

ABORIGINAL AND TORRES STRAIT ISLANDER ELECTED BODY

(Reference: Estimates process 2019-2020)

Members:

**MS KATRINA FANNING (Chairperson)
MS JOANNE CHIVERS (Deputy Chairperson)
MS PAULA McGRADY
MRS CAROLINE HUGHES
MR MAURICE WALKER
MR JACOB KEED**

TRANSCRIPT OF EVIDENCE

CANBERRA

THURSDAY, 12 MARCH 2020

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APPEARANCES

Education Directorate	65
Environment, Planning and Sustainable Development Directorate	99
Transport Canberra and City Services Directorate	119
Community Services Directorate.....	139

The Elected Body met at 9.03 am.

Appearances:

Education Directorate

Cross, Ms Rebecca, Acting Director-General

Matthews, Mr David, Acting Deputy Director-General

Moysey, Mr Sean, Executive Branch Manager, Early Childhood Policy and Regulation

Gotts, Mr Robert, Executive Branch Manager, Analytics and Evaluation

Stott, Ms Alison, Executive Branch Manager, People and Performance

Parkinson, Mr Andrew, Acting Executive Group Manager, Business Services

Hawkins, Mr Ross, Executive Group Manager, Service Design and Delivery

McMahon, Ms Kate, Executive Branch Manager, Learning Wellbeing and Policy Design

Seton, Ms Sam, Executive Branch Manager, Student Engagement

Chapman, Mr Patrick, Senior Manager, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Education

Hamilton, Ms Judith, Director, School Improvement—North Gungahlin

THE CHAIR: Good morning, everybody. Yesterday when we started the proceedings we were fortunate in that Member Hughes was able to provide a welcome to country and, in particular, in language. It is important for us always to acknowledge that we are on what is and always has been Ngunnawal land, and we pay our respects to our elders past and present, not just for what they have been able to do in maintaining culture in this place but for the generosity they have shown to all of us who have come to live here.

We are a member short for these hearings; Member Monaghan, unfortunately, is away due to sorry business and will not be attending the hearings this week. As is our regular practice, he has been involved in the preparation of all questions.

As we indicated in our correspondence leading up to the hearings, the hearings over these couple of days are particularly focused on the whole-of-government agreement and each directorate's action plans and progress against those. We have, as we always do, asked for questions from the community, and there are some of those for this directorate. Some of those line up very closely with what is in the agreement; some are slightly different. We also have progress from our recommendations from the last hearings. That should cover off the topic areas.

We also want to acknowledge, particularly over the last year, a couple of achievements from the directorate that, for us, have held significant importance. Through Member Walker in particular, we have had a commitment to increase the early childhood opportunities for our community. We acknowledge the work that has been done and commitments that have been made by the minister and the directorate in that regard and that that work has started.

We also think it has been very important to have the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander parents advisory group re-established, and to make sure that the voices of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people are being heard by the directorate from

several stakeholder groups and not just the seven of us, because there is only so much we can do in a period of time.

As is our normal practice, the primary questions for you will come from Member Walker, given that education is his portfolio area. I understand you have copies of the questions; at the end of each section there will be an opportunity for any follow-up questions that we have.

Before we go to questions, I would like to give you an opportunity to make an opening statement. Could officers, when they come to the table to provide evidence, be mindful that we are a little time poor, having regard to the number of questions we have. We would be very grateful to get an answer to direct questions. If there is follow-up or the opportunity to hear more broadly about progress from the directorate, we will see whether we have time for that at the end.

Ms Cross: On behalf of the Education Directorate and my colleagues here today, I would also like to acknowledge the Ngunnawal people. We pay our respects to them as the traditional custodians of this beautiful country on which we meet today. I would like to acknowledge elders past and present, our Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander colleagues and, in particular, the young and emerging leaders of the community who we have the privilege to work with in our schools. We also acknowledge and pay respect to the Wreck Bay peoples as custodians of the land on which our Jervis Bay School is located.

We would like to acknowledge the Elected Body; in particular, Katrina Fanning as chair and Maurice Walker as the board's representative to the Education Directorate. I understand you both recently met with the Education Director-General, Katy Haire, and had some productive dialogue on how we can best meet the needs and aspirations of all Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students and staff.

I am here as the Acting Director-General of the Education Directorate because, as you are aware, Katy Haire is on pre-planned leave. I understand she sent her written apologies to the chair and to Mr Walker. I would like to reiterate her apologies as I know she values working with the Elected Body and having the opportunity to promote the work of the Education Directorate.

I would like to make some brief comments. I want to start by reaffirming that the Education Directorate has an unwavering commitment to cultural integrity. As an organisation we have zero tolerance for racism and move efficiently and effectively to address any incidents that arise. While we still have a way to go, we are deeply committed to building cultural integrity in our organisation, schools and school communities. It is perhaps the biggest cultural change program we have underway in the organisation.

Our program is designed to ensure that deep understanding of histories, cultures and knowledge systems is embedded in our system. We are continually building the capability of our staff to work with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students, families and communities in meaningful ways. Our teaching staff are confident in delivering learning to our students that broadens their understanding of Australian histories and cultures, and respect.

We know from the work of the executive, our connection with principals, the professional learning of our staff and the learning that is occurring in our classrooms that our work in this area is resonating, and improving cultural knowledge and understanding.

I would like to highlight a few of the key activities that we undertook in 2014. In particular, our professional learning focused on cultural integrity and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander histories, cultures, languages and knowledge. The programs included executive and school leader cultural integrity training, the 2019 rediscovering languages and cultures symposium, book clubs for school staff, and a cultural immersion program for school leader Cs. The directorate also continued to facilitate online cultural competence training, which has proven to be an effective starting point for many teachers and education support office staff.

It is easy to talk about activity, but, chair, I know you want us to focus on impact. I want to tell you about the impact of cultural integrity at Bonython Primary School. As part of a year-long project, Bonython opened its 2019 art exhibition *Acknowledging Country* at the Tuggeranong Arts Centre. The important aspect of this project was that every student participated, every student understood the connection of their piece of art to country, every student walked away proud of their understanding and their expression and that they had created an exhibition that the broader community could enjoy. This is an experience that will stay with them through their lives.

There are many examples that the directorates see every day where impact is felt, and there is a keen desire for educators to go deeper with understanding and connect more with culture. I know my colleagues will highlight through today's session more examples of the work of the directorate and how it is shaping and impacting on the lives of young people.

The Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander secondary and tertiary scholarship programs, the Mura awards, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander education officers and the newly created cultural integrity coordinator positions are just some of the initiatives that the directorate employs to meet the needs and aspirations of all Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students.

We recognise that we are on a pathway with our students and staff and also with the members of the Elected Body, and we look forward to answering your questions this morning.

THE CHAIR: I will now pass over to Member Walker to commence with the formal part of our questioning.

MR WALKER: Good morning, everybody. These are questions that are being asked of all directorates. What has been undertaken by the directorate to increase the number of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander senior leaders in 2020-21?

Ms Stott: Our approach in phase 1, as the director-general mentioned in her opening remarks, has been focusing on awareness and understanding and our cultural integrity program. We have had, since 2018 to the current time, a 50 per cent increase in our

school leader and ESO leader cohort, with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander members of that cohort. That is our deputy principals, principals, SOG As and Bs and SES; that is how we are measuring the school leaders.

We have also begun to make some changes to our recruitment practices. That is something that will continue throughout 2020. I know that at the last hearings Mark Huxley spoke to you about our principal recruitment. Something we committed to doing was to create an aspect of our principal recruitment that focused on cultural integrity. There was a large principal recruitment round towards the end of 2019 that included a strong focus on that area, and questions and written responses at interview and at the application stage that they included in that selection as well. In 2020 we will continue on that journey.

We are also in the process of finalising a strategic workforce plan for the directorate. An aspect of that will be continuing to focus on this area. We are measuring each month to the executive, as part of our monthly workforce dashboard, how our Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander senior leader metrics are going, and we are reporting on that each month.

MR WALKER: What work has been undertaken to date in order to reduce experiences of racism and discrimination for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people within government systems by 80 per cent by 2028, and how is this being measured?

Mr Hawkins: We might answer this in a couple of elements because it impacts partly on our schools, so I will cover that bit off and Ms Stott might cover off the component around our staff. We can then talk a little about the measurement of that as well.

The director-general highlighted some of those areas we are putting in place across our schools, in building our broader cultural integrity—taking a whole-of-school approach. Our approach has been strength focused in terms of building our ability to manage and support cultural integrity within our schools, and what we have been putting in place for our principals and our school executives in terms of making sure that every child comes to school every day and feels safe within the school environment.

Probably the element for us that we have been focusing on is around the measurement component that you have asked about. We are looking at what systems we have in place at the moment that we can use to measure that. There are elements that we have in our school climate survey so that we can start to look at how students are feeling in terms of their sense of belonging within the school. It is not a perfect measure but it is something that we could use to help us look at what we are currently seeing in our schools.

The other thing that we are currently rolling out within our school environment is a schools administration system, which is allowing us to pull all of our incidents that are taking place in our schools around wellbeing onto one system. This is currently in the development stage of being rolled out across schools. We can see at the back end of that, once that is delivered, whether or not we can start to pull information off—if incidents of racism are occurring in schools, whether or not we can start to provide some degree of analysis over that and make sure that we have the right interventions in place. That is the school side; Ms Stott can cover off the staff side.

Ms Stott: On the staff side we very much focus on prevention, our culture, the structure that we have available in our directorate; then there is what to do if something is reported or something arises. Very much in our prevention and culture space are some of the things that I already spoke about around our cultural integrity work. There is also our staff network and the formulation of our diversity council. Our staff network representative is at the table of our diversity council and is able to directly raise issues with our education EGC members.

In the reporting space we have informal and formal mechanisms where staff can raise concerns—through their staff networks to our cultural integrity team, with our respect, equity and diversity contact officers that are based in every school and every branch in the directorate, and the more formal methods under section H of our enterprise agreements, where they can raise something and have it managed formally through HR or with the support of their manager.

MR WALKER: How does the directorate ensure that cultural protocols to recognise Ngunnawal people as traditional custodians are followed?

Mr Hawkins: We include the acknowledgement in all of our meetings within our directorate and across our schools. An encouragement that we have done within the directorate is to not only recognise the cultural protocol but to look to our executives to add to that, to give their views and experience around what cultural integrity means to them—the next most positive step. That has been well supported and is entrenched within our meeting and governance structures within the organisation. In fact, it features strongly within our governance protocols for the organisation. At all of our meetings that is firmly enshrined as a key component of those meeting structures.

It also takes place within our schools. I would invite any members to come out and have a look at some of our schools and the way our schoolchildren provide an acknowledgement; they are more than welcome. It is fantastic. With respect to watching students send an acknowledgement and be part of it, creating their own, going onto country and gaining that understanding and connecting back, we have seen a great uptake and a growing number of our schools get involved in those processes, to acknowledge the importance of those protocols and what it means to be on Ngunnawal land.

From a school perspective, we have a routine review process of our schools. We might talk a little bit about this later. We go into schools and, as part of looking at the broader construct of what is taking place, how the schools adopted cultural protocols forms part of that assessment. We want to see what is going on in our schools, how they are supporting cultural integrity and how they are going deeper. Part of that assessment is made through that process. It goes to the notion of ensuring that that is taking place within our system.

MR WALKER: Member Hughes has a follow-up question to that later on, but we will get to that. How does the directorate change policies and programs to allocate funding to address the need of the growing Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander population?

Mr Matthews: I might start off by talking about our funding model. The ACT

government has adopted a proper needs-based funding model in the way that we allocate our funding. The ACT continues to fund above the national school resourcing standard, in recognition of the importance of public education in providing equal opportunity to all Canberra citizens.

The way that we allocate funding in our education system recognises a core allocation for every student, as well as a series of needs-based loadings to recognise additional educational challenges, opportunities and needs. They form the basis of how individual schools are funded. There are needs-based loadings for low socio-economic members of our Canberra community. Schools which have higher concentrations of low SES children, proximity to public housing and the like receive additional funding in recognition of the needs of those students, to support their educational outcomes.

We also have loadings around Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students. That is not the total funding, by any stretch of the imagination, that is provided to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander young people, but it is an additional allocation. It recognises the need for schools to invest in their general cultural integrity and accessibility as a school, and to include all of the kids that are enrolled in their schools fully within the culture and operation of their schools. We also have other loadings for areas such as disability. We acknowledge that, within the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community, some community members have a range of those different needs which we need to wrap around and support.

In a general sense, under the direction on the future of education, we want to increasingly personalise our learning experiences for every student in the system. That means, obviously, understanding each of our children really well, understanding how they are learning and how they are tracking against standardised testing, both in-class assessment and other assessments that are undertaken by teachers and allied health professionals. What is really important as well is how that is being informed by family, friends and the community, and working in partnership with community and organisations.

That tailoring process has led us to make sure that we have a range of both educational support strategies and support plans in place for individuals. Also, generally, it is about how we are lifting the general capability of our schools. It is not within that deficit discord of fixing an individual, but it is about acknowledging that people need additional support, or tailored support, at times, just to be at the starting line with everybody else. Our funding model reflects that.

Within Ross Hawkins's network student engagement team, there are a range of support services that we provide centrally—a whole range of school psychologists and other allied health professionals to make sure that we can meet the needs of individuals. We target those on a needs basis and very much based on the feedback we are getting from school communities.

They are the general approaches we take around funding and program delivery. We match those with our emerging work in the area of cultural integrity to make sure that, when we are thinking about a child, we are not thinking narrowly; we are thinking broadly, by understanding their relationships, their connections to community, their family context and the like. That is how we fund our schools to support that generally.

MR WALKER: Thanks, David. How many community events have been delivered by the directorate and who participated? Who was responsible for the delivery and management of the events and do we have an annual budget for those events?

Mr Hawkins: This one is a little tricky for us to answer. Let me just unpack why and then how we might want to provide you that information. We would look for our 88 schools to be running and working with community events across our systems. There are elements that they do.

Bonython Primary School, as the director-general said, organised their community event with the Tuggeranong Arts Centre. That was organised by them, and I know a lot of our schools do have events out in the community. I want to give you a full sense of our picture. There are events that we organise centrally within our education support office—things like our inner north cluster, which was an event that was run recently, along with NAIDOC in the north and the Buroinjin Carnival. I have got details in terms of the funding provided for those—they were \$1,500, \$2,500 and \$3,000 respectively.

Yes, so we do run events centrally and they look to publicise that across and with the community and then work across and with our schools. The other thing we try to do is, when we have got other events that we are running, to think about what they look like from an Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander perspective.

Things like our careers expo that we run for our students will work and we will have a lens within that on how we look to support our Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students within those two events as well. We have a range at different levels, but for you to get a more comprehensive response over the number of them, I would need to take that on notice.

MR WALKER: Thank you. How is the directorate using your networks and resources to promote cultural knowledge?

Mr Hawkins: Thank you. I might just get Kate McMahon to answer that.

Ms McMahon: We use a range of different networks for a range of different purposes and I can explain some of those. Looking at the cultural integrity professional learning that we do for our teachers and our staff in the ESO, we always use Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander people to present and to share their knowledge with us. We have some really strong relationships with a range of different presenters for those activities.

Our on-country learning is always conducted by the rangers in our environment and some of the other Aboriginal people who have the knowledge of those areas. We conduct on-country learning for schoolteachers and school leaders in areas where their schools are situated, so we have multiple different activities across that.

We use our education advisory group to seek advice around policy development and program development. That has been a really active part of some of the work that we have been doing, a very valued part as well.

Our principals have network meetings each term, twice a term. One of the standing

agenda items on that is to discuss what they are doing with cultural integrity and then share their knowledge between each other, which is a really powerful growing activity for them around what they are doing and sharing.

Th teachers in our Koori preschool network get together, but we also provide professional learning for that group by Indigenous people in particular areas. That has been really successful in building up those programs by sharing knowledge across that network and with expertise being built into that.

Our staff network is a delightful sense of reality check for us as an organisation and truth telling. They are very wise and provide us with sound advice at times, which is really useful. They have the opportunity to do that on a regular basis.

We have a Google community, which is our virtual community that our teachers are involved in. We share a lot of resources from our Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander education team on that community. Teachers from across Canberra can ask questions. They can share resources and we also provide a lot of resources up there. We have over 1,000 members on that Google community at the moment.

Pat Chapman and I attend a national body, the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander education body. We are able to network in that group. I cannot attend, as a white person, unless I have one of my Aboriginal colleagues attending with me. That is a really powerful group to be able to look at national policy work that is happening.

We also work with the University of Canberra. We work in a really collaboratively way where we are able to share what our needs are around developing our new teachers and use their expertise in research and use their expertise in personnel with some of the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander lecturers in that group, who have been able to provide some very targeted professional learning for some of our schools but also to be a sounding board for us. We have got a really great working relationship there.

All of our preservice and in-service teachers who are upgrading their qualifications now must do a unit on Australian pedagogy, which is their take on Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander teaching methodology. All of our students who will be coming through the University of Canberra program will be working in that space.

MR WALKER: Thank you very much.

Mr Matthews: I know time is of the essence, but I just wanted to highlight the fact that the senior executive team do meet with the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander staff network representatives once a quarter to get real-time feedback. I would like to acknowledge Ginibi Robinson's work in that in particular. That has been at times really confronting for the senior executive but really valuable in terms of understanding the direct experience of teachers and other learning professionals in our system, how they have experienced or observed racism within schools and how that has impacted on them personally.

The other significant area of discussion which I have personally found very beneficial is understanding more about the cultural load experience by a lot of our staff in terms of their extra responsibilities and how that comes both into their professional and

personal lives and how as employees we can better understand that as well. I just wanted to emphasise that at all levels we really understand we need to have real, honest conversations about everyday experience and that is how really, at the end of the day, we will be able to know how we are going and where we need to keep working.

MR WALKER: Thanks. The last question in this all-of-directorate questioning is: were Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander staff involved in development of the directorate action plan under the agreement?

Mr Hawkins: Yes, the team were involved. I just wanted to run through the way that we work that process. We have an Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander team that sits under Kate McMahon, but we did not want that team to solely own the action plan. They have helped provide a cultural lens over totality, but we are trying to embed that work down through the organisation.

Those parts of the organisation delivering on parts of the plan own it and they are developing it, but they are supported by our team that is providing a cultural lens within it to ensure that this is deeply embedded within our organisation. What we did not want is to have our plan just sitting with the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander team. We did not think that was appropriate and we wanted to make sure that it was much more deeply embedded within the organisation.

They have run a coordination activity for us. They provided, if you like, consultancy and advice to various areas around what that would look like and then they have been working through the development of the implementation and the actions coming out from it.

THE CHAIR: I think Member Hughes had a follow-up question. I certainly have some.

MRS HUGHES: In relation to question 3 and the cultural protocols in recognising the Ngunnawal people, how is that communicated across all colleges and schools? We have heard of some isolated incidents of other groups being recognised.

Mr Hawkins: I am happy to follow up and find out a bit more detail on what that might be. Our protocols are standard across all of our schools, having regard to the way that has been set and communicated. If there is something that is an adjunct to that, we would be glad to know a bit more detail around what that would look like.

MRS HUGHES: I have another question in relation to question 6. With the on-country training, Kate, that you were talking about, how do you ensure that Ngunnawal people are involved in the on-country training for the staff?

Ms McMahon: I need to ask Pat who the provider is for that.

Mr Chapman: For a lot of our on-country at the moment, we use Adam Shipp and Yurbay. We have also started working a bit with Richie Allan. As more stuff is available, we will be able to increase the Ngunnawal providers that we use. I know Adam has worked with local Ngunnawal people to—

Ms McMahon: To develop the programs that we are using, and using specific locations.

If we are working with staff from Red Hill school, we would go up into Red Hill and have a look at the on-country learning that can happen out there.

Mr Chapman: Yes.

MRS HUGHES: Has the United Ngunnawal Elders Council been involved?

Mr Chapman: Not that I am aware of; not on this.

Ms McMahan: But we can certainly work with them.

Mr Chapman: Yes.

THE CHAIR: The critical point is that, if it is on-country, the people who are the traditional owners should have at least a vetting assurance type of role.

Ms McMahan: Yes, we can certainly do that.

MR WALKER: I forgot to ask question 7. How many contracts and tenders have been awarded to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander businesses?

Mr Parkinson: As you have heard from my colleagues, we have an extensive cultural integrity program where we engage a lot of local suppliers, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander suppliers, to be part of that program. The majority of those engagements take place in the schools; therefore there is no central register of those engagements. Having had a conversation over the last while, we can identify at least a dozen local Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander businesses who are involved in those engagements.

THE CHAIR: By not having a central register, how does that make you compliant with the Indigenous procurement policy of the government?

Mr Parkinson: The Indigenous procurement policy is recorded on the contracts register, which is for procurements over \$25,000. The majority of these procurements are under \$25,000. There is an interesting question in that.

THE CHAIR: That might be the issue.

Mr Parkinson: Yes. That is for Procurement ACT to have a conversation around, because we need to find a way of tracking those businesses there.

THE CHAIR: My point was more about the value of the contracts that you let to Indigenous businesses, not the other way around.

Mr Parkinson: We also track the contracts over \$25,000 on the contracts register. Checking against the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander procurement policy, we have identified over the past 12 months two major procurements that are on that contracts register. The value of those two procurements is \$4 million. They were in the construction space and they are both to businesses that are listed on the ACT government's Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander procurement policy; therefore those were supplied to the register. Those two are both construction contracts, as I said, so

we know those ones. We are also about to go to market for—

THE CHAIR: In the interests of time, and not being disrespectful, can we just try and work out where we are up to now and how we have tracked?

Mr Parkinson: We have tracked about \$4 million in two procurements and we are about to go out for another \$6 million procurement, which will be much more targeted than the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander policy, because it will involve full Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Indigenous participation in the subcontract level of the construction project as well.

THE CHAIR: To understand the parity of that, because \$4 million sounds great, is that one per cent of the procurements there?

Mr Parkinson: On notice I would say yes. On the education side, and what we spend in capital, \$4 million would probably be one per cent of our budget—more than one per cent.

Mr Matthews: Our capital works budget was about \$90 million last year.

THE CHAIR: It does sound great. If the budget is \$1 billion then it is not; if it is \$90 million, that is really good. I am just trying to get the scale right.

Mr Parkinson: Capital works is about \$100 million and maintenance is another \$50 million.

THE CHAIR: I have a few more questions. Going to the area dealing with racism in schools, I have a few questions around this. Mr Matthews, you talked a little bit about the value of the staff network and that there are confronting conversations. As the director-general mentioned in her opening remarks, I am particularly interested in impact and action. It is one thing to ask our Indigenous staff to raise these issues and to be brave enough to do that in a workplace. I am interested in what action has been taken about the issues that they have raised.

Mr Matthews: Without giving you a long-winded, bureaucratic answer, we acknowledge that across 88 different schools, with 50,000 students and about 6,000 staff, we are going to reflect the whole of the community and all the attitudes and beliefs that exist in the community.

THE CHAIR: My question specifically is: where Indigenous staff have raised a particular issue with you, rather than it being a reflective exercise, which is part of the process, what corrective actions have been taken directly as a result of that?

Mr Matthews: One that specifically comes to mind for me, and my colleagues might have others, is around the feeling of some identified roles at particular schools. Those issues were raised with the executive governance committee in terms of what their status was and whether there were non-Indigenous people in those roles or not. To my recollection that was followed up and it was confirmed that those positions needed to be advertised and properly filled. That is an example that I can recall where the specific instance came up. As I said, my colleagues might have other specific examples.

Obviously, if there are examples around individual students, they do get followed up. There are a range of school-based strategies around supporting individual students.

THE CHAIR: Has that group raised issues of systemic discrimination or racism in the directorate with you?

Mr Matthews: In the sense that I have already described, yes, in that there are issues of racism in our communities, and it is in terms of how our directorate is responding to those where we have more work to do. We would absolutely acknowledge that there is an ongoing responsibility on us to address systemic racism at, if you like, a corporate cultural level, a leadership level and obviously at a school-based level. Those issues have been raised with us. The key word in that, Katrina, as you know, is “systemic”. The issue is how we provide a systemic or organisational cultural response to that. They are some of the things that we have been talking about today. Of course, with specific issues or areas where we are concerned about hotspots of behaviour reports, we are absolutely responding to those, too.

THE CHAIR: This is more general: what number of incidents of racism have been reported to the Education Directorate?

Mr Hawkins: From a staff perspective?

THE CHAIR: It is one of the commitments in the action plan that you referred to in your evidence, and the mechanism is not quite built yet, I understand.

Mr Hawkins: Correct.

THE CHAIR: Just through your normal complaints or issues-raising processes, do you know how many issues, particularly to do with racism experienced by Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people, have been raised within the directorate?

Mr Hawkins: From a broader organisational complaint perspective we know we have had three complaints this year.

THE CHAIR: Are there outstanding actions to those complaints or have they been finalised?

Mr Hawkins: Initial action is always taken but then there is follow-up action that needs to take place to ensure that the supports are in place for the person who has made the complaint and for the schools. We take this seriously and it is never just a case of a quick action; they need to be addressed to make sure there is a broader support plan in place.

Would you mind if I just add to Mr Matthews’ evidence, because I think part of what one of our networkers has raised is that providing voices back into schools is really important. Some work that Ms Robinson and Tahlia, our university researcher, have provided is those voices—I think it has to read as theatre—around what our students are telling us. We need to make sure those voices are heard by our schools and principals. Schools have shown interest in hearing those voices because hearing that that exists leads to an understanding of what schools can then do to continue to address it.

THE CHAIR: I understand that, Mr Hawkins, and I understand the cultural change that is happening. I am very happy with that, but I am just getting more to the “So what?” with no actions ever taken.

Mr Hawkins: Yes. The impact for us, chair, is that we need that work to be heard within our schools. We need to make sure that that is dealt with and the mechanism that has been provided. The advice from the network has been to share that more widely so that it does not just sit at an executive committee perspective; it is actually out there, heard by our schools and heard by our executives.

THE CHAIR: I agree. The commitment in the action plan is on an 18-month cycle, so what is in that should be finalised by July. Is the mechanism for capturing this information on track for that time frame?

Mr Hawkins: The staff element is ready. That is captured through a staff mechanism. We have information on complaints. In terms of discerning what takes place within schools, that is going to take slightly longer. I mentioned the school system that we have in place and the implementation process, so that will take longer into this year. But we have been looking at whether we can use our staff survey information and looking at our Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students to see whether or not they could provide a proxy for that information for us in the interim.

THE CHAIR: I have just got a couple of more questions. I am mindful of the time and of taking up too much space, but I just want to clarify a couple of pieces of evidence. One was around the 50 per cent increase in school leaders, which I assumed was for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people. How many actual people does that relate to? There is a 50 per cent increase. If it was only two, that is one person. I just want to get an idea of the scale.

Ms Stott: It was from six to nine. That was the increase.

THE CHAIR: Thank you. Similarly, Mr Matthews, I just go back to the evidence around the question we asked about the policy and programs and how a particular focus for us is how young our population is and how that is taken into account.

Mr Matthews: Yes.

THE CHAIR: My experience of funding models like the one that you explained is that whilst the school might be allocated that, it is really hard to see the line of sight between that funding and the actual student. It is good that the funding model is established to give that bucket. How do either the cultural integrity framework, the learning plans or the school development plans ensure that that allocation actually meets that student?

Mr Matthews: Again, in terms of some of the practices I will defer to my colleagues, but in terms of the funding body model it is really important that that provides the global budget for the school. Of course, the resources per child may well exceed those allowances that are made through the budget. So we expect schools to target their resources to meet community need.

THE CHAIR: What I am after—and it does not necessarily have to be you—is how we ensure that it does.

Mr Matthews: Okay. I am just trying work this through. I understand what you are looking for.

THE CHAIR: If that is possible.

Mr Matthews: We do not track the results for individual student outcomes. We cannot say how much money we spend on every child in every school because that is not the way we want it to work, because we would be worried in that instance that the opposite could be true, where people think, “I don’t have any more money to support this child anymore.”

THE CHAIR: Maybe if I phrase it another way: how do you ensure the school does not use that to run their NAIDOC program rather than student support?

MRS HUGHES: Or even an Indigenous program, as well?

Mr Matthews: Yes.

THE CHAIR: Does the cultural integrity framework pick up on that? I am just wondering.

Mr Hawkins: It does. I was just discussing that with the D-G. It does. Every year schools go through a school planning process in the cycle, and as part of that they identify their needs within the school and then what are the programs or supports they want to try and put in place. That is built within each school by every school. On a five-year rolling basis those schools undergo an independent school review, and their connection to cultural interest integrity is included within that. That is able to take place at the school. Mr Matthews mentioned earlier our network support engagement teams. They are in there providing direct, targeted support to students. That is not directly funded through schools; that is funded essentially through me and the services provided to the school. That is why there is a little bit of difference between the funding that goes to the school and what they are doing versus the direct services.

THE CHAIR: So, there are these other complementary—

Mr Hawkins: So, for example, speech therapists, occupational therapists and psychologists all come in as a service.

THE CHAIR: So it does not come out of that bucket?

Mr Hawkins: No, that comes in as a service that I would deliver to the school, based on need and based on individual learning plans that we have around each individual student. There is a student element to this, but then there is more a school community connection piece to this as well.

THE CHAIR: Yes.

MR WALKER: Thank you, Ross.

MRS HUGHES: Can I just ask a question? I am aware of time. I would be interested in the issues of racism. How many were actually staff and how many were external?

Mr Hawkins: Just to clarify, are you talking about staff who were accused of the racist behaviour?

MRS HUGHES: Or Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander staff that have raised racism as an issue.

Ms Stott: We will take that one on notice; we do not have the numbers here today.

Mr Matthews: What we can say, just going back to what Mr Hawkins said before, is that in terms of complaints that have been received about allegations of discrimination—that is against students, if you like—the breakdown was four in 2018, nine in 2019 and three in the year 2020 to date. But that is, I guess, just formal complaints that have come through. We know that there would be other instances that have been raised, where issues have been discussed at a school level. They are from students, if you like, or families. The complaints that staff might make would come through our RED reporting data and we can provide that separately.

MRS HUGHES: Thank you.

MR WALKER: Thanks. Moving on, in last year's hearing report the Elected Body recommended that the directorate work with high schools and colleges to develop a strategy to maximise the uptake of secondary and tertiary scholarships by Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students. Can you outline the progress on this recommendation?

Ms McMahon: Certainly. We have been working to make changes after the recommendations from the last hearings about the scholarships and the decision that was come to. Pat Chapman and his team have been working extremely hard with schools on this issue, and I would like to acknowledge the work of Pat in this area.

Scholarships, as you know, used to be for particular purposes. If a student was interested in teaching, they could get a scholarship. We broaden that out to health as well and then to VET. We have had a really good look at that and now scholarships are open for any student area of interest. It allows now a much broader range of students to apply for those scholarships.

We still have the tertiary scholarships and we still have the secondary scholarships. Money is still the same. What we would like to do is to undertake a bigger look at that program, based on the outcomes from this year, just to see if we are hitting the mark. We will be doing that work in the second half of this year and into next year.

The scholarships are really successful and this year, because we did open it up to a broader range of students, we have students who are undertaking a Bachelor of Science, Bachelor of Environment, sports development. We have students who are learning to do cake decorating and pastry work at a cert III level. We have a student who has been

doing graphic design, film production and medical science, which is really great.

We contacted a couple of our previous recipients just to see how they were going. One of our former secondary scholarship holders has gone on to complete her Bachelor of Science at the ANU and is in her third year of her Doctor of Medicine at the University of Wollongong. This recipient told us that the support that she received from the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander education officer at high school, and particularly an excursion that they went on to the ANU School of Medicine, actually put her on the path for her career.

I think the strength that we have in developing our aspirations program underpins the work of the scholarships as well. We have a year 5-6 aspirations program as well as the secondary aspirations program. We take the five-sixers all out from across Canberra on a leadership day and work through what it means to be a leader and to be moving into high school.

For our secondary students, we take them to a place of work—we have been to the High Court and we have been to the museum. We engage with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander staff at those institutions to talk with the students about what it means to be working in those professions. All of those institutions have a range of professions. I think that then underpins students moving forward to applying for scholarships.

We are really pleased with the progress that we have made with scholarships and how we have changed that. But we do see that we would like to review that further and make some further recommendations moving forward.

MR WALKER: Thank you very much, Kate.

THE CHAIR: I have just one follow-up question, and there is no doubt that those examples of progress are excellent. Are the scholarship funds fully expended?

Ms McMahon: They are fully, yes.

THE CHAIR: Allocated, so there is no money left on the table.

Ms McMahon: No there is no money left on the table.

THE CHAIR: Excellent answer.

MR WALKER: Thank you. What activities have the children and young people directorate undertaken to listen to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander young people regarding education and other matters that are important to them and what are the outcomes of these activities?

Mr Hawkins: Thank you. There are several mechanisms that we have to do this, and we would encourage all schools to be listening to the voices of all students. At a directorate level, we have a minister's student congress that has Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students within that as a broader congress. One of the innovations late last year was to bring together a group of years 10, 11 and 12 students to specifically listen to their voices and what they were telling us.

It was fantastic for us to get a sense of what is it like from their perspective and to listen to their voices. That has been great. The next step, really, for us is to make sure that we listen to those voices and then take that to action. There was some advice about the impact—and I would listen to the chair’s view around impact. They gave us some great, clear feedback around the teaching of Aboriginal history within our schools, that they would like to see that strengthened, and the ability to identify within the broader approach to how we consider and look at history and culture.

The other thing that they have highlighted to us is the real difficulties that students face in those transitions from year 10 to year 11. That is a really tricky time for all students, but these students particularly highlighted that that was an issue. That is something that we will look at further around what supports we can put in place. Given the success of that forum—

THE CHAIR: Sorry, I am laughing because he just bowed at us as he entered. It has never happened before. I am wondering if he can teach my children.

Mr Hawkins: I will take that as a hint, chair. We are looking to extend that this year to a year 5 to year 9 forum, because it recognises that the views of college students are very different to the views of our younger students. We certainly found it a great opportunity to get in to connect, to listen, but we are making sure that that outcome is then linked back into our policy areas so that we can shape up and connect the policy to what we are hearing from our past students.

MR WALKER: Thank you very much. Can you tell us where the communication strategy in partnership with the Community Service Directorate currently sits, regarding parents and families being informed in relation to mandatory reporting processes and the requirements?

Mr Hawkins: Yes. This is not as far advanced as I would have liked by this point. We have been working closely with CSD and part of what we are trying to do—and I have got a meeting on this this afternoon—is to try to line it up to make sure there is a consistency in mandatory reporting approach across government. I think it is helpful for the community to get an approach from how Education is different to Health is different to CSD.

We are doing some with CSD on that and then, from there, there is a level of working out the communications and protocols, and how we can communicate what that would look like. But certainly, conversations initially have been around how we can try to bring together a level of consistency and approach from across government. That is one of those areas that we are progressing on, but it is not as far advanced as we initially would have liked.

MR WALKER: Thank you. It is something to follow up.

Mr Hawkins: Yes.

THE CHAIR: Do you have a time frame for when you are going to get that across the line? If you do not, that is okay; I do not know if you have set targets.

Mr Hawkins: I do not. I think we would like to get to a point of agreement later this year, at least on the consistency of approach that we can then work through what the communication of that needs to be. There is a practice meeting that is taking place to set that up. It is just taking a bit of time to work through the issues.

MR WALKER: The director has reported previously about cultural integrity. To what extent has it been embedded within our schools? How many staff have had the training and how many more need to be trained? How long will this take? How are you measuring those effects?

Ms McMahon: Thank you.

MR WALKER: There is a mouthful there.

Ms McMahon: There are a lot of components to that. We continue to roll out our cultural integrity training for our staff. We do have a lot of staff, so it is a bit of a job to get through everybody. We have, over the last few years, worked with all of our senior executive staff and all of our school principals in ensuring that they have a three-day cultural immersion and cultural integrity training.

Last year we worked with 400 of our school leader Cs. They are part of the leadership team. They are the faculty leaders, or the middle management cohort that are the instructional leaders in our schools. We worked with all of those SLCs to provide a cultural integrity training, which commenced with a provocation. We had a range of different speakers who would come in and tell it as it is, really. There was some people who did that extremely well, including, Cindy Berwick who was really delightful in her approach. We then worked on a whole day of cultural integrity training with Grant Sarra and then they followed up with the on-country training back in their own environments.

This year we are doing a similar process with all of our deputy principals. By the end of the year, we would have had all of our senior executives in our schools and in ESA trained in cultural integrity. From that, we are providing them with the structures and the supports to work with their own staff, because we cannot get every single staff member to come out of school and to do that training. But it is better that the instructional leaders in the school embed that training within that context.

We also have some whole-of-teaching opportunities that anybody can come along to, a symposium each year. We have had two symposiums now over the last two years with a different focus. That is an opportunity for teachers and school assistants and principals and people from ESA to come together across the day and hear from a range of speakers and participate in workshops. From those experiences we have had feedback and we have been able to develop other programs that are then being driven by the community.

One of those is our book clubs. It seems like a funny little title for a professional learning activity, but we have a growing number of book clubs which are being asked for and we are providing the service. We have teachers coming together from a range of different schools to discuss books that they can be using as resources in their schools to tell the story of Aboriginal history and culture. A whole lot of resources are coming out of those—and you are going to tell me to stop talking.

THE CHAIR: Yes, the narrative to it, but how do you know it is embedded—how many people and what is the impact?

Ms McMahon: The number of people: 1,306 people have attended our professional learning in the last 12 months. I can give you lots of stories about impact.

MR WALKER: Thanks, Kate. The reasoning around that is getting the training to people who have direct contact with our kids.

Ms McMahon: Yes.

MR WALKER: And making sure that those teachers particularly have that cultural and integrity training.

Ms McMahon: Yes.

MR WALKER: Because there are a lot of social issues that our kids are facing—not just Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children but the wider community. I think that is something that we need to talk about and how we get that training quicker to those people.

Ms McMahon: Yes, to those people. We are reliant on our school leadership teams to be assisting us with that.

MR WALKER: Thank you.

Mr Hawkins: Mr Walker, the response to this ties in very nicely with the networks that Ms McMahon talked about earlier, because the materials that are created through those book clubs are then shared more widely for other teachers. That is where we get a greater sense of understanding of those cultures and histories and how that builds within the curriculum in every school. There is a level of sharing out there, but you are absolutely right that the next frontier for us is what that looks like and ensuring a whole-of-school approach across all of our schools.

Ms McMahon: Can I just add that this year, in our induction for our new teachers, we dedicated one of the five days to cultural integrity for all of our beginning staff into our system. We have had started that process with all of our teachers.

Mr Hawkins: As they start.

MR WALKER: The first day, yes?

Ms McMahon: Yes. As I said before, our beginning teachers and our teachers who are upgrading are all having training through the University of Canberra with our partnership with them.

MR WALKER: In relation to principal performance and development plans, there is a five-pronged question. What are the cultural components and how are they being measured? What are the compliance rates? From where do you source your cultural

information? Do they include Ngunnawal history, and who does the quality check on the cultural components?

Mr Matthews: We have a whole-of-school improvement process and a school plan which the principal is responsible for, and cultural integrity is a key component of that. That pertains to their role as the leader of their environment. The next stage of it is, as you mentioned, the formal elements around their performance framework as a senior leader within our system. Ms Hamilton can provide more information about how we do that in practice.

Ms Hamilton: Through the principal performance and development plan and AAP, which is the annual action plan, for each school, there is a really strong commitment from principals to that process. You will have heard that the cultural integrity training that took place in 2017 for principals, it would be fair to say, was an absolute game changer for principals. It really captured their hearts and minds.

Since that period we have seen a really strong commitment and uptake by principals to clearly identify what needs to take place in their schools at that leadership level. We have a really strong line of sight through that planning process. The cultural integrity continuum is used in that five-year planning cycle, and that gives us an assessment at that five-year period of how schools are embedding cultural integrity and how they are working with their communities. That assessment informs next steps. Principals use the PPDP and the annual action plan to identify priorities and strategies for each year.

In the principal performance and development plan, principals will identify key leadership actions that need to occur; then they would identify strategies and priorities for the year. That process, that performance agreement, takes place over a 12-month period and they meet with their director of school improvement during that time—initial, midyear and end of year. We also conduct school visits. In that process we identify what is taking place. Principals provide evidence of what is occurring. At the end of the year we review and reflect on what impact that has had for students.

As Ms Stott alluded to earlier, we have also strengthened the principal recruitment process. At the end of last year a number of principal positions were filled—approximately 15. All of those applicants had to articulate their vision of cultural integrity in their leadership and how they would demonstrate working with their Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community.

MR WALKER: In the interests of time I will skip over a couple of questions; hopefully, we can get back to them. What has been the uptake of the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander three-year-old placement program? Has there been a positive response by families in relation to the program? Will there be more assessments and opportunities during the introduction of this program? How does the directorate allocate Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander spots? Is the directorate considering kinship responsibilities, location and other social impacts when prioritising?

Mr Moysey: I want to make it clear that there are two aspects to the three-year-olds program that the ACT government has initiated for this year. One is 100 places in Koori pre for three-year-olds and another is 300 places for targeted placement for children who are three in early childhood education and care services. The targeted program, of

course, is inclusive of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children.

If I could set aside the Koori pre and talk about the targeted program, which I think is the main aspect of the questions you asked, we have gone through the work around the data for three-year-olds. Scanning the number of three-year-olds that would be relevant to that program, it is 418 children. They are predominantly from Community Services Directorate and Health programs. We worked closely with CSD and Health to identify those children, of which 62 children are Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander.

With the process for the placement of children, our shorthand for it is “warm referral”. We have a placement pathway group, which is made up of colleagues from the Education and Community Services directorates; recently, Shona Chapman has joined that group for the discussion of placements. The first part of the conversation is about who best knows the children and family, in order to have the conversation. The second part is the conversation with the family about what the program is about, the offer and how it would work. If there is interest there then we go through a referral process, which is predominantly a conversation, which leads to the completion of a form.

We are aiming to get the best information at the beginning so that people are not retelling their stories over and over again, and so that the knowledge is shared. The process then is the panel considering what is the best offer for that child. The family relationships are a factor, where that child might be at any one time, and whether there is certainty around where they are living at the moment. Certainly, that is an issue. It is then about what might be a placement that better suits the child and the family. It might be that the child has a lot of interaction with their grandparents, and that is where they often go. It might be better to place that child in a service that is nearer to that home.

If we go through each layer there, at the moment we are looking at 120 children, in terms of working through that process of having the first conversation. Of those children, there are 50 Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children. The next layer is the children actually in the referral process, so that the conversation about the referral is happening. Of those 94 children, there are 40 who are Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children. There are 31 children where a placement decision has been made. The next bit is starting the relationship with the child and family service. Of those 31, there are seven Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children. There are 17 children who are in the service right now. Of those 17, five are Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children.

In terms of Koori pre, we have done a lot of work. We heard that the Elected Body, through Member Walker, ran a consultation in, I think, 2018. Through our consultation with our own advisory group, we have been working to match the Koori pre program with how the administration stuff works, making sure that we have clear information about what the program is; that is, for this year, if you are three, you can enrol at any time. That is the key point.

We heard that, with people coming in to take up work in the ACT, the first thing they want to do is enrol their child in the Koori pre program. We have heard that, and we have done a lot of work administratively. We have done a lot of work on explaining and getting clarity on the program. Also we will be doing a lot more work to make sure that, at whatever point people make contact, if they do not know the answer to the question, they can be pointed in the right direction to get the answer. We maximise it,

wherever people are interested.

With the numbers at the moment—hot off the press—for three-year-olds, in the Koori pre, we have 35 children who are three-year-olds, 47 who are four and five who are five-year-olds. I think that is the correct information. The targeted program has been well received. So far, every child that has been offered a place has taken it up. We have positive feedback from the practitioners. The focus in referral is not just on the difficult circumstances that the child might be in. It is, “What’s the child interested in? What do they like doing?” It is about the development of the child as well.

In terms of kinship, the concept, we talked about that. The placement pathway group is a group of experts who have experience with children in challenging circumstances and deep early childhood experience. As I said, Shona Chapman has joined for that aspect.

MR WALKER: I have a final question. Does the directorate have a definition of family connection and kinship carers?

Mr Moysey: We have not formed one for the placement pathway group. Part of the reason we have picked the people for the placement pathway group is we want them to also blueprint how it works. We had an idea of how it works and we have given a framework for how it works, but when issues come up, we want to know what is the resolution for that issue. While there is expertise in that room, we have not written a definition for it.

MR WALKER: Okay, thank you.

Mr Matthews: Can I say, we would be taking a broad, rather than a narrow, view of course. The whole system is about being child focused and finding out what is the best outcome for every individual child.

MR WALKER: For our inclusive community, the directorate would be aware of the recent 2020 Australia Day racism issue between a couple of students here in the ACT. Last year, the former director-general quoted that, on an incident report of racism and bullying, “I would hope that the family would raise that with their school and the school would be mindful that they could raise that with the directorate.”

Is the directorate aware if schools have been approached by the families for assistance and guidance? What has the directorate done to assist both families through this ordeal? What was the outcome of this process, if any?

Mr Matthews: Perhaps, Member Walker, I might briefly start with that. Just generally with Australia Day, we know that it is a very polarising day and it is a particularly important day for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders in our community. We know that each year, as this day comes around and it enters into the media discourse, that it can provoke very unwanted comments and racist comments, which people find very offensive. We are mindful of that.

In the case of this year, and, in fact, most years, schools are not generally not open for Australia Day as it still occurs around the school holidays. That is one of the challenges. Certainly, we take a year-round approach to these issues, but we are aware of significant

dates being sort of black points, if you like, for a range of different comments.

In this instance we are aware of a specific incident that the member might be referring to that occurred during the school holiday period. Contact was made with the school and, indeed, there was a very limited staffing presence in that school around that time. We would say that in this instance that the response was not what we would want to see. It was not addressing the concerns that were raised with that particular school community.

It is another really good reminder for us that if people do not feel comfortable raising concerns then that does reflect on us as a directorate. It will reflect on people's ability to raise concerns in future. We will absolutely consider what our future protocols might be again when we have got that lesson staff profile and particularly around Australia Day.

We would say it is an issue all year around racism that people need to feel confident that they have got an effective response, at a school level. This goes back to the director-general's comment. The school level is important because that is where people's relationships exist on a day-to-day basis. But I would emphasise that we do not just rely on school complaint systems. We obviously have our family and students hotline and other external bodies.

We are very comfortable and would encourage people to make complaints and to escalate issues to those other forums if they are not feeling that they are getting what they need at a school level. They are the messages that we can keep reinforcing, both at a community level and also within our individual schools. But we would expect people to respond very quickly, appropriately and sensitively when there are racist comments on social media, and indeed in any format, associated with Australia Day or any other time of year.

THE CHAIR: And when they do not?

Mr Matthews: When they do not—yes, that is exactly right. I guess there are a range of possible responses that could be implemented.

THE CHAIR: In this specific issue, though, how was it handled?

Mr Hawkins: Building on what Mr Matthews said, it initially did not meet our expectations. When it was flagged with the directorate, my colleague Mark Huxley spoke to the individual concerned and he focused on people rather than on process and making sure the supports were in place. There has been a continuing engagement from there, in terms of speaking with the individual concerned.

The other element for us is looking to see what we can provide in terms of strengthening some of the school supports in place as well. We have been working with our cultural integrity coordinator to work with the school. We have been looking at cultural integrity training for deepening it in the school, in terms of those school supports. But also we have had some specific conversations with students in the school around cybersafety, cyberbullying, and what that looks like as well.

When these incidents happen, we tend to look at what broader supports we can put in place in order to stop them happening again. That is what we have been focusing on in supporting and dealing with the incident.

THE CHAIR: What support has been offered for the family who raised this issue?

Mr Hawkins: As I understand, there have been multiple conversations with the family.

THE CHAIR: Good.

Mr Hawkins: I am just very conscious of the privacy issues here, but we have had multiple conversations with that family, as we would. And the open invitation for them is, if they feel it is not being addressed, to come back to us, at a senior level within the organisation, to give us the feedback.

THE CHAIR: Good.

Mr Hawkins: We would love if these situations did not ever happen, but when they do we need the community to tell us so that we can respond to that. When our response does not meet with the expectations of the community, we need that feedback as well. Actually, the way that we can learn and develop is hearing what we can do to further strengthen our systems.

MR WALKER: Under community leadership, we understand that the directorate offers in-kind secretariat support and sitting fees for the parent members of the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Advisory Group. Does the directorate sense that the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Advisory Group is being adequately resourced and supported to represent students and families to fulfil its role? If not, what is the directorate doing to address this?

Ms McMahon: We believe that the funding that we have currently is adequate at the moment. The budget line has been there continuously since the first allocation of money in 2014. We currently have enough money to be able to cover all of the meeting costs, the sitting fees and any travel associated with the chairperson or their representative to attend national meetings.

As you mentioned, we also do offer the in-kind support around the secretariat services. That money is quarantined as it gets to roll over each year, so we do not lose it. If it was all used up and there were insufficient funds, then we would definitely look for ways to increasing that through our budget processes.

Mr Hawkins: We are looking at the terms of reference for that advisory group. As part of that we need to make sure that members are aware of what they can access in terms of that funding because we found that, whilst it is there, we have not seen—I think the chair's words were—money left on the table. We want to make sure that members know that that is available and accessible to them should they need it.

MR WALKER: Are you able to provide an example of advice that the advisory group has given to the directorate? What was the outcome of that advice, if any?

Ms McMahon: Definitely, we can give examples of that. I will take a step back. We asked all of our areas, especially our policy development areas, if they would like to seek advice from the advisory group. We ensured that they were not coming to the advisory group with a fully formed product, that it had to be in development stages so that it was actually truly seeking input and advice.

We have had groups from the staff network attend and seek advice from our curriculum team, from our early childhood education team and from the early childhood policy and regulation team, as examples who have some through. ACT Policing have also come through us to seek advice as well.

One example is from the early childhood policy and regulation team. They sought input around the three-year-old program that Mr Moysey has just explained to you and the early childhood strategy. At their November meeting they discussed sharing issues with the group and seeking advice from the community. They identified some logistical and operational problems that we might have been having, especially around enrolment. Our enrolment form could not accept a child whose date of birth showed that they were less than four years of age at the time they would be starting school. It was just a logistical thing, so for three-year-old that made it a challenge to actually enrol. We have been able to rectify that problem, as an example.

MR WALKER: On the life learning there are a sequence of questions. How many Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students were in year 7 in 2015? How many Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students successfully completed year 10 and year 8 in 2018, and how many Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students are in year 12 in 2020?

Mr Gotts: In 2015 there were 128 Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students in year 7 in the ACT. That is across all schooling sectors in the ACT, not just public schools. Of those 128 in year 7, 87 were in public schools. Of those 128 in year 7 in 2015—I am talking now about those specific 128 children; the real retention figure—107 were enrolled in year 10 at February in 2018.

THE CHAIR: Sorry, Mr Gotts, the question is about how many successfully completed year 10, not about how many were enrolled.

Mr Gotts: To move on to the next bit—how many of those successfully completed—I have a figure here for the public sector students. I do not have, at that stage, a figure for the non-government students. That will take a little bit longer to pull together. Of the 87 of those 128 that were in public schools, 64 got a year 10 certificate. So 74 per cent of the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children who started year 10 got a year 10 certificate.

THE CHAIR: But we are missing 21 from year 7 already?

Mr Gotts: Yes. When we say “missing”, there are 21 that did not complete. They could be—

THE CHAIR: No, there were 128 enrolled in 2015.

Mr Gotts: Yes.

THE CHAIR: Only 107 enrolled in 2018.

Mr Gotts: That is right.

THE CHAIR: And of those, 75 per cent completed?

Mr Gotts: Correct. Sorry, that is right. Of those, some will have transferred to other schools.

THE CHAIR: And some will have transferred in.

Mr Gotts: And some will have transferred in. I can tell you the number that transferred in. There were 141 students at the beginning of year 10. While 107 came forward from the original 128, there were 141 at the start of year 10, so the number was a bit bigger.

THE CHAIR: Do you know what happened to the 21? Do you have information that they are enrolled in a different system or do we not know?

Mr Gotts: We have information. There is a school transfer form that is filled out. If it is always filled out we know whether a student has transferred to another system or, in this case, more likely outside of the ACT. Families move and so on. It is a separate piece of work to track down what has happened with those.

THE CHAIR: But you could get that for us?

Mr Gotts: To the extent that that information is there—

THE CHAIR: Of what is available.

Mr Gotts: then, yes, we can. Happy to take that on notice.

MRS HUGHES: Sorry, can I just clarify? The 128 and 107 were right across the board?

Mr Gotts: That is across public and non-government schools, yes.

MRS HUGHES: So there are 87 in the public sector?

Mr Gotts: Correct.

MRS HUGHES: And then 64 actually completed in the public school system?

Mr Gotts: Of those ones in the public sector, yes.

MRS HUGHES: So there are 23 children who did not complete in the public sector?

Mr Gotts: Yes, 23 children the public sector who did not complete year 10. The next part of the question is: how many Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students are in year 12 in 2020? Of that 128 that we started with in year 7 in 2015, 76 were enrolled in

year 12 in February 2020. That was just last month when we did the census, so that means a real retention rate of 59 per cent from our original. So the total enrolment of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children in year 12 in February 2020 is 131. The total number is quite a lot higher, and that represents students moving into the ACT, essentially.

THE CHAIR: Or commuting in to come to school.

Mr Gotts: Or commuting in to come to school. Some come across the border from New South Wales, yes.

THE CHAIR: Thank you.

MS CHIVERS: I know we did not ask, but I am actually interested, in relation to question 25, in how many of those 76 students are between tertiary and whatever the other package is.

Mr Gotts: That is a good question. I cannot tell you the answer to that for 2020 but I can tell you—

THE CHAIR: It is a bit early!

Mr Gotts: I will not try to guess it, but I can tell you the answer for 2018 and for 2019. For 2019, 38 per cent of the children who were in year 12 in 2019 were doing a VET in schools program. In 2018, 35 per cent of the students were doing that. With regard to completing year 12, which obviously is several months away, if we go back to 2019 and 2018 respectively then 66 per cent and 69 per cent of the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders got a year 12 certificate.

THE CHAIR: Got through that year?

Mr Gotts: Yes.

MR WALKER: Thank you very much. I want to move to the last set of questions on health and wellbeing, housing and justice. Question 27: schools develop a positive behaviour learning plan in relation to year 7, the health check, and students with complex and challenging behaviour. How many positive behaviour support plans have been developed and how many are outstanding?

Mr Hawkins: This brings in several elements, because the positive behaviour for learning is a framework that we have within our schools that is a universal support service that we provide. We have been doing a lot of work through our schools; currently 58 of our 88 schools are doing it or adopting it over the next two years, which puts in place a universal framework for supports for students. When we get into positive behaviour support plans, that is more around the management of complex, challenging behaviours that exist for all students. I can get you a number, if you would like that, in terms of the number of Indigenous students with a positive behaviour support plan.

THE CHAIR: On the schools where it is available.

Mr Hawkins: But I would need to take that on notice, because the other element is individual learning plans—the ones around the kind of social and emotional supports required. Then there are the individual learning plans that exist in terms of learning and adjustment that can be made within the classroom. I would just need to get a bit more information on what it is that you would like me to provide and I will provide it on notice, if that is okay.

THE CHAIR: That would be good. If you could do that, that would be great, thanks.

Mr Hawkins: I looked last night and there is a range. These sit as outcomes within separate line items. But I am happy to come back on each of those, on notice, if that would be useful.

THE CHAIR: Yes. If you could do that, that is probably the most useful. Thank you.

Mr Hawkins: I was trying to work through what is it that you—

THE CHAIR: It is about understanding how it comes together. Yes.

Mr Hawkins: That is right.

MR WALKER: Thank you. Where Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children have changed their housing arrangements, are they still able to remain enrolled at a school if they are deemed out of zone?

Mr Matthews: Yes, they remain enrolled in their school unless they re-enrol in a new school. They remain at their school.

MR WALKER: Okay. Thank you. That is a short, sharp answer—great answer.

THE CHAIR: It gives us more time to come back on some other things. Thank you, officer.

MR WALKER: On to justice. How many social and emotional learning plans—this goes back to that other question, I assume—have been developed, how many are outstanding and how many other plans have been implemented?

Mr Hawkins: The answer at the moment in terms of social and emotional learning plans is that we have not got to the point of that construct yet. We have done the initial work in terms of looking at what supports we provide within our broader wellbeing framework for schools, and certainly around working for students whose parents are incarcerated, at what level of support we can provide.

We are finding that, on one level, a little bit tricky in terms of whether people are willing to share that data and give us that information, and what we can do. We want to make sure we provide the right supports for that student, whatever that looks like—whether it is social and emotional supports or learning supports—but getting that data through people being willing to share it has proven to be a little bit more difficult than we initially anticipated. We are working closely with JACS to be able to develop that, which is going to enable us to put the right plans and supports in place.

MR WALKER: Thank you.

THE CHAIR: Just to follow up on that, the plans are one thing, but I would expect that, for many of our students who would be needing those sorts of plans, they will be best served outside the education system by the service offers of our community controlled organisations. I know we have spoken previously, not necessarily in hearings, about the directorate strengthening its relationship, particularly with some of our more mature organisations like Gugan Gulwan and Winnunga Nimmityjah. Can you give us any information on what activity has happened in that regard over the last 12 months?

Mr Hawkins: Our network support engagement teams that we talked about earlier that provide these direct wraparound services are working with Gugan to connect those dots up. As we mentioned earlier, our network support engagement teams have allied health providers and supports. They have teaching staff within them, so there are an array of skills that exist there. They have been working closely with Gugan to make sure those connections are in place and provide supports where they are required.

We have said to the head of Gugan that, if there is an issue, they should contact us. There is a level of connection there. My understanding is that there is a connection around a range of students in place at a working level to make sure that support is provided from the network support engagement teams and in with Gugan.

MR WALKER: I want to ask one more question. We skipped a couple. Could I ask that questions 14, 15 and 26 be answered? Maybe you can answer them out of session. I want to ask a community member's question. How do you make sure that there is assistance for children with mental health issues and/or disabilities, including high-risk youth and those who are vulnerable?

Mr Hawkins: Sam looks after our student engagement area that picks up our network support engagement team, so she will be able to answer that in more detail.

Ms Seton: It is a three-pronged approach. I will spend a very short amount of time on the universals. You have heard about how we are trying to support our schools with cultural integrity. The idea is to prevent those sorts of issues from happening. If a young person feels safe, connected and welcome at their school, we know that we will have fewer students who require that support.

That said, there will be a group of students who do need more support, and it is about catching that early in the life of the problem. Every school has a student wellbeing team. That team is made up of the school psychologist and a youth support worker. High schools have a school health nurse; there will be various other teaching staff who are part of that. The idea is that, if an individual student starts to track slightly differently, if there is a behaviour change or attendance change, and something is just not quite right, it comes to that group for the initial discussion and they look at what supports that person may need. It might be about connecting them to an external point; it might be a catch-up with the school psychologist; it might be about someone who has a really good relationship grabbing them and saying, "What's going on?"

In that selected space there might be small group programs we connect them with in the

school. There will then be those individual students that will still require more. That is when we will be looking at our network student engagement team. It might be about connecting with a speech pathologist, just to see if there is something else going on for the young person. It might be about connecting the family with a school social worker and using that social worker to connect the family or that young person to other services.

MR WALKER: With respect to that question, a couple of families have disabled children and the children that are going to school have issues at home, because of the disruption in the home environment. Some of that question could be around support for those kids. They may not have any disability as such, but it is about what happens when they take homework home and they need to find that space to think. Is the school able to offer them an opportunity to stay a little bit late, and have teachers there and things like that, so that they can catch up on school, when home life—

Ms Seton: Lots of schools do that, and manage that differently. It depends on the school community. I know some schools will run lunchtime sessions where they will have a teacher available and students can pop in and check things. Other schools will run external clubs where kids can pop in, if they are stuck with homework. If there is anything done online, they can do some bits in Google where there are extra supports. If it is a young person who is presenting with some academic issues, it is around how we adjust what they are doing and catch them up on that work.

Mr Hawkins: Chair, with your indulgence, if that family wanted to contact us, we could look at the supports that exist. It could also be about a connection back in to NDIA and other providers. We are happy to make a connection with them, if that would be helpful. The only other thing I wanted to mention is that Ms Seton's network support engagement team and our psychologists have all undertaken cultural integrity training as well.

THE CHAIR: Ms Seton, I am not sure if this still sits within your responsibilities but it seems to be similar. I am worried about the kids who transition out of the youth justice system, or for whatever reason have had to disengage from one school and start at a new school. How do the teams make that as seamless as possible for kids? Also, at our last hearings we talked about the length of time missed in this transition. We talked about a couple of examples that were between eight and 12 weeks, which, if it was at the wrong time of the year, could wreck the whole year. It is a substantial amount of time. Is that something you have responsibility for?

Ms Seton: I can talk about students that are known to my teams. If they are moving from school to school, we certainly support that. One of the things we have tried to strengthen relates to our students who have perhaps been involved in youth justice and spent some time in Bimberi. We have combined our Murrumbidgee school, which is at Bimberi, with our broader flexible education offering. For those young people coming out of Bimberi, walking straight back into school the next day can be really challenging. We have set it up so that those students move into our Muliyan program, which is an offsite program, and we support them to transition back into their PEA school, if that is where they are going.

THE CHAIR: If they have an additional pathway, does it involve different people each time or is there someone that is consistent for them through that process?

Ms Seton: One of the things we have strengthened with that flexibility is that it is the one team. Jackie Vaughn, who is our principal, oversees all of those. It is the same people. If they have a relationship with someone that they have developed at Murrumbidgee—

THE CHAIR: That is what I am getting at, yes.

Ms Seton: that follows them into the next setting.

MR WALKER: Just to reiterate, can we get those three questions answered?

THE CHAIR: The ones that you have got, can we get them on notice?

Mr Hawkins: Nos 14, 15 and 16?

MR WALKER: 14, 15 and 26.

Mr Hawkins: 26; thank you.

MS CHIVERS: With respect to the response given to question 13, I was not sure whether all five parts were actually answered.

THE CHAIR: That was Ms Hamilton. I have the same question for her.

Mr Matthews: The key part of that is measurement. I appreciate that is where the question is coming from. When we think about measurement, we are primarily thinking about our school improvement journey. We use multiple sources of data to track how schools are going generally.

When it comes to individual performance development plans, they are not designed necessarily to be a measurement of somebody's performance in that metric sense, as in identifying a particular KPI as such. They are within the framework of a positive employment relationship and a supervisor sitting down with their staff to identify their own individual goals for the year, and to have that as part of the ongoing discussion between the supervisor and the employee.

It is important to say that the performance development framework in that human resources sense is not set up to be a measurable process in the way that other parts of our system are very highly focused on measuring and understanding impact.

MS CHIVERS: Are you saying that you do not know what the client's rates are, for example? That was part of the question: from where do you source your cultural information? Do they include Ngunnawal history? Who quality checks the cultural components? Are you saying that you do not have any of that information based on the response around the measurement?

Mr Matthews: We have information about compliance regarding who has performance plans, because that is part of the process that we go through. Within the school sector that process is very much embedded into the way that we operate. Everybody will have

a performance plan. In terms of the things that are included, a range of things might be included, as Ms Hamilton said before, about specific undertakings that people make as part of their own professional learning. They are part of a review process. When we do the mid-point review, we will sit down and go through those.

MS CHIVERS: So does that mean—

THE CHAIR: Can you let him finish the question?

Mr Matthews: I do not think I am going to give you the answer you are looking for, unfortunately. I am explaining that they are set up as a reflective tool between a supervisor and an employee, essentially. They are not designed to be a strict point of compliance. What is much more in that space is the school improvement planning process that is undertaken where specific commitments are undertaken. There is an external review process that occurs every five years. We have a particular tool that we use there, the NSIT tool, the national school improvement tool. We have embedded cultural integrity as part of those assessments in a way that no other state and territory has done. But we would acknowledge that we have to do more to understand how we can make proper assessments at that objective level around how schools are tracking in cultural integrity. In terms of points where we could really measure impact, that would be the highest value one, from my point of view. My colleague might have other things to add to that.

Ms Hamilton: We have asked principals, through their annual action plan and their performance plan, to have clear line of sight on cultural integrity priority. In that way we can assure you that they feature strongly. I started my PPDAs this week. I have had four, and I am four from four, so all of those four have a clear leadership priority around cultural integrity. Each of those schools has a cultural integrity action plan and they also have a really strong focus on professional learning in their school.

Interestingly, when you talk about how important it is to have classroom teachers being the ones that get that cultural integrity professional learning, at one of our schools in every week 7 they run a series for the whole school—and this is 200 staff; it is one of my biggest schools—a series of eight workshops, and every classroom teacher selects one of those workshops. That is in week 7, every term. In week 7, in term 4, they share the impact of that learning. That ranges from how they use that cultural space to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander perspectives in the curriculum and on-country learning. It is using the resources from our Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander branch and local Ngunnawal community as well. There is a real line of sight with that action plan, the PPDA and then what is happening in their cultural integrity plans.

Mr Matthews: We hear the messages about quality that are embedded in that question and about making sure, to demonstrate cultural integrity, that we are engaging with the Ngunnawal people around the local cultural context. We certainly take that on board as the intent of that question as well.

THE CHAIR: For me, as a final part, I get it that it is not a template. I get it that it is not a pass-fail mark. What I then worry about, if it is not black and white—pardon the pun—is the person who is marking the report card and what their experience and expertise is to provide that professional guidance. That may exist in some of the group

that are having that professional conversation, but my experience would be that that cultural expertise is probably not at the level we would all like, for all people that are doing that. How can that process be genuinely able to mark that report card and guide that career without that expertise at the table?

Ms Hamilton: From my perspective, I have undertaken the cultural integrity training along with my other school and executive leaders. We would be guided strongly by the continuum. As we said, each school undertakes that assessment every year. We would be talking with our principals in those five domains in the continuum around what their next steps are. We would seek advice and input and work closely with our Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander branch to ensure that that is occurring.

The other thing that happens is that there is a sharing of the expertise. We are all on this journey together, but in those network meetings there is a standing agenda item where our principals and our schools share where they are up to—and they are all at really different places—what has been successful, what is working and what is not working and all the challenges they have had. Collectively, we are all building each other’s knowledge, experience and expertise as well.

THE CHAIR: I get that; that is a network of professional development, and that is what your symposiums are for.

Ms Hamilton: Yes.

THE CHAIR: But if I am sitting on the Raiders board, someone who has only coached the under 10s is not replacing Ricky next week. The same applies here. There is a particular piece of expertise for this that needs guidance or a session for the people who are about to have those conversations with people about what we want to do to bring people along on that continuum, given that many other people who are leading that conversation are not highly proficient on the continuum themselves. That is okay; that is not a criticism. It is about how to get the best quality information for us all to move forward. If we cannot standardise it—and I understand that every school community is different and in a different place—then the way to address that is to ask: who is helping to lead that professional conversation?

Ms Hamilton: Yes, that is a good point.

THE CHAIR: You may have that within your Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander units or some of the other advisory mechanisms that you have. But just relying on people who are also on the journey together is probably not strong enough.

Ms Hamilton: Okay; I appreciate that.

Mr Matthews: Thank you for that feedback; we appreciate that.

THE CHAIR: The last question I had was around a commitment in the action plan for communication products that are focused on getting more of our community on parent and citizen associations—school boards and those sorts of things. How are you going with progressing that?

Mr Matthews: Again, it is about a future opportunity rather than a lot of progress so far.

THE CHAIR: It is a commitment in your 18-month action plan that runs out in three months, so there is not much future left.

Mr Matthews: There is not much time; I appreciate that. The government recently, in the midyear review, announced some funding around parental engagement work, including providing resources to parents and citizens associations and working with the P&C council about how to strengthen and broaden the involvement of all community in those sorts of structures. Certainly, that was one of the key mechanisms that we were looking at using to promote this particular piece of work. We are relying on our P&Cs, who are grassroots organisations themselves and need that extra support. That is why the government has put in place these additional grants which we are in the process of allocating at the moment, to determine the criteria and to get that money out. We will continue to work with the P&Cs on that and to look at how we can focus on that particular element under that program.

THE CHAIR: Do we have a sense of the level of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander representation in those groups?

Mr Matthews: It would vary considerably, obviously. With the P&Cs themselves, some schools are very active and some schools are not so active. We do not keep data on the P&Cs themselves. That is something that we can talk to them about—how they are ensuring that they are fully reflective of their community.

THE CHAIR: Certainly, a couple of components of the agreement are around not only community leadership but also connection to community. That could mean making a slight adjustment to the terms of reference for those organisations that are a little bit broader, to make sure there is an Indigenous voice if there are not Indigenous parents in the school at the time. It is not just because we have kids in the school.

One of the earlier points that I was most interested in, with the Bonython example, was that it is not just about treating our kids as if they are the issue and the problem to fix; if we educate all of our kids more thoroughly about the history of this place, we will have a better society for it. It is about having a look at how those structures can be more inclusive. Perhaps in your grants process, where they do not have that, you need to look at how you can have an opportunity for people to come and address those boards and advisory groups, people that set the directions for the schools, on why it is important and what they can possibly do, especially if they do not have that voice coming through at the moment.

There being no further questions, I appreciate that we went a little over time. Thank you for your efforts in preparing for today. We have those few follow-up questions that we did not get to and a few things that were taken on notice. With the current make-up of the Elected Body, we are in our last few months, so a timely response to those would be very helpful because we would like to have our report finished before we go.

Hearing suspended from 10.53 to 11.11 am.

Appearances:

Environment, Planning and Sustainable Development Directorate

Ponton, Mr Ben, Director-General

Brady, Dr Erin, Deputy Director-General, Land Strategy and Environment

Martin, Mr Rory, Senior Director, People and Capability

Mudford, Ms Mary, Manager, Healthy Country

Taylor-Grant, Mr Jackson, Assistant Director, Inclusion and Diversity

Le, Ms Thao, Chief Financial Officer

Foley, Mr Justin, Acting Executive Branch Manager, ACT Parks and Conservation Service

Wilden, Ms Karen, Executive Branch Manager, Engagement and Executive Support

Garofalow, Mr Frank, Chief Executive Officer, ACT Natural Resource Management

THE CHAIR: I acknowledge that Member Hughes provided a welcome to country for us to start the hearings yesterday and it was particularly great to have so much of that in Ngunnawal language. We acknowledge that this is and always has been Ngunnawal country. I note apologies from Member Monaghan, who cannot be joining us for your session. He is actually out for this week on sorry business.

As per the communication we sent out earlier, the primary focus of the questions from the Elected Body is around the progress against the whole-of-government agreement. We do, of course, ask community members, individuals, organisations, for questions, so if there are any of those, we put them in. So if something feels like it is a bit left-field, it is because community have had some input into this process, and that is really important, or they are follow-up questions from recommendations from the last hearings.

I will give you an opportunity for an opening statement if you would like. With each of the directorates where we feel there has been significant progress, particularly through our relationship, we will note that for the record as well. It would be remiss of us not to acknowledge that since our first hearings we feel that your directorate has made significant effort in working with our communities and working with the Elected Body and has achieved some quite significant progress.

Mr Ponton: Thank you.

THE CHAIR: If we are not happy, we bang on, but it is important for us to recognise that progress. We want to acknowledge at the start of these hearings a few things that have happened, particularly over the last few months, that we would want the broader community to know. These things have been in some way as a result of our relationship but particularly the work of your directorate.

Firstly, we acknowledge the approaches used during the recent bushfire seasons and, in particular, working with Ngunnawal people to protect sites and artefacts of significance, which have been well received and noted across our community. We just want to pass on our thanks for not just what was done but how it was done. In partnership with that,

I acknowledge the progress over the last couple of years in re-establishing a strong and meaningful relationship with traditional owners, and your practices in the national park have been quite significant. We really appreciate that effort.

We acknowledge that the restoration strategy, which is fresh off the printers almost, has been done in a very meaningful way and pays respect to some of those practices. We also have had a couple of briefings over the year—and this summer highlights its importance—about the use of traditional cultural burning practices in some of your areas of responsibility. These practices are noted as not just showing how the culture is a nice thing to have as part of your operations but that culture actually fundamentally can improve business outcomes if done correctly. We did want to acknowledge those things.

Mr Ponton: Thank you, chair.

THE CHAIR: Whilst I have done the opening remarks, as is our normal practice, the member, in this case, Member Keed, has the portfolio responsibilities and will ask the direct questions. As we get to the end of each section—and I believe you have got a copy of the questions—if other members have questions about the evidence provided, they will get a chance to ask them then, not at the end when trying to remember what we said. We are trying to make it a bit easier for you as well. I will give you an opportunity to make some opening remarks and then hand to Member Keed to commence with the questioning.

Mr Ponton: I do not intend to make an opening statement simply because time is limited and I would rather spend the time answering your questions. I have my team here who can hopefully answer all of the questions. If not, of course, we will, as is normal practice, take questions on notice and get the responses to you.

I would like to thank you for the acknowledgement of the work of the team over the last few years. I agree that the relationship is building and that goes a long way to Member Keed and the work that he has put in with us in building that relationship. I would just like to take the opportunity to thank Member Keed for the very collegiate, collaborative process he has taken to working with us on a range of matters over the last 12 months, but beyond.

MR KEED: The first set of questions are asked of all the directorates. Number one, what has been undertaken by the directorate to increase the number of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander senior leaders by 2021?

Mr Taylor-Grant: Currently, the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander representation is at 2.77 per cent, 22 people. This is slightly over our target of two per cent. There are several identified opportunities throughout the directorate and two of them are senior leader positions. We actually have in total, out of the 22 people, eight people within senior leader positions and higher, which is 33 per cent.

There is an important element of this, and that is positions within the land management space. Within parks and conservation, there are many positions that are inherently leadership positions that take on really strong leadership work that they do. We have the TO4 position, which is our Aboriginal fire position. They look after all cultural

burning within the ACT. They have a GSO7 that comes underneath them, which also has about 20 people that they take out on site. A really important aspect of this is identifying careers for success and pathways for success.

We have lots of intake programs. One of them is the vocational employment program. We are looking at starting an Australian school-based apprenticeship. Creating these intakes and then people seeing the pathways to success is actually a really important aspect of creating a space where we have an increase in our senior leaders. But at this stage we have eight SOG C and above out of the 22 Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people within the directorate.

Mr Ponton: If I could add to that, I mentioned at the last hearing that I was quite keen to look at opportunities for executive roles. While we talk about senior leaders in the SOG A, SOG B level, it is important that we look at opportunities for senior executives. I have asked the team to look at opportunities that might exist for working with Indigenous recruitment companies for executive roles. I know that at least on one occasion we have used an Indigenous recruitment agency in looking to fill an executive position. It was a 12 to 18-month role. Unfortunately, that did not eventuate in the appointment of an Indigenous person to that role, but we are certainly wanting to look at every opportunity to increase participation at those most senior levels.

Mr Martin: If I could just add one more thing, a couple of exciting things have happened over the last few months. One of the most exciting things is we actually finalised our innovate RAP, and within that RAP one of the key activities for us is to develop an employment and mentoring program. That is a real key in answering this question in relation to providing those pathways. It is not just a direct recruit into those positions that we have, and we do have some identified positions in those leadership roles, but it is also building the unique people up to having those skills, being mentored by other Indigenous people into those leadership positions.

One of the things that we already have in that data of our 22 current people who have identified is that we have got 27.2 per cent in supervisor roles. They are not senior leaders yet, but they are ASO6s and 5s and we are looking to those people as our pipeline cohort, who are currently in the draft of our employment and retention and mentoring program. We are looking forward to progressing that piece of work.

Key to that is that before last year we did not have an inclusion officer and Jackson is now our first inclusion officer. Part of the key role of Jackson is to help us progress the activities in the RAP and all these types of artefacts, including the employment strategy.

THE CHAIR: We have spoken about this to other directorates in hearings, but as a collective we think it is very important to value the Indigenous staff you already have within your directorate and to build pathways for them. It is excellent to hear that that is part of the strategic planning that is happening.

MR KEED: Question number two: what work has been undertaken to date in order to reduce experiences of racism and discrimination by Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people within government systems by 80 per cent by 2028? How is this to be measured?

Mr Ponton: I might just make an opening remark and then I will hand to Mr Martin to talk in more detail, but we talked about this at our last hearings. We have put quite a significant amount of effort into cultural awareness training. We think that is the first step in terms of making sure that all of our people undergo that training. It is mandatory for all of our people and Mr Martin can talk about the number of people who have been through that training and other work that we are doing in this space.

Mr Martin: It sounds like I am boasting a little bit, but I will take this opportunity. When I joined the directorate three years ago, we had seven per cent of our people trained in the cultural awareness space. Last year we increased from seven per cent to 17 per cent of our staff participating in that training and this year we have 39 per cent.

We are seeing increases, perhaps not as rapidly as we would like, but one of the key things that we have done is we have created an EPSDD essential framework that is part of the induction framework. Cultural awareness training is a key component of that essential framework. Just like learning how to use our systems and learning how to be a good public servant, the cultural safety and the cultural awareness program is something that we really value, and we can see people talking more about it.

During our RAP launch—and I think Member Keed was there—we had a fantastic representation of our whole organisation there. That is attributed to some of this cultural awareness. Helping people understand the significance of Indigenous people in our community and in our workplaces does help to reduce the instances of racism.

We have had, from my awareness, one grievance that was raised. It did not get to a point of an investigation and I think we are looking remedial action and how we have those conversations and how that occurred. I think that is probably a key thing that we are looking at.

MR KEED: With the example of the grievance that you just mentioned, how was that managed?

Mr Martin: I do not have all the details off the top of my head, but what I understand is that we did receive an awareness that an Indigenous staff member was feeling perhaps discriminated against. When we unpacked that and led it through with other conversations, we asked: “Is it discrimination or is it personal conflict? Is it ways of managers and employees not understanding how the expectations are really looked at?” It still is an ongoing matter, so I cannot really talk too much more about it. At this point there have been no formal investigations conducted.

MR KEED: No 3, how does the directorate ensure that cultural protocols to recognise Ngunnawal people as traditional custodians are followed?

Mr Ponton: Thank you, Member Keed. I might ask Mr Foley, who is the head of our parks and conservation service, to answer that question initially, and then Mr Martin may wish to add to that.

Mr Foley: The Ngunnawal committee, particularly from a parks and environment perspective, is the key example of how we are using correct protocol to engage with community. We really are recognising Ngunnawal community as traditional custodians

through this committee. We are directing all of our engagement, trying to work through that committee across our range of programs to make sure that we are getting the traditional custodian view. As we worked towards all of this we developed the partnership for park management and management of environmental resources across the ACT. There are a number of examples, I guess, that we could talk to, and I could ask Mary Mudford if she would like to come up and provide some examples, if the committee would like to take that a little further.

Ms Mudford: Sorry, Jacob. Can I just have the question again?

MR KEED: Yes. The question was: how does the directorate ensure that cultural protocols to recognise Ngunnawal people as traditional custodians are followed?

Ms Mudford: Justin has alluded to our Dhawura Ngunnawal Committee. We ensure that the committee is aware of the programs that we are developing and working through. We are also looking at co-design with the committee. We are also exploring other avenues to engage the broader Ngunnawal community through the committee as well. As part of the work of the committee we are looking at developing protocols from that committee for our engagement processes and having them identify the correct pathways to follow from a Ngunnawal perspective.

THE CHAIR: Officer Mudford, it is good to hear that Ngunnawal input is helping to formulate that, but is there a standard, a resource kit? How do your non-Indigenous staff know that that is what is expected of them and how to use those protocols properly?

Ms Mudford: One of the items that we have as part of our reconciliation action plan is to develop a series of protocols and also an engagement strategy. We are, at the moment, in discussion about how we progress both of those activities to ensure that we do them in such a way that we are getting it right from the beginning, not rushing to put something in place that could create issues along the way. The engagement strategy is quite critical to the work that we do to ensure that we are engaging with the community in the correct manner. We are involving them but also listening to them as to how they want to be engaged with and how they would like to be involved in the work that we do as a directorate.

THE CHAIR: And that is for the whole of directorate, not—

Ms Mudford: For the whole of the directorate.

Mr Martin: If I may, there are some other internal things that we are looking at. Mary has already mentioned the protocol work that we are working on together, but there are also some pragmatic things that we are doing. Recently we had the International Women's Day event out at Stromlo. There are some little, subtle things that we can do. I actually do not know what that banner is called—I am going to call it a banner—but even though it was a focus for International Women's Day, we made sure that we had our acknowledgement of country, acknowledging Ngunnawal people as the traditional custodians there, front and centre. So, while we were talking about International Women's Day and the focus was on women in fire, front and centre was our acknowledgement.

We had over 100 people attend that event. To answer your question, chair, that is some of the subtle messaging that we are reminding people of. The other thing that I would like to add is that we run a train the trainer program—we do peer training. I will not go into the mentoring 2020 program that we have, but we have about 18 trainers from across our organisation. Part of their train the trainer program is always about acknowledgement to country. All of the staff who are attending that are hearing it at least from the training point of view. So every trainer is well versed in acknowledging and recognising the country that we are working upon.

Ms Mudford: And all our documents—plans of management and all of those types of stuff—always have an acknowledgement acknowledging the Ngunnawal people as the traditional custodians.

Mr Taylor-Grant: I think, as well, it is really important to understand that we are in front of our community quite often. We try to invite our community as much as we can to any events that we are hosting. As part of that, we often make sure that our people have the opportunity to go up and meet our community—meet the Ngunnawal community—where possible. An example of this was at our reconciliation action plan launch. We tried to get as many Ngunnawal people as we could involved with that. And that was a way of really bringing people to see how the interactions happen, to meet the community, put a face to what is often a sign or an acknowledgement. I think that is something that, as a directorate, we have done quite well over the years, and we are trying to improve and grow. Trying to put a face to an acknowledgement is a really important aspect of making sure people understand why their protocols are important, not just that they have to follow certain protocols. That is a really important aspect.

Ms Mudford: Also, as—

THE CHAIR: Sorry, we have to keep moving. I think we have got the fact that you have some things embedded. I am conscious that I have side-tracked us already, and of the time. I will have to be a bit more disciplined with myself to help you as well.

Ms Mudford: That is fine.

MR KEED: No 4, how does the directorate change policies and programs to allocate funding to address the needs of the growing Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander population?

Mr Ponton: Thank you, Member Keed. I will make some initial remarks and then I will hand to Dr Brady to comment further on this one. In terms of the agreement and the actions that are relevant to the directorate, that comes to our senior executive group, which is me, the chief operating officer and the two deputies. There is a reason I am mentioning this: we do that so we can keep track of where things are in terms of our compliance with meeting our obligations under that agreement. Doing that then allows us, as we develop our budget bids or we review policy, to think about how we might be able to incorporate Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander considerations into that work.

To answer the question, we always have that overlay in all the work that we do. We do try to think about this in terms of budget bids. I am going to ask Dr Brady to talk specifically about the planning review that was recently announced. It was first

announced in 2019. We have done some background work in relation to that, and we are moving to the more substantive body of work in 2020. We are looking not only at Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander input but at how we reflect that culture in our planning system. That has been at the forefront of mind. So we have been working through how we can do that and even embed that in the planning legislation. That is not traditionally done in legislation but we see that, from a planning perspective and the work of the portfolio, it is not just about parks and conservation and country; it is about the urban environment as well. And that is just as important to reflect culture and community. I will ask Dr Brady to talk a bit more about that.

Dr Brady: As Mr Ponton has said, there are actually a range of areas in my portfolio area as well. We certainly look at policies and programs. I will probably leave parks and conservation for a bit because I think we have talked a bit about that and we might talk about it a bit more. In environment and heritage there are certainly areas that we focus on—particularly on heritage and awareness of some of the issues that have happened with scar trees recently. We have revised legislation more recently to assist with how we can do enforcement and try to stop those sorts of unfortunate events occurring in the future.

That is one example in another area. But in the planning area, as Mr Ponton was talking about, one of the things that we found in the planning review, having looked through the main planning legislation, was that our Planning and Development Act does not necessarily acknowledge Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people and culture in a similar way to other planning legislation in other jurisdictions. So we know that that is a gap that we need to focus on. We have already flagged that as something that we will be doing as part of the reform work that follows from the review.

That flows through, then, as Mr Ponton was saying, into more detailed planning and how we pick up what it is in the Heritage Act and cultural considerations in urban areas. So from a policy and legislation perspective that is a focus for us in the review and reform work we are doing over the next year. We have also been doing engagement, but I might leave that because I think there might be other questions that focus a bit more on engagement. But those are some of the things around policies and legislation that we have consciously been making some shifts in and that we will be working on.

MR KEED: Number 5, how many community events have been delivered by your directorate and who participated? Who was responsible for the delivery and management of the events, and what is your annual budget for the events?

Mr Ponton: I might ask Ms Wilden to talk about some of the engagement activities. I know this question is broader than the engagement activities, but the reason I want Ms Wilden to answer is talking a little bit about her budget item, because the way that we are looking at this is we do not necessarily set aside X dollars for this type of activity. What we do is consider for each program, each line area, each budget bid, how we might be able to fund that. It is done on a bespoke basis rather than just having a bucket of money that goes towards this. We really do try to think about the detail.

THE CHAIR: Perhaps what might help with the answer is if I clarify by saying we are actually asking about what has actually been spent. We just want to know what has actually happened.

Mr Ponton: In terms of the actual number, I do not have that at hand. We could take that on notice and move on to the next question or we could talk a little bit more about what we are doing. I am in your hands. I do not think anyone would have the specific number.

Ms Le: As of end of January we have spent about \$1,000 on mutualising Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander enterprises. We have still got another quarter of the year to go and there are some big major projects and procurement that is underway currently, so that number would be boosted significantly.

Mr Ponton: I think we are delving into question 7, but my apologies.

THE CHAIR: There is a question later that that just answered on the procurement.

Mr Ponton: In terms of these specific detail for each part of that question, we can take that on notice. We do have the answers, but not just at hand.

THE CHAIR: Do you have anything planned for the rest of this financial year, for example?

Ms Wilden: The answer is probably not quite specific as you would like because the approach that we take, particularly when we are talking about community engagement and not engagement with staff through the RAP—

THE CHAIR: Not engagement, just events.

Ms Wilden: It will depend on what is the actual engagement subject. For example, with the planning review we have an individual engagement plan for Aboriginals and Torres Strait Islanders as a subset of our overall engagement plan. We work with Ms Mudford and the Indigenous community through the council that has been set up. We actually are looking for specific opportunities, so we designed two events for specific engagement from September last year. We also specifically met Ngunnawal representatives when we did a big workshop on the planning review.

That is because you have to do it fit for purpose, so we are not just going to do an event because we can tick a box for you. We actually try to work out what is it that would be of interest to the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community and, more specifically, the Ngunnawal community. Who are the people that we need to talk to? How would they like to be engaged? The planning review was an example of how we go in depth particularly on those big policy reforms to understand what of the planning review is the Ngunnawal community interested in and the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community more specifically.

We have had a couple of goes. We have not been successful so we are going back again now to talk to the Ngunnawal committee about what is the next way we can try to get feedback from the Ngunnawal community about what matters to you as we go forward with planning, not just for looking after your parks but for the urban areas. Basically, fit for purpose, we design it as it comes on board. We work closely with the relevant people and also keep the board and OATSIA informed of what we are doing along the

way.

Mr Ponton: That is not just in relation to engagement, but there are also events, separate to engagement activities that the organisation holds. There is the Tidbinbilla open day, there is the Heritage Festival and we look to engage through those events as well.

Ms Wilden: Yes, and so we also work with people in capability but very close with parks and conservation as they have got regular events coming up in their calendar, what are the opportunities for us to highlight Ngunnawal and ATSI more broadly.

MR KEED: Going to question 7, how many contracts and tenders have been awarded to ACT Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander businesses?

Ms Le: So far, at the end of January, we awarded 20 to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander businesses. As I mentioned before, that was obviously the end of January. We do have some significant procurement between February and the end of June right now in progress, so obviously that number will increase.

Mr Ponton: Just on that, beyond mid-year, we, as a senior executive group, do monitor this. We have been concerned about achieving our targets in that respect. That is something that is been closely monitored by not only our senior executive group but by the next layer down, which is called our executive management board. That is the group that manages the organisation, so this is something we are monitoring very closely and Ms Le is reporting back to us on a regular basis.

Ms Le: As part of that, we are actively working with the relevant business line. Part of their program and their budget initiative, in terms of how we can help with the procurement design for utilising the consulting panel, is going directly to a Yass enterprise to utilise.

MR KEED: Question 8: were the directorate's Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander staff involved in the development of your directorate's action plan under the agreement?

Mr Ponton: I think the short answer is yes, but I might ask Mr Martin to expand on that.

Mr Martin: I think I can just say yes. Ms Mudford, would you like to say how that came about?

Ms Mudford: Yes, there was a collective of staff that Mr Walker pulled together to work on the action plan and that included Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander staff but also non-Indigenous staff from PCS environment division, the directorate as a whole.

MR KEED: The next set of questions are regarding the written invitations from the 2019 hearings. Question number 9, recommendation number 14: has the directorate developed and implemented an Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community engagement plan in line with the Elected Body's protocols for working with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples? If not, why not?

Mr Ponton: Ms Wilden has touched on this in her previous answer, so it may be very

similar.

Ms Wilden: I was going to say, I think I have already answered the question, that it is basically fit for purpose and design and full consultation, not just with Ngunnawal members of staff but also where they can reach into the broader community. We take their advice as we do each individual engagement design.

MR KEED: Question number 10, recommendation number 15: has the directorate worked with Ngunnawal community groups and organisations to standardise and better communicate licensing arrangements for cultural tourism activities in the territory's national parks? What has been the outcome?

Mr Foley: That is work that we will be undertaking in the year ahead. A nature-based tourism strategy was released by VisitCanberra and the directorate is a significant contributor to that strategy. The work we want to be doing in the next year is to make sure that a commercial framework is in place not only to make it easier for Indigenous businesses to participate but also we would like to be in a position to have a capacity building component to that, so we actually make entry as smooth as possible. At an aspirational level, that is an area we will be focusing on this year, so developing the commercial framework and making sure we are creating the capacity there by building capacity of local businesses.

Another area of work that we are doing that complements this—and I have to get the language right—effectively we are making sure that we are understanding our values in the park. We are making sure that we are appropriately protecting the critical values, cultural values, so that we can actually have Indigenous businesses participating and communicating to the broader community and to the tourism sector those critical values, so they are protected into the future.

We are building the commercial framework and it is our intention to build the framework to work with community to make sure we can build capacity. We are also making sure, through our landscape classification system that we are developing, that we are very clear and prioritising work to make sure the critical cultural values are maintained. They are there to support that industry that we are looking to build.

THE CHAIR: Officer Foley, one of the drivers behind this question was to ensure that, particularly for cultural-based activities in the park, to get that licence or that form of accreditation now that you have a functioning traditional owners' group, people get that cultural authority. That is where that question is coming from, to make sure that if it is claiming to be a cultural operation in the park, it has the Ngunnawal stamp of approval. Will that be part of the process?

Mr Foley: Absolutely. Anything we do in the parks and environment space will be working with the committee to make sure that we are observing protocols, making sure that we are supporting businesses that are speaking and have the authority to speak to country. We develop that program.

THE CHAIR: Thank you.

MR KEED: With respect to questions regarding the action plans, No 11 is: what

strategies has the directorate undertaken to engage Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander youth in the implementation of the ACT planning strategy?

Mr Ponton: In answering this question I will focus on one particular area. With the planning strategy there are quite a number of actions. One of the key ones relates to the planning review that we talked about earlier. I will ask Ms Mudford to come to the table, and possibly Ms Wilden as well. Mary is the lead in relation to our action against this particular item. She has been working with Ms Wilden and, in turn, the planning policy team to respond to this.

Work has been done in terms of ensuring that we have youth representatives on the Dhawura Ngunnawal Committee. Of course, that is not the only way that we want to engage with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people, and certainly with young people. I will ask Ms Mudford to talk a little bit more about that side of what we have been doing, and Ms Wilden will talk more broadly about what we are doing to engage with young people and, in particular, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander young people.

Ms Mudford: Are we focusing on the planning strategy in particular?

THE CHAIR: In particular, and it goes to an earlier question as well. It is twofold. One is around the opportunity for leadership development for our young people. Also, under 24s represent more than half of our population, so that is a critical group to factor into any planning. It is a two-pronged—

Ms Mudford: As Mr Ponton indicated, we do have youth membership on the Dhawura Ngunnawal Committee. They will be engaged in the planning review as well. I am currently investigating establishing a youth group for 12 to 17-year-olds. The Ngunnawal community have established a youth council—the United Ngunnawal Youth Council—and that covers the 18 to 34 age bracket.

At the moment I am focusing on establishing a 12 to 17-year-old group, so that we can try and pick up in particular that bracket between 12 and 17 years old, for them to have input into that. I am working with Carly Freeman on the kickstart program and identifying ways that we can establish that group successfully. In terms of engaging youth in the planning strategy, Karen, the comms team and I will look at how we can engage youth in the planning conversation in particular. We recognise that young people have views around the planning system as well. We do want to capture their views.

Ms Wilden: Following on from that, you could almost replace the planning strategy with the planning review, because ultimately the planning review is looking at what we need to do to actually implement the strategy. One of the things that we have been talking with Mary about is whether or not we need to have more individual, one-on-one and interactive aspects. I think we were talking about art as a form of expression. That is one of the things that we are investigating in terms of how we present a conversation with youth on something that most people find boring. Firstly, how do we get them there and, secondly, how do we provide different ways in which they can represent what their views are?

We find that engaging with youth more broadly is a really difficult task for us when it comes to planning, because they do not see how it relates to them. How we then involve Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander youth is a really big challenge for us, and it is something we are still working through. We tried to reach out through the various youth councils and contacts that we have. My answer to you is that we are still trying to find a way to present something that connects and that makes people want to come—in particular, Indigenous youth. That is still a work in progress for us.

The encouraging thing is that this review, and the implementation of the planning strategy, is not just a matter of “six months or you will miss it”. We have major engagement that we can be designing for the next stages, which will not be happening until next year. It may well be that we are in a better position to answer that question at next year’s ATSIIEB hearings.

Ms Mudford: We are about to engage in a conversation with the youth membership on the Dhawura Ngunnawal Committee, to seek their advice about how we develop and design those engagements.

THE CHAIR: In your action plan, of the five commitments in the first 18 months around developing young people’s skills and leadership, how many of those are on track to be finished?

Ms Mudford: Off the top of my head, I could not give you a final number.

THE CHAIR: Could you come back to us on that?

Ms Mudford: I will take that on notice.

MR KEED: Question No 12: what policies and legislation have been identified to meet the aspirations that have been raised by the Dhawura council?

Mr Ponton: I will ask Ms Mudford to talk to this item. The co-chair, Ian Walker, who ordinarily would have responded to this item, unfortunately could not be with us today. I do know that there has been discussion around the heritage legislation. In terms of the detail of that, I might pass to Ms Mudford.

Ms Mudford: The heritage legislation has been a topic of discussion for the committee. They have just opened that discussion with Ian. We need a little bit of time to work out how we are going to progress that request. In terms of other legislation, I can advise that, with the Fisheries Act review that occurred from 2017 to 2019, as part of that act there has been a change to the Nature Conservation Act that requires the conservator role to develop a cultural resource management plan in partnership with the Ngunnawal community. We are looking at the different legislation and how we can influence and change the legislation to better reflect the cultural values of the Ngunnawal people.

MR KEED: We might skip the next one; it has already been covered. No 14: what strategies has the directorate identified to adopt Aboriginal bushfire prevention methods?

Mr Foley: We have two tiers, effectively. We have an active cultural element to the

existing bushfire operation plan. What we are looking to do is to develop a more mature understanding of the aspirations of the Ngunnawal community with respect to burning. I will clarify that because there is a cultural component which can assist in managing the risk of bushfire; then there is an element of direct bushfire risk management as well.

At the moment we are starting a conversation around community aspirations for burning, including those two key elements in particular. That is underway, but there is a long way to go for us to truly understand the techniques as well as the aspirations of community regarding burning. But there is definitely a strong commitment to develop this understanding and have a shared approach to burning as we go forward.

MR KEED: From these conversations, will you be able to identify barriers or restrictions preventing the adoption of these practices?

Mr Foley: I think that the practices will be regionally specific, so it is really important that we come to terms with the strategies that traditionally have been employed and that we understand how we would best work with community to implement those. It is a matter of talking to community, making sure we are really clear about, as I say, the aspirations of the community in relation to burning, and being able to translate that into both a cultural context and risk reduction. With the season we have just been through, the summer and the bushfire season, we are all very keen to explore how we can do things better and how we can work better with community.

MR KEED: No 17: what joint ventures has the directorate engaged in and/or developed in collaboration with the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community? If none, why?

Mr Ponton: I might ask Frank Garofalow to come to the table to talk to this item.

Mr Garofalow: We are working quite closely with the Aboriginal community on a range of projects and activities. The committee would be well aware of the kickstart program. We are working with a range of providers on a few different aspects of the kickstart program. There is an element of it which is called culture talks, where we are working with Aboriginal businesses to engage with ex-detainees to reintegrate them back into the community, and to use culture to assist with that process.

We also have the future leaders program, which has an element of bringing in 15 to 30-year-old Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people, along with some older mentor Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people, and providing access to training and skill development. We are using almost exclusively Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander businesses to provide those services.

With the recent native plant use forum, again, we used almost exclusively Aboriginal businesses to provide those services. A lot of these things are done jointly. We tend to have a steering committee where we work up the ideas and come up with the way forward. For example, with the future leaders program, we are looking to co-design that program. We ran it last year and it was quite successful. With the one going forward that we are about to launch, we are looking to co-design that with the members that have signed up for it.

MR KEED: Okay. We will go to question 21.

Mr Garofalow: Thank you.

MR KEED: What are two outcomes that the planning and sustainable development portfolios have done that contribute to the ACT Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander agreement?

Mr Ponton: I am going to look to my colleagues. Mary, perhaps? There are a number of actions and a number of leads. We might start with Mary.

Ms Mudford: In terms of the agreement, one of the actions that we have taken is to establish the Dhawura Ngunnawal Committee and the leadership in this area.

THE CHAIR: Are they working across planning and development as well?

Ms Mudford: Sorry?

THE CHAIR: The reason for this question is that we have had lots of good information about what is happening in the environment in particular. We want to have an opportunity to hear what the rest of the directorate is doing to contribute.

Mr Ponton: We have touched on part of that, in terms of the work we are doing in the planning review. That touches on a number of the actions. I have, here in front of me, against all of the identified actions for the directorate, an update. I wonder whether it might be more useful if I just provide that directly to the secretariat.

THE CHAIR: That will be helpful.

Mr Ponton: It is quite comprehensive, and it has an update on what we have done, what we have completed or what we are hoping to complete for all of the actions.

THE CHAIR: Thank you. We are just conscious that, because we have such an interest in what is happening on country, we want to make sure that we are given an understanding of what is happening across the broad directorate as well.

Mr Ponton: Yes. Certainly the response that I will provide to you covers all aspects of the portfolio.

THE CHAIR: Excellent.

MR KEED: Question No 22: what is the directorate's strategy to provide all children in ACT primary schools the opportunity for Ngunnawal on-country cultural learning? What does that implementation model look like?

Ms Mudford: I am happy to answer that one, if you like?

Mr Ponton: Thank you, Mary.

Ms Mudford: Currently within the parks and conservation service we have the visitor

and volunteer programs. Part of their role is developing an education program, which is currently in development. That is looking at how we can provide activities across the range of PCS activities, including cultural activities, to ensure that we are providing activities through which students can learn about culture on our parks.

THE CHAIR: That is a specific action item in your 18-month plan. I am just wondering what work you have done, for example, with the Education Directorate to make sure the students are coming?

Ms Mudford: Can I take that one on notice, please? Thank you.

MR KEED: Question No 23: what actions has the directorate implemented in order for cultural change to reduce some of the barriers to government procurement encountered by Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander enterprises?

Mr Ponton: I will ask Ms Le. Do you want the question again?

Ms Le: Yes, please. Can I have the question again, please?

MR KEED: Yes. Question No 23: what actions has the directorate implemented in order for cultural change to reduce some of the barriers to government procurement encountered by Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander enterprises?

Ms Le: As mentioned previously, we track it on a monthly basis. We work really proactively with our business area to encourage the use of ATSIIEB enterprises, obviously through the procurement panel. When we have a budget initiative, from day one we work with the various line areas to see where we can assist, with what types of procurement we can assist, and how they can utilise the ATSIIEB enterprise procurement panel.

Mr Ponton: The key thing is always making sure that this is front of mind for all of our people.

Ms Le: Yes.

Mr Ponton: We use the COO stream to constantly reinforce that this is something they need to be thinking about. Doing that helps to reduce those barriers because, as people think about this, they will be going and looking for opportunities.

THE CHAIR: Officer Foley spoke a few minutes ago about the commercialisation strategy. Will that include having a look at what is available now or not, and how we help to build that component of our business sector? Will it identify what the opportunities are so that we can then ask, "Do we have a business or not?"

Mr Foley: The commercial framework will definitely be considering the needs of community and community businesses. It is really important that we are actually building a framework that can allow tourism across all of the values in the parks. It is critical that we address that.

THE CHAIR: Thank you.

MR KEED: No 25: what progress has been made to establish an Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander business incubator?

Mr Ponton: Is that you, Mary? Thank you.

Ms Mudford: In terms of the business incubator, we are currently exploring and looking at other business incubators that have already been established to identify how we can most effectively establish a business incubator within the directorate. We really want to see the business incubator succeed, so we want to do it right, right from the beginning. So we are, at the moment, investigating how we can best establish that by looking at existing models.

THE CHAIR: In the 14 months since the agreement was signed, which is when this was put into the action items, what activity has been undertaken to progress it?

Ms Mudford: Just the investigation of what models are out there and how we can best implement those. We are only in the early stages of investigating how we establish that incubator.

THE CHAIR: It is three months until these action items need to be completed. That is the commitment in these action plans. Are you going to make that time frame?

Ms Mudford: I will take that on notice, please.

MR KEED: Question No 27: what actions within the ACT infrastructure plan has the directorate implemented incorporating Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander culture?

Mr Ponton: I feel as though we have done reasonably well. I am going to have to admit that this is one that is not front of mind for me. I do not know whether my colleague Dr Brady can answer this. We may have to take this one on notice, unfortunately.

Dr Brady: Again, we will take that on notice.

MR KEED: Last question, No 28: how is the directorate supporting Justice and Community Services in programs involving Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander detainees, and how are you measuring the outcomes?

Mr Garofalow: Thank you. We have a number of programs that we are working with, mostly through the kickstart program. We have, as I mentioned earlier, the cultural talks program, which is assisting to fund local Aboriginal businesses to work with ex-detainees to assist with on-country work, reintegration and some social elements, to again work with them. We are also running programs in the youth justice space in terms of cultural immersion programs to try to assist those students. And then there are also the preventative activities of the kickstart program, which is really around targeting early intervention for at-risk youth within the high school age group to try to assist them to get back on track if they are starting to drift away. Again, it is using on-country types of activities and assisting them to get some qualifications towards natural land management-type activities. Those are a few things. We are also continuing to look for other opportunities where we can continue to engage. We think that culture talks

program actually has a lot of opportunity to grow.

MR KEED: Thank you.

THE CHAIR: That is the formal questions that we have. I just need to check with members if they have any follow-up questions. I know Member McGrady does, so I might start with her.

MS McGRADY: This might be a question for Mary, if she would like to come back. She spoke a little bit about the Dhawura—

Ms Mudford: The Dhawura Ngunnawal Committee.

MS McGRADY: Yes, sorry, the youth council. I am just wondering, does that youth council just consist of Ngunnawal youth or all—

Ms Mudford: The one I mentioned was the United Ngunnawal Youth Council. That has only recently been established, and it is for Ngunnawal youth.

MS McGRADY: Okay. The specific age groups that you said you were going to target, will that just include input from Ngunnawal youth in those age groups?

Ms Mudford: We are looking at Ngunnawal and other Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander youth.

MS McGRADY: Thank you.

MS CHIVERS: I just have a follow-up question in relation to question 28. I was not quite sure from the response how you are actually measuring the outcomes. You talked a lot about the specific programs and what you are doing, but I just wanted to know how you are actually measuring the outcomes.

Mr Garofalow: Were you asking how we measure the success of it?

MS CHIVERS: How are you actually measuring the outcomes in relation to all of those programs that you spoke about and how are you supporting JACS? How do you actually measure the outcomes?

THE CHAIR: What might be helpful is: what we are trying to get at is not just how busy we have been but what difference it has it made.

Mr Garofalow: I appreciate that. That is a challenging and great question. I would say the main way—for a lot of these programs that are relatively early, particularly that cultural talks program—that we measure success is by attendance. It seems to be that in that program we are getting engagement. That program started out as a one-day-a-week program and the interest was so high that it is now four days a week.

THE CHAIR: Is that for four different groups?

Mr Garofalow: Initially it was just four women and then it expanded to be men as well.

We have got separate programs for men and women, but initially it was almost like a yarnning circle where women would get together and share stories that support each other. But then it grew quite dramatically from there because obviously there was a need there and there was an interest there.

That program is in the early stages, so it is almost during the establishment phase. As I said, attendance is how we are measuring success to some extent. But I think once it really gets up and running, we will be in a better position to have more formal measurements around it.

With the kickstart program, attendance is part of it, but it is really around attainment and we are looking for students who are continuing their education and are able to attain qualifications. We would like to see a reduction in dropout rates and those sorts of things. Those are the kind of measures we use. I apologise that I do not have the numbers in front of me, but that is how we measure those kinds of programs.

MRS HUGHES: I am interested in knowing a little bit more about racism and how it is addressed within the directorate, particularly before it becomes a formal grievance. I am interested in knowing how many staff may have raised concerns, rather than a formal grievance and what happens around that.

Mr Martin: I can talk generally about the process. I suppose it goes back to being a values-based organisation and part of our induction suite in the essentials framework about the values and behaviours and the code of conduct. I think that is probably where it starts in the education space.

In relation to specifics, I probably need to take that one on notice and give you a better response than off the top of my head. But essentially any type of racism against any individual is not tolerated. I use the word “indoctrinated”, but perhaps that is too strong. But that is—

THE CHAIR: It might be the standard that you set?

Mr Martin: That is the standard, that there is no tolerance. I think that goes into our management training, so we focused very heavily in the last 12 months specifically on our management cohort and giving them good business acumen skills but also understanding what it is to be a public servant and a decent human being. That is some of the understanding that we have tried to underpin throughout the management cohort. We have had about 96 managers participate in that program, and it is also about being on the same page. There is some robust discussion.

The other thing that we do have that is quite important piece of our program is not only do we offer cultural awareness training to all of our staff as a management component, but if you become a manager we also have a component called supporting Indigenous employees in the workplace. That is a specific program targeted towards managers. It is not only open to those who may manage an Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander employee but we definitely strongly encourage those managers to come along and understand some of the nuances and how to work more effectively together. Those are the two pieces from an HR perspective that we have been focusing on. I am happy to think about this back at the office and provide you some more information.

MRS HUGHES: I am also interested in, if it is in those managers' performance management plans, how is it measured?

Mr Martin: Yes.

THE CHAIR: I have a follow-up question in the racism space, and it is not to do with your people's actions to each other, but given the number of people who visit the places that you manage, how do you record and take action if, for example, someone decides to spray-paint racist remarks in some part of the park? How is that managed?

For example, I remember when our welcome to Ngunnawal country signs were first put up at our borders that we spent \$300,000 to \$400,000 that year removing graffiti and then had to change the signs. Is there a bit of a standard around when we see it, how quickly we deal with it so that it is then not in the face of, firstly, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people in particular but, secondly, in front of anybody?

Mr Martin: We do act straight away. Obviously, if we have got evidence it will be treated as a criminal offence. There is not a lot more we can really say than that we move very quickly and we are aware of the sensitivity.

THE CHAIR: Do you have a sense of how often it occurs?

Mr Martin: I could not, off the top of my head, give you that, but I am happy to come back to you.

THE CHAIR: If you could follow up, again, for us, it is a reflection of what we are all trying to address together, rather than a reflection on anything that you guys do or do not do. But it is important for us to be able to say to people, "The reason that this is on the agenda is because it happens, it happens often and it happens publicly."

The last question I have is separate to that. You have talked about the work you do with the caring country group and getting Ngunnawal engagement, which is excellent. I am interested to know how broadly that group is utilised by the directorate, or is it just for a very specific team or unit? Does the whole directorate basically have a relationship with and is influenced by them, or is it at the moment discrete with an opportunity to grow?

Mr Ponton: It is growing, I think is the short answer. As was mentioned earlier, in terms of the planning policy space, we are wanting to engage with that group in the planning policy. We are thinking about all the opportunities. Traditionally, as you have noted, because of the parks that has been a lot of focus in terms of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people. We are doing all that we can to broaden it beyond that. All aspects ultimately will be engaging with that.

THE CHAIR: It just seems like an obvious piece of low-hanging fruit. Does the heritage unit engage with them?

Mr Ponton: Yes. I was going to say yes confidently, but I thought I had better check first. Yes.

MS CHIVERS: I have one more question. While I absolutely agree that the work that we have spoken about from the children's and young persons' perspective around the United Ngunnawal Youth Council is very important, it is just more around what you are actually doing for all Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people in that space and how you are getting them involved from an environment and planning perspective as well.

Ms Mudford: For any programs that we develop we look at the whole spectrum; it is not just focusing on Ngunnawal people. Our main focus for Ngunnawal people is when it is to do with making decisions around country. For all our activities and programs that we develop it is across the whole board; it is not just specific to Ngunnawal people.

MS CHIVERS: Excellent.

THE CHAIR: you have taken a number of questions on notice. Please be mindful that this is the last hearing for this group of the Elected Body. Our terms finish at the end of the financial year and our elections are in July, so it would be really helpful for us to be able to finalise our report and recommendations from these hearings while we still have a role to play with this. If we could get those questions on notice back as quickly as possible, we would really appreciate that.

Mr Ponton: Certainly.

THE CHAIR: We thank you for your time today and, again, acknowledge how far the directorate has come, particularly over the last few years, and thank you for that.

Mr Ponton: Thank you. Again, can I just say to Member Keed, thank you. He has certainly kept us to account. We appreciate that.

THE CHAIR: That is his job. Thank you.

Short suspension.

Appearances:

Transport Canberra and City Services Directorate

Playford, Ms Alison, Director-General

Crowe, Ms Petra, Executive Branch Manager, People and Capability

McGlenn, Mr Ian, Executive Branch Manager, Bus Operations

Little, Ms Vanessa, Executive Branch Manager, Libraries ACT

Jordan, Mr Craig, Executive Group Manager, Territory and Business Services

Oldfield, Ms Meghan, Executive Group Manager, Infrastructure Delivery and
Waste

Alegria, Mr Stephen, Executive Branch Manager, City Presentation

THE CHAIR: We will resume. I would like to thank the director-general and members of the Transport Canberra and City Services group for joining us today. We started yesterday with a more formal welcome to country, and particularly in language, having the benefit of Member Hughes being with us. Given that each section is its own standalone event, in a way, I acknowledge that this is and always has been Ngunnawal country.

I pass on apologies from Member Monaghan, who is away on sorry business and who will not be joining us this week, but he has helped in the preparation of questions. As usual, we have taken in community questions as well. Whilst predominantly these questions—and you have had an opportunity, I understand, to have a look at them—relate to our agreement and the action plans, some of the questions that are not part of that will be asked because they have come from organisations or individuals who wanted us to ask these. I am not sure that your directorate has too many of those. A couple of the other directorates have quite a few; when they have looked at their list, they have thought, “What does that mean?”

Ms Playford: We are happy to answer all of the questions.

THE CHAIR: Given that we are getting towards the end of our term, and we have had a few years to work with each of the directorates in this iteration of the Elected Body, we wanted to reflect on a few things that we thought, through our relationships, have gone well. I will give you a chance, director-general, to make any opening comments that you might want to make. As is our normal practice, Member McGrady, whose portfolio area this is, will lead the questioning. At the end of each section, time permitting, there may be additional questions from members.

Firstly, it would be remiss of me not to acknowledge how well the work and refurbishments at Boomanulla Oval went. We have talked about that previously. A couple of other directorates helped as well. I refer in particular to the way in which the refurbishments were done and the respect that was given to the advice from community members. In fact, looking around on the opening day, the pride that your staff had in doing that with us was a really strong example of partnership, reconciliation and impact all rolled into one, and it was something that we all felt a great deal of pride about.

I also acknowledge the changes to bus routes which we have talked about from time to time. Taking into consideration not just the financial needs of the bus network, which I am sure are incredibly important, I am reflecting on our need to access things like our

health service and our youth service, and for families to be able to visit the AMC in an appropriate way. We want to acknowledge that that was taken into account and some changes have been made to reflect that.

From the first hearings to now, even then I made the comment that I had no idea how much libraries do in our community, let alone as an opportunity to tell good stories. We spend a lot of time talking about what is difficult between all of us, but the libraries find such a good way of truth telling and giving lots of people a voice. With libraries, it sounds a bit ironic to talk about giving people a voice, but they really do; so we are grateful for that.

There is also the opportunity to have some influence around the proposed changes to how the cemeteries will work, regarding re-using sites. I note how respectful people have been in taking into account what cultural components might need to be incorporated for not just funeral services but burials as well. We want to acknowledge that diversity. Sometimes our community—as was the case for us, before we started—are not quite aware of how closely some of the things that you do relate to what we are after. I want to acknowledge that.

I will now give you an opportunity to make some opening remarks.

Ms Playford: Yes, I do have a very short opening statement. I would like to start by acknowledging, on behalf of the directorate, that we are meeting on the lands of the traditional custodians, the Ngunnawal people, and pay my respect to elders past, present and future. I acknowledge and respect their continuing culture and their contribution to the life of this city and this region. I would particularly like to acknowledge the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people and staff who are with us today.

I am very pleased to appear before the Elected Body for the first time in my capacity as Director-General of Transport Canberra and City Services, as opposed to the Justice and Community Safety portfolio. I would like to recognise the thanks you have given. It was very exciting for me, in my first week in the directorate, to have the honour to be the director-general who was getting all of the praise heaped on me for the opening of Boomanulla. I really felt the pride that day and it made me really excited about the career change that I had made, and what opportunities there would be in a different way to make a contribution, compared to the contribution I had been trying to make in the justice sector, and to bring across some of those learnings. I am very proud of the staff and what they do, and thank you for the acknowledgements.

The directorate have been undertaking a range of activities to develop positive relationships with the Canberra Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community, including improving our employment and retention of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people. We embrace the role that Aboriginal culture should play in land management, which is a particular focus of our directorate. In recognition of this we have recently created and filled an identified position within our city presentation team responsible for maintenance and land management of urban open space and public facilities across the city.

I would like to acknowledge that we are very fortunate that Jacob Keed, who is one of the Elected Body members, applied for and won that position on merit and is already

making a considerable difference to business as usual in that part of our directorate. In a few short months he has engaged with all parts of the team to identify where Aboriginal knowledge and culture can be better integrated into our on-the-ground operations. He is working for better engagement with the Indigenous street artists, preparing guidelines to help teams engaging with Indigenous business and assisting with Aboriginal input into some play space strategies that we are developing and helping to improve access to heritage information.

It has been very encouraging to see the positive response to this new role from staff within the city presentation team and the enthusiasm to integrate different Indigenous perspectives, knowledge and culture into operations. That has been a fairly significant recent change that the directorate has made.

Libraries ACT, as you have acknowledged, do a range of things. Our coordinator regularly visits the Grannies Group and informally teaches them digital literacy. For NAIDOC in the North, the library provides its rooms and spaces for free, for groups to celebrate. Libraries also provide giggle and wiggle, story time and parent education about literacy to a range of organisations like Tjillari Justice, Koori preschools, Gudan Gulwan, young mums and the child and family centres.

The directorate's commitment to the agreement is primarily reflected in our most recent reconciliation action plan, which is a stretch plan that has been developed by a committee which represents staff from right across the directorate. I would like to acknowledge the work of the co-chairs of the committee, Jacob Keed and Meghan Oldfield. Megan is also our executive champion within the directorate. I would also like to acknowledge the efforts of Toni Hicks, our inclusion officer.

We have a number of staff here today and we are very happy to answer your questions. We have done, as I said, a range of projects that are still in some ways underway, including the Boomanulla Oval, increasing designated positions and our detainee employment programs that we are trying to foster.

THE CHAIR: Thank you, director-general. For the benefit of officers who will give evidence, and being mindful that we are running quite late already, could people just answer the question that has been given. We are particularly interested in impacts rather than activity, with respect to those things. That is why we started with an acknowledgement of things that are going really well. The questions are not necessarily a reflection of everything that is happening but they are things that we want more information on.

Ms Playford: Sure.

THE CHAIR: Member McGrady will now ask questions.

MS McGRADY: These are questions across all directorates; in particular, what has been undertaken by the directorate to increase the number of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander senior leaders by 2021?

Ms Crowe: In the interests of time, in my response I may be able to address questions 6, 25, 27 and 30, potentially.

TCCS has taken a “growing our own” approach by using entry-level programs—for example, our graduates, traineeships and the Australian school apprenticeship program. We are also exploring a cadetship entry-level program that will target younger people. We have an annual scholarship of \$6,000 that is directly invested into the leadership of an Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander person. We are running that for the second time this year, and one of our candidates has recently commenced in that program.

The scholarship aims to build leadership development and capacity in the individual. It has a focus that draws on knowledge across commonwealth, private and ACT government sectors. It includes modules over 10 days. The participants hear from industry experts as well as executive across both the commonwealth and ACT government landscape. They also receive personal coaching sessions so that they can focus on areas where they may wish to build upon their strengths and develop new skills to progress their career. That is one of the very successful outcomes that we have had. We had good success last year, and we are continuing to invest in that space.

We are also this year embarking on the development of a cross-organisational mentoring program. We will look at partnering with the existing peer-to-peer network that is within TCCS to benefit all staff but with a focus on the culture of our organisation.

We establish regular opportunities and promote to our Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander staff attendance at programs and conferences. For example, the most recent conference that was attended was Indigenous insights into effective policy engagement and design. That has very much a human-centred co-design approach. We have received really positive feedback from the participants who attended that and who could see how they could look at applying that to further their own careers and benefit ACT government.

We have recently identified a new position within the people and capability branch, at the ASO6 level. It is a designated Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander person or a person with disability position. We have linked in with First People and First Grade Recruitment agencies to assist us with the attraction. One of the things that we need to continue to build upon is how we attract the talent into our organisation when we are recruiting to these roles. We have just started that conversation.

We are also in the process of drafting our 2020 learning and development strategy for the whole organisation. We will particularly look at the leadership development opportunities in that strategy.

THE CHAIR: All of those programs sound good. Are you able to tell me over the last, say, two or three years how that has helped to grow the number of senior leaders in the directorate? What has been the number change for that?

Ms Crowe: We are consistently seeing an increase in the number of identified people within our organisation. We currently have 58. When you asked the question about senior leadership—

THE CHAIR: Say from SOG C and above.

Ms Crowe: We do not have any that have identified that we are aware of. It is certainly an opportunity for us to look at how we further develop that.

MS McGRADY: Question 2: what work has been undertaken by the directorate to date in order to reduce experiences of racism and discrimination for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people within government systems by 80 per cent by 2028? How is this to be measured?

Ms Crowe: We undertake a range of training that is called mandatory training. One of those is cultural awareness training. It is mandatory for all senior officers SOG C and equivalent classification, and we actively target them from when they join our organisation and progress through. We have delivered six of those programs this financial year, with 128 people having attended and we have a further three of those sessions planned for this financial year.

The estimated expenditure is around \$32,000. We also have planned sessions for our Aboriginal mental health training program, which will be delivered by a local Indigenous provider and we have one of those scheduled later this year. We ran one of those last year and received really positive feedback in terms of what participants learnt from that training.

We also deliver on-country cultural appreciation program. We did one in September and we have another one scheduled this May. Thunderstone deliver that for us. I have numbers of attendants if you are interested in those.

THE CHAIR: I am happy if you have got them at hand, but do not search for them.

Ms Crowe: Okay.

THE CHAIR: This is actually one of the public-facing commitments under the agreement for all directorates. What we are interested in particularly is the commitments to reduce it by 80 per cent by 2028. What are we reducing? How do you measure it now? What does it look like?

Ms Crowe: For some of the measurements potentially that we can draw on, we have course evaluations. When people undertake the training programs that are delivered, they complete evaluations and we are able to use that information to further improve the programs. We ran a TCCS engagement survey in 2017 and we are running another one in April this year.

THE CHAIR: Is that an internal service?

Ms Crowe: That is an internal survey. There is a specific section on diversity and inclusion, so we measure the understanding, the cultural safety fairness and the employee experience. Employees will also be asked if they identify with the aim of understanding their work-life experience within our organisation.

In terms of complaints and investigations, I am sad to say we actually have received two complaints this financial year. There are several aspects to the complaints that do involve racism. We have taken immediate action on both of those through

investigations. One resulted in the termination of an employee and the other two are still ongoing, so we take it very seriously.

THE CHAIR: To be honest, be more worried when there are no complaints, because that shows that no-one is using the system.

Ms Crowe: I am still sorry to say we have had them. When we receive them, not only do we act quickly and decisively but we then roll out RED training in the areas where the complaint has arisen. We will target those work groups so that we can remind them of respect, equity, diversity and expectations aligned to our values.

THE CHAIR: One of the other sentiments in that measurement is about how our community experienced government systems. For example, on the light rail or on the bus, do your drivers or staff, when they see or hear racism occurring—now that is not to put them in harm's way, but for us it is about how to understand how the community is experiencing racism within the systems—do they feel like they can say something?

Ms Crowe: Yes. I might ask Ian McGlenn from our public transport area to talk specifically to that example. But, certainly, part of what the training is about—

THE CHAIR: It is to help people to deal with it.

Ms Crowe: It is to help people have the understanding of how they need to deal with those customers, because a number of parts of our directorate that have that customer interface.

THE CHAIR: That is right.

Ms Crowe: But the buses are a really good example.

Mr McGlenn: With the buses in particular, we do have events which could be considered as racism—comments et cetera made to not only people on the buses but also to our drivers, obviously. All our staff are trained in the radios in the duress system, if they need to use them or they can call our communications centre. The communications centre then can, in a duress situation, overhead the comments that are being made in the bus and dispatch our field transport officers. Our field transport officers attend all incidents and, if required, we will also get the AFP to attend.

THE CHAIR: You have a system, should it arise, which is a bit more progressed than some of the other directorates.

Mr McGlenn: Yes.

Ms Crowe: We are also exploring behavioural de-escalation training. We have run one session and we are looking at tailoring that further to assist our staff in those situations.

THE CHAIR: Excellent.

MS CHIVERS: How does the directorate ensure that cultural protocol to recognise Ngunnawal people as traditional custodians is followed?

Ms Oldfield: TCCS, of course, is a very broad organisation, so we would have a number of ways that we would ensure this protocol, both through our musical programs and through management of the land. In my business area, for example, in NoWaste, we have recently engaged an Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander enterprise to provide education services through the recycling hub at the material resources facility, the MRF.

We will be engaging this business to provide education programs over the April holidays for students, with a caring for country workshop and also developing caring for country Ngunnawal education resource kits, which talk about management of the land, how to use resources properly. We will use that educational kit to provide ongoing education to the community through the NoWaste program. Those are things that we will be learning from and we will have that information on board to use even past the April holidays.

THE CHAIR: What we are particularly interested in how you are sure that the end is upheld so that, if for some reason, one of my mob decide to say, “Well, we have just decided this was Wiradjuri country and that is what I am going to say.” We want to understand how you set the expectation that the government’s position is that Ngunnawal people are the traditional owners here and that is who we recognise as the traditional owners.

Ms Playford: I think that is actually recognised within our reconciliation action plan, which is the mechanism we have used. There is a clear protocol around events that the directorate holds, and the directorate-wide events.

THE CHAIR: Yes, that is the part we are after.

Ms Playford: There are directorate-wide events, and absolutely we would not have a directorate-wide event without having an appropriate welcome, considering the appropriateness of a smoking ceremony, those sorts of things. For key meetings there will be an acknowledgement. And then particular business units also have specific things they do.

THE CHAIR: They look for great opportunities to say that Ngunnawal people are the traditional owners here and that is just business as usual.

Ms Playford: Yes. Certainly, that is my own personal leadership protocol and the protocol I expect of my leadership team.

THE CHAIR: Excellent.

Ms Little: I came with props. Every library staff member has one of these on their lanyard. On one side it is the wording of the acknowledgement for adults and on the back, in the green—I like it the best, so that is why the green one is showing on mine—is our acknowledgement for children’s programs. For every children’s program we welcome people with “yuma” and we farewell people with “yerrabi”. We acknowledge the traditional owners, the Ngunnawal people, with this really lovely little piece that says that we touch the sky and we thank the Ngunnawal people for letting us use their land.

MS McGRADY: Thank you. How does the directorate change policies and programs to allocate funding to address the needs of the growing Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander population?

Ms Oldfield: Thank you for that. Again, we probably have a pretty diverse area in our businesses. We provide services with a community bus, with the library programs and some currently developed programs. We are looking to ensure that we are developing programs and policies as they are needed and not just sticking with what we have always done. For example, Alison referenced some of the great work that is happening in city presentation with the pilot program for how to embed local Indigenous culture into the design of all the things we do throughout our really diverse businesses. City presentation will be looking at that as a pilot program for the moment. Again, I would like to recognise the great work that Jacob has been doing in leading that effort.

It is about thinking about each business. TCCS is going to be different. Capital Linen is going to have different opportunities than Capital Works and the Yarralumla Nursery. So how do we think about embedding the culture, community and businesses in the work that we do? That is a bit of a pilot program that is happening in city presentation at the moment.

THE CHAIR: What we are trying to get at with this question is more about the business intelligence of who is our community and how they use your services—how young we are compared to other populations and does that influence what levers you use to deliver services to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people?

Ms Oldfield: Thank you for the clarification.

Ms Playford: We also have allocated \$59,000 for various community events, which we spend over the year at various events. We use those opportunities to try to engage, again, across the really diverse business areas that we have, in different ways. We use them as ways for our own staff to have a better understanding and to celebrate Indigenous culture, but also to engage with the community on different elements of the work that we do.

MS McGRADY: How many community events have been delivered by the directorate and who participated? Who was responsible for the delivery and management of the events, and what is your annual budget for these events, which—

Ms Playford: I think I just answered that.

MS McGRADY: Yes, you did. Thank you.

Ms Playford: Again, I will hand this over to Stephen and to Vanessa to speak about their areas specifically. We could come back to you, if you want, on a number of cross-TCCS and community events, but they could speak to their two business units.

MS McGRADY: Maybe we could keep it a little bit brief because of the time constraint and need to have a break, thanks.

Mr Alegria: One thing we have done to assist, not so much running the event, is obviously at Boomanulla Oval and their capacity to facilitate community use of that space. We have had around 10 different organisations use the meeting room there and obviously a number of people are using the sportsground as well. That has added up to something like 400 hours of use over the past financial year. That is an example of helping and working with the community to facilitate what the community wanted.

Ms Little: Since July this year we have hosted about 1,500 lifelong learning programs for the broader community, attended by about 40,000 people. That is 28,000 people coming to Giggle & Wiggle and story time. As I just said, Giggle & Wiggle and story time are always started with “yuma” and finished with “yerrabi”, and have that acknowledgement. We are sending that message out and touching 28,000 people so far this financial year.

MS McGRADY: Thank you. How many contracts and tenders have been awarded to ACT Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander businesses?

Ms Oldfield: The information we have through the end of last financial year, through December of 2019, is 11 engagements for \$900,000 totally. That is 1.53 per cent of the TCCS procurements.

THE CHAIR: That has you on track for the IPP schedule—yes?

Ms Oldfield: Correct. The largest of those would be with a company called Community Resources Limited. They manage two of our waste programs. Soft Landing is the mattress recycling program and Resource Recovery Australia runs our weighbridges. We have, I believe, a total of six Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander employees in their businesses.

That is the work we currently have. I realise we are on limited time, but that is throughout the TCCS portfolio, with a number of different contracts—through libraries, for catering or these waste businesses. Specifically through our infrastructure delivery or capital works group we are looking to understand how we can best support Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander businesses in construction work, noting that we have a pipeline of works. Right now, we have about \$250 million worth of works that are ongoing. We know that those will be going on for quite some time, so we are quite keen to—

THE CHAIR: They are great business opportunities because they provide sustainability.

Ms Oldfield: Exactly. On the back of a federal procurement we have engaged a company called PwC’s Indigenous Consulting to help us understand what our role is in helping develop that industry in an ongoing capacity. We are working with them on a brief and they will be giving us some guidance in how we can help develop that. We are also tying with Major Projects Canberra, knowing that they also have quite a role to play in this area. They are approaching it from a slightly different perspective, so the two entities are working—

THE CHAIR: But also being very proactive, which is good to see from both.

Ms Oldfield: Yes.

MS McGRADY: Were directorate Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander staff involved in the development of your directorate's action plan under the agreement?

Ms Oldfield: Yes.

MS McGRADY: Thank you. This is a question from one of the recommendations of the 2019 hearing. What progress, programs and/or services have been put in place to support employment opportunities existing in Corrections and youth justice facilities?

Ms Crowe: I will start that one. We have been working with Corrections with respect to the throughcare program, and we have placed on temporary employment personnel who are on the release program. We will continue to partner with them this year to do that. At the moment they do not have anyone available for opportunities in our organisation.

The placements that we have had have worked at Yarralumla Nursery as well as Capital Linen. That is what we have done in that space. In terms of youth justice, I will need to defer to one of my colleagues to speak about that. One additional item is in Libraries ACT. Again, this is the work of Vanessa's group. One of their officers has been facilitating men's groups and conversations in Corrections. Is that correct, Vanessa?

Ms Little: Yes. In the AMC. Our Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander coordinator, who you would all know—Brian Demmery—has been facilitating the men's group at AMC with a focus on literacy. Now we have moved from that to being registered with their one-on-one visitor program.

Ms Playford: Stephen, do you want to talk specifically about what we have been doing with Corrections in relation to Boomanulla Oval?

Mr Alegria: Sure.

Ms Playford: In relation to youth, we are still looking at working through with CSD, and we have had a couple of meetings about what the opportunities might be. Petra talked before about our entry-level programs, school leavers programs, cadet programs and how, particularly for children coming out of care, we might start to do something. It is probably something we are still in the development phases of at this stage.

Mr Alegria: Yes. Likewise, at Boomanulla Oval we have recognised there are some great opportunities for detainees from AMC to work—to physically do things—which obviously gives them experience and exposure to the outside world. We had a work crew out there in late 2019—that is people who are supervised, who are suitable for doing that kind of hands-on work around Boomanulla Oval. It has been a great partnership that helps the facility and also gives those opportunities for experience.

Ms Playford: Just in relation to that program, I would like to acknowledge that Corrections are having some difficulties in maintaining that program at the moment. We are very open to it continuing and, in fact, growing. We are engaging with them at

a very senior level to try to work through the barriers that they perceive in terms of how they can participate and have detainees participate in that program,

MS McGRADY: The next few questions are questions around your internal action plans—around cultural integrity. How is the directorate engaging with the local Ngunnawal community about the recognition of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people, for example, in relation to the Judy Harris Park?

Mr Alegria: I will start with that one. In the work that we do in city presentation, which is obviously primarily about managing our land, we engage in a variety of ways, but a great example is at Glebe Park, where we have a nature play space, where we have engaged with Thunderstone to get advice and be able to tell the local Ngunnawal stories as part of that play space in an interpretative manner. That is one example.

We obviously also engage with RAOs, registered Aboriginal organisations, where we need to get that cultural advice from those who have the cultural authority. For example, we have engaged with them in relation to a play space project at Hall, and indeed, in relation to any other processes where we need to get that cultural authority.

THE CHAIR: What we are particularly interested in is where we name things, for posterity if you like, to make sure there are opportunities to reflect either Ngunnawal language or people, or where people who have come to live in this place have lived in a way that is respectful of the Ngunnawal community. I am not sure what your processes are or how the Ngunnawal people are engaged when those sorts of ideas are floated.

Ms Playford: Again, we probably have a diversity across each of our business units. An example I can give you is with the new Dickson office block, where we are engaging and seeking advice around the naming of some of the key meeting rooms et cetera. There are a range of different things we are doing in different places, but that is one that springs to mind—it is very current—to make sure that we do that in a way that is culturally appropriate. That again helps to build pride for our Aboriginal staff. As we move into a new office block it is a great opportunity.

THE CHAIR: I am assuming registered organisations is a good place, Ngunnawal business is a good place, but I just have not heard you mention the elders council, so I want to make sure that they are on the consultation list.

Ms Playford: Yes, we would regularly write to them—

THE CHAIR: I do not want to assume it; I am just double-checking that is the case.

Ms Playford: We would consult with Ms Mudford and others often about who is best to consult on particular issues. Probably the buses is a good recent one that we are following. We had a conversation around what was the best way to engage.

MS McGRADY: What updates does the directorate have regarding being culturally sensitive and aware on using the cultural protocols around burials and cemeteries within the ACT? What can you do further to engage with the local Ngunnawal people around these improvements?

Ms Playford: I am going to invite Craig Jordan to respond.

Mr Jordan: I might just give you some very brief background. We have a dedicated section in Gungahlin cemetery that has the capacity for 41 gravesites. There are currently 16 people buried there and we have three reserved sites. We have the capacity to increase to 40 gravesites.

THE CHAIR: When you say “reserved”, does that mean someone has paid for the space?

Mr Jordan: Pre-purchased, correct. In terms of culturally sensitive practices, we actively encourage people, when they come out to the cemetery and in particular if they wish to bury somebody, to talk with the staff and to explain to the staff what their cultural needs are. For example, in the past we have done smoking ceremonies. We make sure our staff are aware of those requirements. Another example is we will have fire pits et cetera, except for on total fire ban days.

In terms of how we can better engage with the community, recently the Assembly passed a review of the Cemeteries and Crematoria Act. A key focus point of that was focusing on our broad and diverse cultural needs within the ACT community. Part of that was to strengthen the right of our citizens to a burial or cremation in accordance with their cultural needs. Not that we are aware of this happening in the past, but no longer can a crematorium or a cemetery refuse to undertake a culturally sensitive burial or cremation.

The next bit I would like to highlight, which I think is very relevant, is that our cemeteries board is coming due for renewal or re-election in August and we are about to, I would suspect in the April time period, go out and start to advertise for cultural representative members. That would be an excellent opportunity for somebody to put their name forward and to be part of that board.

Probably the final point I will make is that you may or may not have heard the minister talk about the creation of our first public crematorium, which will be out at Gungahlin. A key focal point of that, or the need for that, is our culturally diverse community, which obviously includes our Indigenous population as well.

MS McGRADY: I have a question around inclusive community. What improvements have been made to the frequency of bus services to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community organisations such as Winnunga, Gungan Gulwan, Bimberi and the AMC? Are these bus times in line with visiting times?

Mr McGlenn: Yes; there will be an adjustment of the network 19 timetable coming in late April. That announcement is yet to be made, but what has been taken into consideration there is the frequency of going past Winnunga. We have got a service that will go from Woden to service to the health centre there, out past AMC to Hume and return. It certainly lines up with the AMC visiting hours. Then there is also route 56, which will be coming from the city through Narrabundah and then into Fyshwick and then a subsequent service returns.

The facility in Wanniasa is serviced by the rapid services, which go through very

frequently. All the local Tuggeranong buses go through the Wanniasa area to Erindale, which also now will provide a connection from Erindale directly to the Canberra Hospital and the supporting health services in that vicinity.

In Belconnen there are some changes to some bus services that have come from a lot of feedback connecting with Calvary Hospital and places like that. There are a lot of changes—and thank you for the recognition of the consultation that has previously taken place—to be implemented for the entire community, but in particular those facilities.

Route 18 goes out to the children's facility in Mitchell and that will continue. But that also will now hook down to Dickson, so that will give a really good interchange point in Dickson, so they will be able to get from there straight up to the facility.

MS McGRADY: I have a community leadership question. What is the outyears commitment from the directorate for Boomanulla Oval? Does it include the financial upkeep of the oval, like water and electricity costs, in its general operations?

Mr Alegria: The current operating costs for Boomanulla have been secured up until the end of June this year. That obviously, as you suggest, covers the costs of maintaining the playing surface, running the facilities, paying the utility bills and so forth. There is a process underway to ensure that we have funding ongoing for the future to make sure we can still keep doing what we are doing.

MS McGRADY: What improvements or achievements have you made in this area, which I think we lightly touched on earlier on?

Mr Alegria: In essence, over the past couple of years we have worked with the community and the Elected Body and other directorates to restore most of what was at Boomanulla to make it fit for purpose. As you would be aware, we have got the playing surface; we are commissioning the new lighting on the playing surface just about as we speak, any time this week. We have done the main building and established that as a working environment. We have done some safety improvements and done a whole lot of landscaping work there.

What is there now really is fit for purpose. There are still things that we would like to do in future in relation to upgrading change rooms, the fencing and so forth. That is part of a budget process. In essence, it is a usable facility and one that is valued by the community.

Ms Playford: I would just like to add that we, as a directorate, do see these opportunities to further upgrade parts of those facilities. In particular, the caretaker, the disability access—there are a range of things that have come from community feedback now that the oval is open. We will be pursuing those through the budget process.

MS McGRADY: I have a couple of questions around connecting the community. How has the directorate managed the usage of the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community bus service? What are the statistics in terms of the TCCS driver services and self-drive bookings? Is there a need for another designated bus and could this service be extended to provide extra services, such as to Koori preschools? That was a

very long-winded question.

Mr McGlinn: The Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander bus service is run through the flexible bus office in Tuggeranong, where the two buses are situated. Bruce Garrett manages those services for us and he organises all of the bookings of the buses for interstate trips et cetera and liaises with the community groups. I think Bruce liaises with 33 community groups within the territory, in and around the provision of the service.

At the moment 55 per cent of the total journeys are undertaken by Bruce. The rest of that is self-drive. Predominantly, as you would be aware, most of the self-drive things are for sorry business, reunions, family activities and sporting events. We seem to be doing a lot of sporting events, which is really good. The team travels away as a team and that seems to go very well. There have been about 868 trips so far this year, in total. So far 2,950 people have been able to be carried on those services. That has us in line to equal or better the previous four years, this being the fourth year.

Can the service be extended to preschools? We do not currently, in the big network, run services to preschools. We can look at reviewing it. It would be on the basis of the same model that we have with the special needs transport. We have a little bit more specialist people on the buses. We would have to look at the size of the chairs and whether we need any boosters for some of the smaller children. That is the sort of buses that we would need to look at utilising to provide that service. Certainly, it is something we welcome investigating and reviewing.

THE CHAIR: The reason particularly for Koori preschool is that there is a significant boost in the numbers available in those placements, but they are not necessarily at your local preschool. People do have to travel out of area—

Mr McGlinn: They are not within the core area—

THE CHAIR: unlike accessing other early childhood placements, which is why we are flagging it. We are about to grow those spots, but not everyone will live within an easy distance to get to where that specialist service is.

Mr McGlinn: It is very similar to the special needs transport because there are specialist schools across the territory for those services, and we have to move those people across an extended period. Preschool is not the same because the special needs is five days a week. Preschool, as we are probably all aware, is two days one week and three days in the other, depending on what preschool you go to.

THE CHAIR: Koori preschool is a little bit different from that.

Mr McGlinn: Yes, that is what we need to sit down and discuss. We are happy to investigate how we could look to provide a service.

THE CHAIR: In those utilisation rates, the sport one, especially on the self-drive, seems easy enough to work out. How many people use it to get to TAFE or a medical appointment? It is so that we can understand what is driving that usage.

Mr McGlinn: For travel within the ACT to appointments, it is approximately 40 appointments; medicals is 79; outings is 248; shopping is 22; social is 202; for sorry business, 212 activities were undertaken.

THE CHAIR: It is good that you are able to give us that detail. It is good to know, and it also highlights for us some other areas of need that are not accessing it. We can talk about how to promote that to those parts of the community as well.

MS McGRADY: As was mentioned by Sean Moysey from the Education Directorate, we have about 85 young kids, preschool kids, ages five, four and three. That is a number. If that area could be explored a bit more, it would be very much appreciated by families in our ACT community with kids going to Koori pre.

Mr McGlinn: Yes, as to where the travel pattern is. It comes down to the availability of the fleet, what time preschool starts and finishes. Certainly, it is something very well worth looking into.

MS McGRADY: Does the trainee bus driver position still exist? If so, when will the position be filled?

Mr McGlinn: The trainee bus driver position exists. However, we currently have another identified person using that role under a traineeship. That person is currently doing a rotation through the corporate office in administrative and computer skills.

Ms Playford: I will note that we are actively recruiting bus drivers and are very open to having a culturally diverse workforce. There is an ad that we are going with—

THE CHAIR: It is more about having a second driver available.

Ms Playford: For the community bus service, yes.

Mr McGlinn: One of the things we can certainly look at is having some identified casual positions, which is probably a very good point to make. Bruce does have to go on holidays from time to time. I note that Bruce, very kindly, during the January fires gave up his weekends. He said, “Listen, can I use the bus if I need to, if any families feel they need help to move around the territory?”

MS McGRADY: That is great.

THE CHAIR: That is excellent.

Mr McGlinn: It was very good of him to do so.

MRS HUGHES: That is absolutely incredible, but it does show that we should not be relying on just one person because of the load on that one person. That includes the cultural load as well.

Mr McGlinn: Yes.

MS McGRADY: How do you communicate information about service changes to the

public bus networks to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people that are public housing residents?

Mr McGlinn: The information I have to date is that, with announcing the new timetable update on network 19, we have written to the board, and we will be writing to you again very shortly.

THE CHAIR: Do you mean us?

Mr McGlinn: Yes.

THE CHAIR: We are not a board, so when you said that I thought you were talking about someone else.

Mr McGlinn: Sorry; my apologies. Very shortly, we will be writing to you to advise that we are updating the network. We will ask for some advice about the best way to contact people. Concurrently, at the moment, we have not finished the timetables and all of the paraphernalia and advertising behind it.

THE CHAIR: Always very popular.

Mr McGlinn: Yes; indeed.

Mr McGlinn: We will then be out in the community. If you believe that there are some areas that we can have some pop-ups at, or give some talking points to, like we do with the community councils, we are more than happy to take that on board and go and do it.

MS McGRADY: Have there been any reports of racism on the buses—all buses, school and public transport buses? What are the policies and strategies to deal with these issues on public transport?

Mr McGlinn: We might have covered this a little bit earlier.

MS McGRADY: We did.

Mr McGlinn: Do you want me to go into further detail?

THE CHAIR: Only if you have something you can add.

Mr McGlinn: No, it is all the same—as long as our drivers report it. We had a story last week about a young boy. He caught the bus, got to the end of the run and the driver drove him home.

MS McGRADY: I read that story, yes.

Mr McGlinn: The really good thing about that is that we need to educate all parts of the community that the bus driver is their friend; talk to them and they will call us, and we will step in and help.

MS McGRADY: A couple of questions around lifelong learning. Have Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander resource kits been developed within Libraries ACT?

Ms Little: Certainly have. We have a pilot kit at the moment which contains a selection of picture books by and about Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people. It has Wiradjuri symbol cards. It has the Ngunnawal “If you’re happy and you know it” body parts song that we use with the kids. It has colouring sheets and a Ngunnawal language handbook. We send that out across all of the branches and the staff use that in their story time program.

Probably even more importantly, though, is we have targeted to get material into our other picture book and story time kits. For example, there is a lovely book called *Crabbing with Dad*, by a fellow called Paul Seden. He is from a family in North Queensland. His book is about crabbing with Dad. We have put that into kits that are about going to the beach. When we are doing a program about going to the beach, there is a book in there that is being read to kids that is by an Aboriginal person, about an Aboriginal family.

We could equally use that book for Father’s Day. What we are very actively doing is trying to get material, as and when it is published, into those mainstream collections, so that is just the norm for us that we are telling the stories with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander characters.

MS McGRADY: I think your answer may even flow into question 21, unless you have got something new to add.

Ms Little: The only thing I would like to add about question 21, which is about what has worked really well, is that I would really like to acknowledge the work that our ACT Heritage Library has done. In NAIDOC Week last year, across the country, all of the state and territory libraries and the National Library did a project to update our catalogue records to recognise different Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander languages.

In the past you have not been able to type into catalogues and get a lot of material up that talks about which language material is in. Our wonderful people at the Heritage Library upgraded the records for 226 publications, which now give what language they are in and we are contributing now to a national project. We are trying to make that richness of the material that is sitting in the Heritage Library more accessible to people by more easily identifying it. We always talk about the public library part of what we do, but there are things happening within the Heritage Library as well.

MRS HUGHES: With the ACT Heritage Library, do you use ATSLIRN protocols developed by AIATSIS?

Ms Little: Yes, we do and the AUSTLANG codes, which are nationally agreed.

THE CHAIR: I do not know what that means, but you can explain it to me later.

MRS HUGHES: Yes.

MS McGRADY: I have a few questions under our economic, employment participation.

Have there been opportunities for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander persons to participate on tender, recruitment and procurement panels?

Ms Crowe: I can answer the recruitment one. Yes, absolutely, it is a mandatory requirement. With the ones that we have emerging, it is also a requirement. We have established four new positions so far this financial year and all of those require the participation of a panel. I will defer the tender and procurement question.

Ms Oldfield: That would be an area that we would need to use as opportunities better, but we have flagged that with some future procurements that we have.

THE CHAIR: What we are particularly interested in, and the procurement space is a good example, is making sure that there is someone on the panel who can help you with whether this genuinely is going to meet the participation and the economic benefit to the community. Is it genuinely an Indigenous business? Do they employ our people? Does even knowing how many people are employed by those businesses show that you are looking at those things? It is just about maturing that process and making sure you have got someone who can help with that expertise.

MS McGRADY: How many Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander staff have been given opportunities to progress to higher duties?

Ms Crowe: Currently, the data in the reports that we have access to is aggregated information. We do not have it drilled down to that level. There may be privacy issues, but I can seek further information from Shared Services for a report on it to see if it exists. I am personally aware that we have had one employee in recent months who has had a higher duties opportunity.

THE CHAIR: We have said this to the other directorates. Whilst a lot of strategies, particularly at the senior leadership level, do focus on parachuting people in, for want of a better term, there are obviously people already within your agency and we are just keen to make sure that they are given opportunities to develop, if that is what they want to do.

Ms Playford: Can I just say, I have seen the difference in TCCS. They actually do have much more of a grow-your-own strategy. There are many people in other directorates who might be leaders at a higher level, but actually leaders in some of the areas of TCCS are more operational and can be at lower levels.

We do have ASO5s and 4s who are team leaders. I think that it is important to understand that in an organisation like ours, which has a large number of employees certainly in operational areas, the sorts of traditional levels that people perceive leadership. When we run our leadership programs, we talk about anyone who is responsible for a team. We do not necessarily put a classification on it, that you have to be a SOG C and above attend those. If you manage a team of people, we want you to think of yourself as a leader.

THE CHAIR: Excellent.

MS McGRADY: What are the retention figures of current Aboriginal and Torres Strait

Islander staff within the directorate?

Ms Crowe: We have certainly grown every year. Year on year we are growing and we are currently at 2.8 per cent, which I understand is reflective of the community numbers. We have a target to grow to three per cent this calendar year. I cannot tell you the specific retention figure. Again, I can ask for the report and see if it is available.

Ms Playford: I would note that we, like other directorates, sometimes lose people to other directorates at the same time as we are growing our own staff numbers. That is one of the issues in the ACT, actually increasing the overall number, not just pinching from each other.

THE CHAIR: I would suggest as well that whilst that is what we are in the general population, I would assume that we probably have a higher proportion of our population who use the buses, for example. As users of your service, that proportion might be larger, if you want to reflect the community that is using the services, just to take that into consideration.

Ms Playford: I agree and I think that different business units, because of the diversity of services that we offer, need to think about that differently.

THE CHAIR: Playing on that diversity does create a lot more choice and not just the desk job type of things but doing things outside and things that other directorates might not have that might be attractive to some parts of our community.

Ms Playford: I think what we have been trying to do with the creation of this role in city presentation is to recognise that. EPSDD is responsible for the non-urban land management and we are responsible for a lot of urban land management, but it is equally important for Aboriginals and Torres Strait Islanders. We see that as a focus for a particular area for this year.

MS McGRADY: What new employment positions have arisen for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people since the last hearings?

Ms Crowe: We are currently recruiting an ASO2 kennel hand through the vocational employment program, which is a whole-of-government program. We are also recruiting the ASO6 inclusion officer within people and capability, an IO1 classification, which is a dam inspector, which is really interesting.

THE CHAIR: Why is it IO1, if it is a dam?

Ms Crowe: Yes, dam inspector.

Ms Playford: We have all sorts of good jobs.

Ms Crowe: That is a really good job. It surprised me when I read the position description.

THE CHAIR: Yabbies.

Ms Crowe: They actually have to have a boat licence as well as other qualifications. It is a really excellent role that one, and it is outdoors. We also recruited the ASO5 community engagement program officer and the caretaker at Birrigai, which was a specific campaign that we undertook last year. We were very successful with that.

MS McGRADY: Thank you.

THE CHAIR: Thank you for your time and your evidence today. For any question that has been taken on notice, we are in the last few months of our term as the Elected Body, so if we can have any information as quickly as possible, that will mean we can finalise our report and recommendations before our term finishes, come the start of July.

Ms Playford: Thank you very much for the opportunity to appear.

THE CHAIR: Thank you.

Hearing suspended from 1.26 to 2.05 pm.

Appearances:

Community Services Directorate

Wood, Ms Jo, Acting Director-General

Sabellico, Ms Anne-Maree, Deputy Director-General

Gilding, Ms Louise, Executive Group Manager, Housing ACT

Dunne, Ms Ellen, Executive Branch Manager, Inclusion and Participation

Pappas, Ms Helen, Executive Group Manager, Children, Youth and Families

Charles, Ms Lisa, Executive Branch Manager, Office for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Affairs

Robinson, Ms Jodie, Executive Senior Branch Manager, Children, Youth and Families

Rose, Mr Craig, Executive Branch Manager, People Management

THE CHAIR: I thank members of the Community Services Directorate for joining us this afternoon. Yesterday, when we started the hearings, we did a formal welcome to country through Member Hughes, and we were able to have that substantially in language, which was a really great way to start the hearings. For each of the sessions we like to make sure that, for the record, we acknowledge Nggunawal country and the people, its elders both past and present and their ongoing relationship to this place.

We need to offer apologies for Member Monaghan, who is away this week on sorry business. He will not be joining us for any parts of the formal hearing process, but he has participated over the last month in the development of questions.

As we indicated in our correspondence prior to the hearings, a substantial number of the questions are generated from the action plans with our agreement. We do, of course, ask for questions from our community, both organisations and individuals. There may be some questions in your list that look a little odd in terms of the agreement or the action plan, but they come directly from community, and we give the undertaking as much as possible to deliver those questions directly.

As is our usual practice, the portfolio member for the directorate will take the lead in asking questions, and for this portfolio area it is Member Hughes.

Ms Wood, you are the acting director-general, so you are fortunate enough to be given this task. Thank you for that. Your colleague this morning, on her last day in Education, was here to answer questions. We want to open by highlighting a few things that we think are reflective of the relationship between the Elected Body and your directorate, and more broadly with the government, and that have been able to be progressed, particularly over the last 12 months. Some of these things are over a longer period. Even though we have a couple of hours set aside for you, you will have seen from the list of questions that it will probably take us that amount of time to get through it.

As has been the practice, at least in this term, we would prefer all officers providing evidence to stick to the impact and the outcomes regarding the questions. Now that it is so late in the term, we are aware of much of the detail of programs and things that are happening. Unless it is something that is uniquely different, we probably do not need to hear too much of that narrative. If I feel that it is getting a little bit off track, it is nothing personal; I will be trying to catch up on time management, which I have failed

at for the last day. I will give the acting director-general an opportunity to make some opening remarks.

I turn to some of the things that collectively for us are front of mind as highlights in the relationship or in the space for our community that you have direct responsibility for. We are really happy with the progress of the older persons' housing units—both how quickly they have been progressed and how well we have been engaged in the planning of those. Hopefully, we will at least have the development application parts of stage 3 completed by the time our term ends in July this year.

We would also like to take a moment to reflect on how powerful we think the Our Booris, Our Way process has been. Obviously, there are recommendations in a final report tabled in December that set out that there is much more work to be done. The process of having an Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander-led group to determine that whole process and to lead that is a great mark for the way forward. It is about sticking to what has been our premise that, whilst we are elected representatives of our community, we are not the only voices. There is plenty of expertise throughout the community and we need to find a pathway for those voices and that expertise to be heard. That is certainly one example of that, as well as the co-design process that you are undertaking more broadly on policy.

Whilst there is still much work to do, one of the things, personally and collectively, that we were very committed to at the start of our term was to make sure that the *We don't shoot our wounded* report no longer remains on a shelf. Significantly, there has been a first step in acknowledging that 10-year delay in doing something, now that there is a community-based group looking at what to do next. That is back on the agenda. Those recommendations are still relevant today, unfortunately, and we hope that will achieve some momentum. That is something that we are happy to have been able to help to progress. We hope that progress from this time on is a little quicker. We note that that was a significant milestone, in engaging ministers in particular whom this report pre-dates. It is a little tricky sometimes to get momentum around things when they do not feel that sense of ownership, so we thank you for being able to do that.

Ms Wood, do you have any opening remarks?

Ms Wood: I would like to make a short opening statement that covers off how we are working on embedding a focus on outcomes for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people and the wellbeing and development of our workforce across CSD. It is relevant to a lot of the questions that you want to ask, so we can have it once and be shorter and sharper in our other responses.

For CSD we are seeking to embed our commitment to reconciliation as one of the core values of the organisation through our reconciliation commitment, which commits us to embedding a culture of respect, celebrating and appreciating the contribution of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people to our city and region, and prioritising and acknowledging the rights of Aboriginal people to a culturally safe service system.

Our reconciliation commitment flows through our integrated planning framework. We have a strategic plan that includes our cultural integrity statement. That flows through the rest of the planning for the organisation. Each division within CSD is asked to

respond to that cultural integrity statement and the priority given to supporting Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander leadership in our strategic plan. At each level of planning, at divisional and branch planning, we are asking all members of our executive and all members of our organisation to identify what they can do to contribute to those outcomes. That is outcomes for the community in our business and outcomes in terms of creating a culturally safe workplace for our own staff that enables people to develop and flourish, and have the kind of career that they aspire to.

That is an underpinning of a lot of the work we will then talk about against the questions in relation to our own workforce and how we are shifting culture and to make that longer term difference. I thought I would set out that framework; then we can refer to it briefly, if needed, as we go.

THE CHAIR: Before I hand over to Member Hughes, one of the things I forgot to mention in our highlights—and it would be unfair not to mention it here since we mentioned it for CMTEDD, and a significant amount of work was done by the Office for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Affairs as well—was that the ACT played a leading role in the changes to the Council of Australian Governments’ approach to closing the gap, a partnership arrangement that now sees Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people from community-based, community-selected arrangements around the country having a direct voice in resetting closing the gap. I apologise that I did not mention that at the start. That was a significant piece of work that has been driven a lot from your directorate as well. I want to acknowledge that. Member Hughes?

MRS HUGHES: (*Ngunnawal language spoken.*) I said hello and welcome. We will go through the questions that are on the paper before you. I believe you had those questions before you came in. I am honoured to be here today with you all and to recognise the value of our partnership that we have had together over the last three years. We have questions that are relevant across all directorates, so I will lead with those first. Can you tell us what has been undertaken by your directorate to increase the number of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander senior leaders by 2021?

Ms Wood: Yes, Ms Hughes. Under our commitments under the agreement, we have committed to increase Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people in senior leadership roles—SOG B and above—by 20 per cent by 2021. What we know in terms of the facts is that, at 30 September 2019, 4.1 per cent of our executive and senior managers at SOG A and B identified as Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander. We know that, for that 2021 target, which is obviously only the first step, we would need to increase that number by three people in total.

We are in a phase, in this first period of the agreement, of building the foundations, and we know we have more to do. The foundations for us are both working on that inclusive and culturally safe workplace, in the frameworks that I mentioned in the opening, and a really active focus on how we develop our existing staff, and supporting them to have the careers they want to have. That means we have to use, and we are proactively using, all of our mainstream career development tools. We use our performance agreement and career development conversations to identify people’s aspirations.

We have a particular focus on developing the skills of supervisors, and ensuring that Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander staff are getting access to that supervisor

development program. We are also supporting our own staff to access some of the whole-of-government programs. We are looking at all of the mainstream development programs that are available to public servants and the particular programs available to support Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander leadership development. We provide some additional studies assistance for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander staff. Again, that is helping people to build their own qualifications for their future career.

There are a whole range of ways in which we are working with individual staff, but we are also looking at the more systemic issues that prevent people from either entering our workforce or developing their careers to the more senior levels. Part of our reconciliation commitment is that we will look at new recruitment processes that value life experiences and cultural expertise—recognise that as a qualification for a lot of our work. Through that enterprise agreement process, the child and youth protective services, the CYPP—

Mr Rose: Child and youth protection professional.

Ms Wood: The child and youth protection professional classification gives us a way now to recognise people's expertise as qualifying them for the role. That gives us flexibility for people who may not have the formal qualifications to come in at a range of levels. It is reducing that qualification barrier and recognising that people are qualified in a range of ways.

The other thing that we have been keen to ensure—again CSD has pursued this in enterprise agreement negotiations—is setting expectations for managers about recognising and understanding the additional cultural responsibilities of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander staff. It is about making sure that people are supported in the workplace to discharge all of their obligations, both their work obligations and their broader obligations, and that entitlements are able to be used flexibly to allow that. It is about creating the kind of culturally safe workplace that will allow people to pursue their career aspirations.

MRS HUGHES: You have more than covered that, thank you. Question 2: what work has been undertaken to date in order to reduce experiences of racism and discrimination for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people within government systems by 80 per cent by 2028? How is this measured?

There is also question 22 in relation to racism, where it talks about what strategies are in place for reporting racism. How many incidents of racism were reported since the last hearings? How does this compare to previous years and how does the directorate address racism and ensure cultural safety for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander staff, clients and community members through that process?

Ms Wood: For us, reducing experiences of racism, both for our own staff and clients who receive our services, starts with that strong commitment to better respect and cultural safety across our whole organisation. I think the enterprise agreement recognition of cultural responsibilities is a part of ensuring that that is recognised as an important obligation that people need to honour so that it is managed around work commitments as well. That really is our starting point.

We have a process that involves our people management branch for people to report any form of discrimination and harassment. That would include complaints of racism and the response of that starts with a preliminary assessment that is undertaken by people management branch. For cases where the conduct is considered serious, and I would ask Mr Rose to expand on what those circumstances would be, there is an option for referral to a misconduct process.

In terms of actual numbers of reports of racism since last hearings, we would probably take that one on notice to make sure that we have looked at all the data that may be relevant and can give you a very robust response. In doing that, we could look at comparing that to previous years as well.

MRS HUGHES: We are looking at the baseline with question two.

Ms Wood: Yes. Would you like Mr Rose to talk a bit more about the assessment process?

MRS HUGHES: Yes, please.

Mr Rose: The assessment process or what else we are doing to reduce racism?

MRS HUGHES: What else you are doing.

Mr Rose: To add to what the D-G articulated in her response, we also have our e-learning modules. We have 10 modules on cultural knowledge for new staff that start in the directorate as part of their core learning package for induction. They are required to complete it in the first six months of commencing at the directorate. To date, since we have introduced this training module, which we introduced in consultation with the Australian Institute of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Studies, which endorsed this process, we have trained, from memory, 222 people through the various 10 modules of this process.

It is really about education to ensure that staff are educated through what the D-G articulated, the enterprise agreement, acknowledging that cultural load and those sorts of things, understanding the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander culture through this e-learning package and other training that is conducted through CYPS for their staff in those areas. All that, in total, is what we are working on to reduce those instances.

MRS HUGHES: With the question you have taken on notice, will you also take on notice how it is measured?

Ms Wood: Yes, we will do that as well.

MRS HUGHES: Okay, thank you.

THE CHAIR: There are parts of your directorate that have a unique role, particularly for our young people. What seemed to come out in that answer are reports of how people might experience your staff or instances between staff. Is there also a component for the people that are in your care who raise that issue of how you advocate for those issues to be dealt with—our most vulnerable children, for example, who might be

experiencing some form of racism? Do the caregivers in the directorate have a responsibility or a role in helping to address that?

Ms Pappas: I was just sitting here thinking about the different mechanisms. There are a number of mechanisms that exist for children and young people who are in out of home care, whether that is in the context of foster care, kinship care or residential care, because the response can be a little bit different. In residential care, we have got quite a few people that go into those services and engage on a one-to-one basis with young people, like our official visitors, for example, and like the public advocate and those types of oversight bodies.

That is a direct one-on-one engagement, and it sits separately to the directorate. That is one mechanism that children and young people can use in that context and they do. They are also going to Bimberi as well. We have got an official visitor who is an Aboriginal woman, and we have a male as well. That exists in that context.

In terms of foster care and kinship care, we do not have those oversight bodies other than the public advocate. They do have a role to review information and engage where they think they need to. We provide a lot of information to the public advocate, so when we hear information, or when somebody makes a complaint or asks for some intervention, the public advocate is able to do that on behalf of children and young people, carers for kids in foster care and kinship care arrangements.

Then there is the direct case management circumstance, where caseworkers go into family homes and engage directly with children and young people. Then there is the Create Foundation, who also provide engagement services and who sit independently to the directorate and are funded to specifically do engagement services with children and young people in out of home care across the entire spectrum. They are a couple of the mechanisms.

THE CHAIR: Across each of those systems, is there a way of catching information that talks about having to deal with issues of racism?

Ms Pappas: That is probably not data specifically that we ask for. We would have to go through it manually and have a look at each of them, but there might be. Probably we are not going to see it saying that this is about racism. We will probably see it play out in different ways in terms of language and circumstances and behaviour and those sorts of things. It is not data that we collect specifically, but it is something that we need to turn our minds to and think about how do we—

THE CHAIR: People are calling it out. If that is what it is, that is what should be in the report.

Ms Pappas: Yes, that is right: how we do that, how we capture it and how we address it in those contexts, absolutely. I guess the other thing to say is about the viewpoints project. We have got an electronic system—it is interactive—called viewpoints that children and young people are able to complete once a year. It is a survey that asks a lot of questions around their experiences: are they feeling safe, are there people in their lives that they feel they can talk to, how are they faring at school, do they know how to make complaints?

There are a whole lot of questions, probably in excess of about 100 questions, such as: can they contribute to decision-making? It has all of those questions that you want, so kids are offered that opportunity. We had not a bad uptake. I think 53 children and young people in our out of home care opted to do the survey, and we were able to get some information about their experiences.

I do not think we have had anything in terms of racism specifically, but that is another mechanism. We could look through that process and see whether there is actually a question we should ask explicitly about that.

THE CHAIR: And just one final follow-up question—this is more for housing—in the intake process for public housing, is there an opportunity for people to say that one of the reasons that they are seeking public housing assistance is because of racism in the housing sector?

Ms Wood: Ms Gilding can respond to that.

THE CHAIR: Because part of the outward-facing commitment in the agreement is about reducing this collectively. You are not necessarily driving it, but this seems to be one way of capturing what kind of an issue this is in our community.

Ms Gilding: Yes, it absolutely is. In terms of whether there is a possibility for an Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander, if they are experiencing discrimination in the private rental market, that is absolutely something that we consider as part of our assessment of need. There is the eligibility that comes first, which looks at income et cetera, but then we go and look at whether it is a standard, high or priority need. If that discrimination comes up, that would be a very strong argument for placing somebody on that priority housing list.

THE CHAIR: At present do you have a dataset for that? One of the issues I have got with the target we have set is that we say we are going to reduce it by 80 per cent, but I am finding it hard to get clarity from people about what is the number we are reducing. How do we know what volumes we are attacking?

Ms Gilding: We could certainly do a piece of data work, but it would be manual at the moment, in terms of looking back at our applications and how many people we had come through and tick that box as part of their priority consideration.

MRS HUGHES: Question 3: how does your directorate ensure that the cultural protocol recognising Ngunnawal people as traditional custodians is followed?

Ms Wood: Our starting point, again, is our core documents, our reconciliation commitment and our cultural integrity statement, where we acknowledge Ngunnawal people as the traditional custodians of the land and recognise their contribution to Canberra. As standard practice we have an acknowledgement of country at all our internal governance meetings, so we are modelling that on a daily basis. We build it into any events that we organise. Certainly, it is a standard inclusion for talking points for senior execs, ministers. We do brief ministers for a lot of externally facing events. We also include it in our social media communication.

We ensure, for major events and significant events—the Multicultural Festival, the ACT Women’s Awards, and for other events where there is a particular significance—that we have a welcome to country as well. We are inspired to use language where possible for events and to adopt humour and encourage people to use that. We are going to use the work of the videos that CMTEDD will be rolling out, using language. We all want to build the skills to do the full acknowledgement in language. That is something we just want to get people more comfortable with. All staff in the organisation see their leaders actually doing that and engaging in that way.

MRS HUGHES: How does your directorate change policies and programs to allocate funding to address the needs of the growing Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander population?

Ms Sabellico: We are in the middle of developing a commissioning framework. Its working title is “Commissioning for social impact”. It is about working with community and the sector about redefining how we make decisions in terms of funding allocations, service, system planning and design.

As part of that we specifically asked Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community organisations and community members whether or not we should have a separate commissioning for social impact framework for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander decision-making, and the feedback came back saying that, no, we just needed to embed it so that, with every single decision that is made, we are thinking through the lens of the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community.

As part of that we will develop the processes and procedures that will fit around that framework that will include the voice of community and organisations in the decision-making process, as well as looking specifically, as a priority lens, at what are the needs of the community and how we address those, in terms of any specific funding for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children and community as well as mainstream. We will undertake that work.

Part of that will be about how we write into our contracts the expectations, particularly for mainstream services, about how they then support Aboriginals and Torres Strait Islanders to access services. Are they culturally competent? How do they demonstrate that? We have to make sure that we look at what proportion of funding that is available for certain programs is going to the community, either through specific service delivery or through mainstream.

MRS HUGHES: With that framework, would you be accessing the Elected Body and other Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander groups and Ngunnawal groups?

Ms Sabellico: Yes.

MRS HUGHES: Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander disability groups, and LGBTIQ?

Ms Sabellico: Yes, we have been consulting quite broadly on this across the whole community.

MRS HUGHES: Excellent. How many community events—some of them have already been mentioned and I have noted them—since the last hearings have staff participated in? Who participated? Who was responsible for the delivery and management of those events, and what was the annual budget for those events?

Ms Wood: We will start at the more significant end of events. Ms Charles has a range of the details, including the funding details for those, and we can see what else you would like.

Ms Charles: There are a number of high-level events. There are five events that I want to talk about today. One is the Indigenous showcase at the Multicultural Festival. The responsible area that delivers this is the inclusion and participation division within CSD. They stand up a group of people to work through that, in partnership with the ACT NAIDOC committee, in delivering that. There is a cost associated with that of around \$5,000 for the Indigenous showcase. There are other costs involved in the welcome to country; there is more detail in terms of the Indigenous welcome to country and things like that. There are other costs there as well.

Reconciliation Day is another event that we hold annually. That is a partnership between OATSIA, the Office for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Affairs, and the Chief Minister, Treasury and Economic Development Directorate. We work together on that. \$150,000 is allocated to that event, with \$50,000 for grants available to the community to hold events prior, at the event and post Reconciliation Day.

There is the NAIDOC luncheon that we, in partnership with the Elected Body, hold. The inaugural event was last year. There is a budget of around \$35,000 within the operating budget of OATSIA to hold that. We also do the annual NAIDOC flag-raising event, which this year will be in a partnership between OATSIA and CMTEDD. We have a budget for that at the moment of around \$3,000. We are working through the processes with that.

With other relevant events, one most recently was the ACT Women's Awards events, which recognised a number of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women within the ACT community. That is held by the Office for Women. The budget for that in 2019-20 was around \$7,000.

MRS HUGHES: Was that \$7,000 particularly for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women or it was the whole—

Ms Charles: No, in total for the event. They are the main events. We hold a number of smaller community events. We could probably take on notice and get that information to you.

MRS HUGHES: Yes, I would be happy for you to take that on notice. How is your directorate using your networks and resources to promote cultural knowledge?

Ms Wood: The events that Ms Charles has just talked about are an important way that we do that. The Reconciliation Day event is about engaging the whole community in understanding their role in reconciliation and celebrating our Aboriginal and Torres

Strait Islander culture in the ACT, as well as a NAIDOC luncheon.

There are a range of ways that we ensure that we bring Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultural knowledge into those events. The Women's Awards is a really great example, with a local artist who makes baskets for the trophies which are amazing. We try to bring cultural experiences into a range of our events, to raise people's understanding of that.

As Mr Rose talked about earlier, we have a specific focus on Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultural knowledge in our induction for all of our staff. We are ensuring that our own staff have that knowledge and can bring that into their engagement with the broader community.

There is a range of work that we are doing on our own cultural competency, particularly in working with communities—shifting our approach across the organisation to being one that is much more partnership based, that is much more supportive of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander self-determination. That is a high level of skill in cultural competency that we need to develop over time.

MRS HUGHES: Plus you have access to a range of networks as well across the ACT?

Ms Wood: We do.

MRS HUGHES: Including the Aboriginal community-controlled organisation, the co-design group that has been established, UNEC and this body. How many contracts and tenders have been awarded to ACT Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander businesses?

Ms Wood: I have a partial answer to your question; then we can take some more detail on notice. We are still working out the system to ensure that we can capture all of the contracts awarded to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander businesses. We are able to identify that we have awarded contracts to at least nine ACT Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander businesses in the last year to provide goods or services. We have also identified that we have at least two national or interstate Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander businesses that have been engaged by CSD to promote goods or services. There may be more than that. We can probably capture the bigger ones more easily, but there may be a range of smaller contracts.

We are aiming to ensure that we are engaging with Indigenous businesses across a range of different types of goods and services. We have certainly used Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander local businesses in recruitment. We have engaged a company to provide furniture. We are looking at trying to make sure that it is diverse, but we are still working on having a good system to capture all of the potential contracts.

Ms Gilding: In addition to that, we are very focused on growth and renewal. There is a significant \$600 million investment over the next five years by the ACT government in growing and renewing the public housing stock—initially, in terms of the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander procurement policy, against those three measures year to date. Measure 1 is the number of tenderers that we have had that have also been registered with Supply Nation. We have had two—the number of tenderers that have been awarded those contracts, we have had two. I think it is significant that the two

companies that are registered with Supply Nation have been allocated \$17.3 million work for the initial six months of this financial year, against a spend of \$23 million. We can see a significant spend. I think there is a 1.5 per cent procurement target. We are really hoping to kick that out of the ballpark.

THE CHAIR: You are going to help the rest of the team if you do not win!

Ms Gilding: I hope so. That does not include what we are doing on the Lyons site in terms of Boss Constructions, because they are not necessarily an Aboriginal owned and controlled organisation. Certainly, what we are trying to see there is the flow-through from the employment, in terms of their apprentices, carpenters et cetera, and also through the TFM contract.

MRS HUGHES: Of those tenders or contracts that have been awarded, you talked about them being registered with Supply Nation, and going back to the question, how many of those business are actually ACT Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander businesses?

Ms Gilding: Let me double-check, but they are likely to be small residential companies.

MRS HUGHES: You are taking that on notice?

Ms Gilding: Yes, I will take it on notice. But we are not dealing in this procurement with the large multinationals. We are not doing the Health building or what have you; they are those smaller, local residential builders.

MRS HUGHES: Were the directorate's Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander staff involved in the development of your directorate's action plan under the agreement?

Ms Sabellico: Yes, they were. We had about five months overall in terms of developing up the action plans. We consulted broadly with all of the divisions, given that it ran out of strategic policy. We then consulted with housing colleagues, child, youth and family colleagues, including participation, and our corporate services colleagues in order to identify the particular measures that we wanted to achieve.

As part of that, once we drafted the information, we then circulated that quite broadly. We held some internal workshops as well, to refine for those, and people were welcome to attend those and critique them. We also had a number of strategies already underway where we were talking to our Aboriginal staff colleagues, particularly around cultural integrity and what that looks like. That means that we then embedded that into the plan as well.

MRS HUGHES: Excellent. Are you able to provide—and I understand you may not be able to provide it today—how many Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander staff were involved?

THE CHAIR: I want to go back to the contracts and, in particular, the Indigenous procurement policy. One of the features of the ACT government's procurement policy is the human services contract, and from what I could hear in the responses, you have got the focus on the routine business of procurement to an extent. I understand that for

the human services contracts part there was a much more significant shift in how things are done. Are you able to give us at least a progress report on how that particular component is being implemented?

Ms Sabellico: It is about us having a look at what we need to do through our new commissioning for social impact lens and how that shifts and changes what we are doing more broadly in the human services area. But, specifically, we are also having a look at making upfront decisions about what work we need to do, who is best placed to do the work and then seeking to have a look for are there then Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander businesses and services that would be able to deliver and using those as our first port of call before we then would look elsewhere.

THE CHAIR: Excellent.

MRS HUGHES: Moving to the 2019 hearing recommendations, please explain how many caseworkers have completed cultural competency and cultural awareness training. How is the training measured for efficacy?

Ms Pappas: I can talk about the cultural development program that CYPS do specifically for our caseworkers and then there is all the work that we are doing across CSD, which is broader knowledge. As we have spoken about here before, child and youth protection services have a very specific cultural development program that we run. We look for outcomes in that program that help staff develop an understanding of culture that will contribute to better outcomes and responsiveness to Aboriginal families that are in our system.

The program is designed so that staff gain an understanding of the protocols and processes and understand the importance of establishing positive working relationship. The program is six face-to-face sessions, and we use the Australian Institute of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Studies, the foundational e-learning, as a component of that. Then there are six face-to-face sessions that we run over a period of a few months. We have got two of our training officers here in the room today. We have got four programs due to be run for this year and the next one starts on 18 March.

Our focus has been about having the majority of our frontline caseworkers, including team leaders and operations managers, go through that program. We have 67 per cent of our staff who have completed, or almost completed, the training. The ones who almost complete have to go back and do it all, so almost complete does not mean yes. The team are really good at making sure people go back and catch the sessions that are missed. There are four sessions, and the next one will start on 18 March and will run to 13 May. Then we have got one in July through to August, September through to November, and then one towards the end of 2020. We hope, through the processes of those next four, that most of our caseworker staff will have completed the training.

We have set ourselves a target that 80 per cent of all new staff that come into casework positions will do the training within their first 12 months. We have had 14 new case managers commence and nine of them are enrolled and have partially completed the program. They are our caseworkers and then we will go out beyond that to all of the other enabling functions, because it is not just the caseworkers that need build competency; it is across the workforce.

You might remember that after the apology documentary, we ran some sessions so that staff could immerse themselves in that. We have had some recent screenings of *In My Blood It Runs*, the Adam Goodes story. We are exposing our staff and giving them as much opportunity as possible to understand the impact and to appreciate their role in that and to think about how they might work differently with Aboriginal families. That is the child protection youth justice response.

MRS HUGHES: Are there caseworkers elsewhere in the directorate?

Ms Pappas: No, probably not, actually.

MRS HUGHES: This is particular to caseworkers. How is the training measured for efficacy?

Ms Pappas: I think we will know we are doing well when the families tell us that they are experiencing something different, but we do not have a measure other than continuable immersion. Our cultural services team and some of our senior leadership Aboriginal staff are going to be our measures. If they are seeing the work differently, if they are seeing that the documentation has been done differently, the engagement is done differently, that is how we are getting feedback.

There is a tool that we are looking at in Western Australia. It is a tool that measures competency, specifically for child protection staff. We have been in contact with that psychologist and she is a—

THE CHAIR: Dr Westerman?

Ms Pappas: Yes, that is her. We have had some staff go across to her session in WA to understand better. We are really keen to see whether we can apply that tool here in Canberra and we are just working towards that. I think that is the only one that we are aware of that actually measures competency. We would be really keen to do a baseline and then go back and see how we have progressed and where are the gaps and what else we need to do.

MRS HUGHES: It is important to have the baseline because it also provides an understanding of when there is racism raised within the organisation and community and particularly for families and children as well.

Ms Pappas: That is right. We cannot underestimate the importance or the role that the cultural services team plays in holding our other staff to account in terms of their practice.

MRS HUGHES: Yes. How many Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children have been restored to their birth families in the last two years, broken down by children or short-term versus long-term orders?

Ms Pappas: I cannot give you breakdown by orders.

THE CHAIR: Would you be able to do that on notice or it is just not available?

Ms Pappas: I want to say yes. Can I try? I will take it on notice and see if it is available.

THE CHAIR: Yes, thank you.

Ms Pappas: But I can give you a breakdown of the restoration to birth parents. The proportion of children who were restored back to their birth parents within 12 months of coming into care for 2017-18 was 30 per cent. The proportion of Aboriginal children who were restored at any point—not within the 12 months but any point in terms of their out of home care experience—in 2017-18 is at 17 per cent. I do not have more current data than that. That is the family matters dataset. It is an unpublished data source but that is the most recent data we have.

The system is much more successful in preserving kids at home. We are seeing the success of working with families, and maintaining children at home is a better way, obviously, and a much more successful engagement. There is some difficulty in terms of restoration. I describe it as kids that go into out of home care and become a bit sticky. It is a bit harder to get them out and the effort is continuing through some programs that we have talked about before: functional family therapy and family group conferencing and the uniting children and families program, which are starting to see some real success in preserving kids at home and making sure they do not come into care.

The programs try to make sure that if kids are in care they can get them home and actually maintain them at home safely. At the 12-month mark we are seeing some real success. We know that if we can have kids go home and stay home for two years without coming back into care, those kids are not going to come back into care. It is a pretty critical time and at 12 months, if we are having success, then we are likely to extend that success beyond. It is heading in the right direction.

MRS HUGHES: Thank you. I look forward to receiving information with the breakdown.

Ms Pappas: What we are taking on notice is the two years and short-term versus long-term?

MRS HUGHES: Yes. And then broken down.

Ms Pappas: Yes.

MRS HUGHES: What is being done to ensure access to timely legal advice and support for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander families in contact with the child protection system?

Ms Pappas: I will talk briefly about the initiative that Legal Aid has in terms of the duty lawyer. I am not sure whether you have heard about that initiative. That is in place. As I understand it, parents are accessing that, and that duty officer is quite busy at the court when there are matters on. I understand it is successful and people are using it, which is excellent. It is increasing people's access to legal advice at the point that they need it.

Every child that comes into care, regardless of Aboriginal status or not, has access to their own independent legal advice. The Red Cross deliver a birth parent advocacy service. They provide advice to families and they connect families to legal advice if they need it. With those families who want to self-represent, they support them to do that as well.

THE CHAIR: Just to clarify—it is probably just my lack of understanding—that is not a service that they have to pay for?

Ms Pappas: That is right. It is a free service. The Red Cross work alongside families to advocate for themselves. They give them the skills, the knowledge and the confidence to do that. Where they need to be connected to other legal advice, they do that, and they support them to do that. They also run court workshops, to prepare families to self-represent, for those who want to do that, and they attend court with families to support them.

Ms Wood: Could I add some other initiatives that are relevant to that question that are operating in slightly different ways? Through the facilitation work of the family safety hub, looking at how we can provide better early intervention for pregnant women and new parents experiencing or at risk of domestic and family violence, we worked with both of our hospitals, one of our child and family centres and our legal providers to develop some health justice partnership arrangements. We have a legal service embedded in Canberra Hospital, Calvary and the Gungahlin child and family centre.

That is for people where the health professional or the family professional working with them identifies there may be a risk of domestic and family violence. They can then connect them directly with the legal service provider. They can have a completely confidential conversation, which is one of the things, when we talk about family violence, that people tell us they want. They want a safe conversation where they can explore what is happening to them, or for them, before they actually have to necessarily take action.

Through embedding those legal supports, one of the issues that often arises for families, and for women in particular, is child protection interaction. Having those legal supports where people are already accessing services is providing them with an opportunity to get some legal advice and legal support for the case conferences with CYPS. That is in its early stages, but it seems to be reaching Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander clients as well as a diverse range of clients.

The other model, which is only just in scoping, so it has not actually commenced yet, is a similar idea of embedding a legal practitioner in schools and building networks with schools to support young people and their families with a range of legal issues. It is based on a model that has been quite successful in Victoria. So there are a couple of ways that we are taking legal support out to where people already have engagement.

MRS HUGHES: That is excellent. Bear in mind that we are about to commence question 12 and there are 39 questions to be asked. I know that your time is valuable. How is the directorate prioritising the training and employment of Indigenous disability workers to support culturally safe work practices for people with disabilities?

Ms Sabellico: Generally, we would look at it on a case-by-case basis and work with any individual coming in to identify what their needs are. You look to work with them around reasonable adjustments and what other supports may be required—how to link them in with mentors or buddies, and being able to settle them into their work environment. You then look at what else is required on an ongoing basis in terms of supporting the program of work that they are involved in and how to embed themselves into the team that they are working with. That would all be done on an individual plan basis.

MRS HUGHES: In relation to the internal action plan, I am going to move to question 5, because of the priority of our Aboriginal community-controlled organisations. That is under community leadership, question No 25. We have been advised that the scoping has been finalised by Community Services Directorate for Gugan Gulwan and four options have been presented. We would like to know: has a funding submission been completed and approved, and has it been set at the higher mark of those four options?

Ms Sabellico: I am happy to answer that.

MRS HUGHES: And what is the proposed time line?

Ms Sabellico: As you would appreciate, currently we are going through the budget process within cabinet. We have, in fact, put in a proposal based on the options raised within the scoping study. We are still working with Gugan Gulwan in terms of their preferred option and what that looks like, but we have put in a placeholder for what we would consider to be the highest cost option.

MRS HUGHES: Excellent.

Ms Sabellico: The proposed time line—we need to await the cabinet decision and then progress that with any decision coming out.

MRS HUGHES: Have Gugan got back to you with their preferred option?

Ms Sabellico: We have a date to meet with the board coming up.

MRS HUGHES: Okay. Hopefully soon.

Ms Sabellico: It is in about three weeks—their next board meeting, I believe.

MRS HUGHES: Moving back to children and young people, there is a commitment to work with the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community and our representative bodies, including the Domestic Violence Prevention Council Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Reference Group, on areas of future work from *We don't shoot our wounded* and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Community Forum on Domestic and Family Violence reports to improve the government response to family violence and its impact on the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community. Can you tell us what that commitment looks like and what are the strategies to ensure it is implemented and regularly monitored?

Ms Wood: The commitment is to my office in my regular job. The Office of the

Coordinator-General for Family Safety is working with the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Reference Group under the auspices of the Domestic Violence Prevention Council to support that group and to lead work with the community to prioritise where the work starts. Obviously, *We don't shoot our wounded*, in particular, is a very substantial report and there are a lot of recommendations. Some of them go to quite complex issues.

Our work has been with that reference group. They have obviously had to establish themselves. They have had to establish their terms of reference and their ways of working. They have identified that they want to undertake some engagement with the broader community to establish the starting priorities for turning those recommendations into action. Our role has been to support their work. We are doing that in a few ways. We have established an identified position within our office to work directly with the reference group. We have also committed to provide funding basically to the admin resources needed for that reference group to work effectively—understanding that everyone on the reference group has very busy other jobs—so the logistics and the secretariat role can be funded by their chosen provider.

We are close to signing off a funding agreement so that the arrangement can be in place. That arrangement will include the secretariat support—minutes, organising meetings and that kind of admin work—but also supporting the community engagement process. So they will have an organisation they can work with, who they have chosen, who will book the venues and facilitate that process with the community. I do not want to speak for the reference group, because they are still working this through, but they have indicated to us that by about May they expect to undertake that community engagement.

The other offer that we have made to the reference group is that we can use the resources of our office to support them in any research that they want to undertake to look at models that are working elsewhere. That may extend as far as site visits at particular places they may want to see, where there are well-established models. We are also supporting three members of the reference group to attend the ANROWS national conference. That is a national conference on research in women's safety, which is coming up in April in Adelaide. Three members of the reference group will be supported by our office to attend that. That is a really great opportunity to meet face to face with some of the people doing good work in the rest of the country. We are trying to make sure that we are supporting the reference group to have access to all those resources and to be able to draw the best out of what is happening elsewhere.

Coming out of that engagement, once the reference group have worked through their engagement with community, we will then work with them on how we turn the priorities that have emerged from the practical actions into implementable action. One of the commitments that the minister has made in a statement to the Assembly is that the family safety hub resources would be made available. We have some people with particular kinds of skills around facilitation, as well as a small innovation fund that can help them go out, take an idea and test it—do that work to turn it into something that can be implemented.

MRS HUGHES: With the identified position that has been created, what level is it?

Ms Wood: That is an ASO6 position.

MRS HUGHES: Right. Under the 2019 hearings, recommendation 11, the question is: please describe the work that has been undertaken with the Aboriginal community controlled organisations to increase the engagement of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community members with the family safety hub?

Ms Wood: Again, the key focus for us has been on *We don't shoot our wounded*, which sets out the priorities the community has identified, where it wants government to engage. The DVPC Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Reference Group includes a range of community representatives, including from the Aboriginal community-controlled organisations. Our primary way of building that engagement is to work with that reference group and support them to lead engagement with the community. As that reference group identify new needs—new resources that they need to support that work—we have said that we will be really flexible about doing that.

MRS HUGHES: What strategies have been identified to ensure the commitment to work with the cultural care plans that must be in place for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children in care? How many plans have been developed since the establishment of Our Booris, Our Way? Are experienced and qualified Aboriginal staff involved in the measurement of cultural proficiency and compliance, and how are the plans monitored?

Ms Pappas: Can I go to the data first and just give you data? Then I can work back in terms of the process. As at 31 December, there were 195 Aboriginal children and young people who were in the care of the director-general, and 93 per cent of them had cultural care plans in place. That is just a number.

MRS HUGHES: Yes.

Ms Pappas: But more importantly for us, it is about the quality and the process for the development, so the Our Booris, Our Way recommendation went to the cultural care plans, the Safety in the Pouch group. I am going to have a go at saying it. I do not want to offend anyone, but I am going to have a go at the Aboriginal name of the group. It is the Safety in the Pouch group—that is what I am supposed to be saying—(*Ngunnawal language spoken*). I hope I have said that properly. Sorry, Maurice. I hope I didn't—

MRS HUGHES: He is laughing at me.

Ms Pappas: The team have been working with the Victorian Aboriginal Child Care Agency, who have been doing cultural care planning for a very long time and have lots of expertise. They have drawn on their expertise and have been working with ACT Together to rethink the cultural plan. We have refreshed it; we have got the templates and the guidance. That has gone through our internal committee process and is about to go live. Internally, we have established an Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultural panel for the development of the cultural plans, and the cultural panel provides specific advice and guidance and better support caseworkers, who are developing the plans.

Not all plans are developed by our cultural services team. Sometimes they walk alongside other caseworkers to do that work; sometimes caseworkers do it and then come back and get some advice and be informed and influenced by that panel process.

They are aligned with the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander child placement principles in the context of participation, partnership and the connection elements of the child placement principles. That work is about to kick off. I think the templates are available, or about to be available, to all staff. That panel will kick off and then we will start to see a similar focus on the quality of those plans. They are intended to be living documents; it is not set and forget.

MRS HUGHES: Excellent.

Ms Pappas: They are supposed to be updated. I do not think we will ever get 100 per cent, but we want 100 per cent in the quality of the ones that we have.

MRS HUGHES: What action has been taken to ensure that the interpretation and use of mandatory reporting requirements is consistent across CSD, Education, Health and JACS directorates?

Ms Sabellico: We have started to have some conversations internally in terms of what is the impact of the current mandatory reporting arrangements and what it is, from our point of view, that we need to consider when we are talking with the other directorates. We know that the largest mandatory reporters are Health, Education and the AFP. There has been a bit of a process to look at the data and try and understand if it actually gives us any information in terms of what some of the specific issues are that we should be raising and talking about with other government directorates.

Part of the discussion we have been having is about, “If we’re looking at it through an early support lens, how do we get people to start to support people where there are identified issues rather than just report?” We have started to have that internal conversation. We have had some conversations as well with some external experts on our strengthening practice committee that we have established within CSD to get their views about how far we should go, and the sorts of things we would want to have a look at if we were really going to make a difference to the way in which we do intake, of which mandatory reporting is a part. We have agreement to look at how we then work with the directorates.

It is a continuing piece of work; it is a priority for us to do this as part of how we need to change our front door, so to speak. We will have a lot of work now, going forward, in terms of being able to continue to work on developing that as part of our first action plan. It will potentially lead in to the second, because there will be a significant culture change that will need to occur across all of those directorates in terms of how to stop just reporting rather than looking at how to provide support to people.

Ms Pappas: Very recently we introduced a B-level principal practitioner and a C-level senior practitioner into our intake service. Both of those are designated positions and we have Aboriginal people in them. With the role of those two, as reports are being received on Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander families, they will be reviewed by those staff and they will provide some advice about diversion strategies.

For them it is about reaching out, back into the mandatory reporting community, and talking about what a different response might be. What is it that those people could do differently next time, and how might we work together to prevent families from coming

into the system when it is about need, not necessarily risk? That is relatively new, and we are really excited to see what the potential is there in terms of preventing families from coming into the system unnecessarily or being reported and then coming into the system unnecessarily.

MRS HUGHES: It is important to have that clear understanding across ACT government, which then filters out to the rest of the community, on what mandatory requirements are. Under “inclusive community” in your action plan is: “a self-determined and inclusive society where Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people are valued, respected and experience a life free of racism and systematic discrimination”. Has the United Ngunnawal Elders Council approached the directorate to seek an increase in their sitting fees? If so, is the directorate considering an increase in the sitting fees in line with other existing traditional custodian committees or groups across other directorates?

Ms Charles: Yes, the United Ngunnawal Elders Council approached the directorate late last year to seek an increase in their sitting fees. In response OATSIA has been finalising an analysis of their sitting fees and comparing that against all boards, committees and holders of public part-time office. We are looking to finalise that for their next meeting, which has had to be rescheduled to mid-March. That analysis has been undertaken, which would include looking at the existing traditional custodian committee.

MRS HUGHES: How many formal arrangements are in place to build joint opportunities for strategic initiatives for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander businesses and services?

Ms Sabellico: We probably all have some examples from the different areas. Again, I think it goes to how we are trying to consider what work we are undertaking and who we need to bring on board to support us undertaking that work each and every time. It is about thinking through whether there is a significant Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander issue or need for community involvement in certain aspects of what we are looking at, and how we then make sure there is the appropriate level of voice within our decision-making about how to do that.

To give one example about how we then thought through that, in terms of looking at establishing our co-design forum, we talked a lot to a number of community members about what that needed to look like and how to progress that. When we decided that we would test that sort of forum on the non-adoptions policy, we clearly worked through the fact that it would be great to have Aboriginal facilitators to be able to undertake that work. We made a very clear decision that we would commission for those consultants to come on board to assist with that. I know that, similarly, within CYF, in terms of the work that was needed around their family group conferencing, they worked specifically with Curijo in establishing that. It comes down to: what do we need to do? Who is best to undertake that work? We then need to be able to apply that lens.

MRS HUGHES: I think that is a good process, but what seems to be missing is that that is all generated from within the directorate—the ideas to test. How can the community, or community organisations in particular, be the ones to raise the things that they think should be the joint approaches? Is there something in place to capture

that?

Ms Sabellico: We are going through our process around looking at how we better align the work that we need to do with what we know are the needs from the community. We review all of the community budget bids to identify some of the issues that are arising there. Where we do have similar or aligned interests, we would potentially make a call and say, “Do you wish to partner in terms of what we are doing here as well?” That has worked successfully a couple of times. We have done some joint proposals to government around some of those sorts of things.

In terms of commissioning for social impact, that will give more of an opportunity for there to be earlier decisions made so that, if we have an issue to solve, we work out how to do that jointly, in partnership. We look at who is involved and how we actually progress this. We can make the decision about whether it actually sits within government, the sector, or in fact both. How do we need to construct it so that it will get the best results? That is some of the future thinking at this stage.

Ms Pappas: A good example of that is the approach of Gugan Gulwan to child and youth protection services around their functional family therapy program.

THE CHAIR: Yes, that is a good example.

Ms Pappas: That was not on our radar until Gugan said, “We think we can do something here,” and that has been incredibly successful.

Ms Gilding: From a housing point of view, we have been approached by several different organisations and have been working over 18 months to two years in terms of how to work together to progress the development of community housing organisations. I think there is also an opportunity for us in terms of the commitment we have made under the action plan around establishing the community participation approach. We are yet to carve out or tackle what that looks like, but the way we co-design that or the way that comes to the fore will be an avenue for community to raise ideas back into housing about how those things might happen.

MRS HUGHES: How does the directorate ensure that tender panels include an appropriate Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander member?

Ms Wood: Ms Hughes, a lot of our processes are grants rather than procurements. Certainly, for grants, we have a very clear expectation of diversity and appropriate Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander representation on those panels. We can take on notice looking at how we ensure that for other types of tender processes. It is probably an area where we need to look at ensuring consistent practice. I suspect we may have good practice in some areas and less good practice in other areas.

MRS HUGHES: We need to ensure that it is not staff within the directorate—that we are looking at community members.

Ms Wood: Yes.

MRS HUGHES: I would hate to hear that an ASO2 was sitting on a panel and feeling

pressured to make decisions.

Ms Wood: Yes.

MRS HUGHES: Are you combining that with question 27? How many of your mainstream grant programs have Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander members on the assessment panels? Do you want to combine that one?

Ms Sabellico: Yes, we can combine those two.

MRS HUGHES: Question 21: where a tender process is not required, what is the process for engaging Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander businesses?

Ms Wood: Where a tender process is not required, we have quite a bit of flexibility. We can single-select. We can identify that there is a particular business or provider that actually has all the expertise. We have to assess it still against value for money, but there are different ways that you can do that that do not require a tender process. We do single select or we can seek some quotes and we then make an assessment and a recommendation to an appropriate delegate. We can engage people directly.

I think the key thing there is actually making sure that everyone who might be engaging in that sort of procurement knows who the available businesses are and actually has visibility of them. There is a range of work that we are doing, both under the Indigenous procurement policy but more broadly to raise awareness about the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander enterprise list and then beyond the local list, the Supply Nation Indigenous business directory.

We have had staff from our services and funding support team attend a Supply Nation expo, I think, to find out more about Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander businesses. We are making sure that our people who advise on procurement have really good visibility and knowledge of both the local Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander businesses but also other businesses who might be appropriate to our work. That will be an ongoing process of raising that visibility.

MRS HUGHES: Ensuring that the IPP is about ACT businesses and growing the economic participation of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people living in the ACT.

Ms Wood: Yes, and that is absolutely our very first priority.

MRS HUGHES: When will the first meeting of the Our Booris, Our Way steering implementation committee be held?

Ms Sabellico: I met with the contact person for that interim implementation steering committee last week and we discussed the potential dates for the committee, the agenda for the first committee and the drafting of some documents for the committee to consider. She has asked for the first meeting to be a four-hour meeting, so we are just looking at some times to be able to send through, along with the draft agenda. But we agreed it would be late March, early April and I have got times ready to send through tomorrow in an email for that to occur.

MRS HUGHES: With the final report for Our Booris, Our Way, there was a compelling and detailed analysis that spells out a number of changes in the child protection system to work with our families to keep our children safe at home or with family. There is a list of dot points there. What actions have been progressed to undertake a feasibility study to fund and grow an Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander childcare association? What strategies, policies and programs will develop the importance of culture and kin in the placement of children in out of home care? How many programs have been run? What is the measurement to ensure understanding and implementation?

How many children have improved family connections since the last hearing? What work practices have been improved for the oversight of ACT Together's work practices? How many Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people have oversight in the development of those work practices?

Ms Sabellico: I am happy to start with the first questions and then we might share a couple of them around. I will give a bit of an overview on the feasibility study and then I will pass to Ms Charles to talk through more of the detail. We presented some interim findings from the feasibility at the last of the Our Booris, Our Way steering committee meetings in December and got some feedback and some input in terms of where we needed to continue to undertake some further research or consider different issues.

Then that has been taken away and developed further with an expectation as well that our final paper would be part of the first meeting of the new interim steering committee for consultation about how we then take that forward. I will hand over to Ms Charles in terms of the process that is then being used to bring that together.

Ms Charles: We have done a pretty comprehensive desktop review across all the jurisdictions and international models. We have also been working with our data team to look at the numbers of children across the different caring arrangements in out of home protection and so we have pretty much pulled all of the best practice models. I think we showcased those and talked through those with the Our Booris, Our Way steering committee meeting, looking more towards what they are doing in Queensland, Victoria and New South Wales.

I have met a couple of times with the Queensland peak body to better understand what they provide in terms of services to their members. I have also met with the Queensland government in terms of how they work with the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people to better understand how Aboriginal voices are heard within the Queensland government.

That knowledge all feeds into the feasibility study and the desktop review. I have had a couple of my staff attend the SNAICC conference, so they could build their knowledge and capability around it and the New South Wales child protection peak body as well to better understand their processes, again talking with the New South Wales government. We are bringing all of that experience together with the desktop review that will feed in, and bringing the numbers to feed into resolving our feasibility study.

THE CHAIR: Can I just check that I have understood all pieces? The feasibility study

is looking at what models that are out there and using Our Booris, Our Way committee to say, “These are the things we think will work.” You are having a look at the actual numbers of people who we think will need to use the service and then having a look at what it would cost to deliver that model to that many people.

Ms Charles: That is right.

Ms Pappas: And is it one or two, or are there a number of other options in between that we can then use to consult on more broadly, depending on the preference of the steering committee.

MRS HUGHES: Focusing on since the report has been tabled in the Legislative Assembly—and of course that first meeting of the implementation committee will be critical—what strategies, policies and programs will develop the importance of culture and kin in the placement of children in out of home care?

Ms Pappas: The Our Booris, Our Way review was iterative. We were getting recommendations as we were going along. We did not need to wait until the final report. Over the course of 2019 we have done quite a lot of work in terms of engaging with SNAICC to deliver very comprehensive training in an ongoing way, and to engage with Curijo to do some work with our team to develop an Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander practice guide. That guide is about how we embed the Aboriginal child placement principle into our day-to-day practice. Curijo worked with us to do that and SNAICC has reviewed that for us. That guide is about to be printed and about to be released. We will have a launch because it is a significant piece of work for us.

I will go back to Safety in the Pouch, the advisory group. We have membership on that policy group from Gugan Gulwan, the Aboriginal Legal Service, Winnunga Nimmityjah, the Red Cross, the Family Advocacy Service, OzChild, JACS, ACT Together, Health, CYPS and the child and family centres. So it is really broad and it is across quite a lot of our service systems.

The role of that group is to provide advice and inform and influence the redevelopment of policy. We are being pretty systematic in terms of going through each of our policies and making sure that we account for the Aboriginal placement principles in each policy and culturally responsive practice. There are things like the family preservation procedure. I will come back to the list, if I find it.

With A Step Up For Our Kids governance, we have an operational policy subcommittee. That steering committee will feed into the work that CYPS does with ACT Together to get a consistent, seamless approach to policy and procedure across both of those service systems. Kids, as we know, go through the service system backwards and forwards and we want the same response, so that people know what to expect regardless of where they are in the service system. If I can find the list of policies, I will come back to you, if that is all right?

MRS HUGHES: Otherwise you can take it on notice. How many programs have been run?

Ms Pappas: When you say programs, I jump to programs like functional family therapy.

We have moved out of the pilot phase and Gugan and OzChild have funding to continue to deliver that program, which—

MRS HUGHES: And family group conferencing?

Ms Pappas: And family group conferencing. Both of those programs are funded ongoing. They are achieving, as I mentioned earlier, great success—particularly the functional family therapy one. Of the 30 families, in excess of about 100 kids or thereabouts are involved in that program. None of the kids who have participated in that program have come into care, which is extraordinary.

THE CHAIR: Did you say none?

Ms Pappas: None. It is extraordinary. I think that is about the credibility that those organisations bring to this work, and the time that they take to engage and build relationships with family establishes that success. We are incredibly excited about that. I do not know that we are going to be able to maintain that into the outyears. Of course, families choose not to participate, but with the ones who do, and stick with it, we are seeing some real success.

The family group conferencing program, again, is achieving some success. We have had 38 families involved with that program to date. We are seeing some success in terms of kids who are not coming into the system as a result. From the beginning of the pilot, in November 2017, to February 2020, 38 families have been involved in the family group conferencing program, which has involved 82 children. Of those 82 children, 53 have not subsequently come into care. With the remaining 29 children, families were in a position to be able to make decisions about where those children should go within their own family networks. The family centre decision-making meant families decided what happened to those kids, rather than the system doing it. Even though some of those kids are in care, families were able to make those decisions.

We are really thrilled about the success of those programs. The uniting children and families program is also starting to see some success in terms of the work that it is doing. I will try and find some data for you. The data there is increasing. The number of Aboriginal families that are engaged in that program is increasing. We are seeing those kids at home and staying home for longer. I mentioned earlier that those Aboriginal families that have received the service are still at home 12 months later.

MRS HUGHES: That is excellent.

Ms Pappas: It is good. It is early stages and we know we have more work to do in that space, but we are excited about the potential here.

MRS HUGHES: It is heartwarming to hear those stats.

Ms Pappas: Yes. The over-representation exists, and we are working hard to turn that around.

MRS HUGHES: I recognise there is still a lot of work to be done.

Ms Pappas: Absolutely.

MRS HUGHES: I believe the next two have already been answered. What work practices have been improved for the oversight of ACT Together's work practices?

Ms Sabellico: One of the recommendations from the final report from the Our Booris, Our Way Steering Committee was to look at establishing a monitoring and review framework, for us then to be able to identify what the quality and level of casework was for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children and young people within the ACT Together consortium.

That work is currently in the planning stages around what it needs to look like and what it needs to cover off on, in terms of the full continuum of care planning, casework, the therapeutic assessment and all of those things. We have also been having conversations with Barnardos about the specific areas where we would expect to see increased levels of quality of work. We have been very specific about what we expect to see. In fact, we have started to have some conversations about how we do some sampling and testing of some of those quality areas.

One of the discussions we have had with them is that, with the cultural planning process, given that CYF has invested quite a bit of money in looking at the templates, the panel they have set up and reviewing for the quality of the content, we expect there to be one system across both, not separate systems. We have been having those conversations.

I also know that there is a whole governance structure that sits around A Step Up For Our Kids. One of those is around the operational practice and procedures, where a whole lot of the discussions about expectations and consistency of practice occur. I will pass over to Helen for that.

Ms Pappas: With some of the policy work that we are developing, we would expect ACT Together to pick up on and use it, in terms of informing their own practices. The Safety in the Pouch team are developing an Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander father-inclusive practice guide. How do you work with the fathers? We know that it was an area that was a recommendation of Our Booris, Our Way. There is mother-inclusive practice and grandparent-inclusive practice—recognising the different responses that are needed.

There is how we work with non-Aboriginal carers caring for Aboriginal children. I am trying to run through some of them. There is some information about family time. What does contact mean for Aboriginal families and how should that run? There is some guidance around that. There is information about prenatal practices, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander mental health, and identification and family mapping. That is some of the work that the team are focusing on.

All of that, regardless of where you are in the service system, is important. There is no need for anybody to redo that or replicate that. We should just be able to hand that over. With training opportunities, we will look to see how we can extend them and have everybody participate, which helps to build relationships and understanding each other's roles and responsibilities, and it supports better practice.

MRS HUGHES: Thank you. With the framework in particular, how many Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people have oversights the development of the work practices that go into that?

Ms Sabellico: The framework in terms of the monitoring and review framework?

MRS HUGHES: Yes.

Ms Sabellico: None yet. We are looking at the communication and the consultation plan to be able to get that input into the process.

MRS HUGHES: Yes. Of course, you will involve the Aboriginal community-controlled organisations in that. With leadership—we have already asked the Gudan Gulwan question—in terms of this agreement, how many Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people have been successful in receiving grants across the grant program managed by CSD?

Ms Sabellico: Ms Charles can speak to the numbers for the grants managed by our NCR. As for other grants programs within CSD, I will have to take that on notice. We do not have the numbers with us, so we will take the whole question on notice, as well as the non-Indigenous grants.

THE CHAIR: In particular we are interested in that broader access.

Ms Sabellico: Yes; I understand. We have already taken 27 on notice.

MRS HUGHES: Can you add in there how you ensure that they are targeted at those most in need?

Ms Wood: Yes, we will do those three questions.

MRS HUGHES: What strategies does the directorate have in place to advise the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community about the grants programs?

Ms Wood: We can speak to the OATSIA grants programs. We will take the others on notice.

MRS HUGHES: Okay.

Ms Charles: All grants are put up onto the CSD website. They can be found through the strong families website. There is also a social media presence. We try to promote the grants that way. We circulate not only through our networks—so Murrunga through the ACT government—but also through networks and social media. We have a group that goes out to community. All of those grants programs are regularly promoted that way.

MRS HUGHES: Thank you. What supports are available for the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander representatives on the Disability Reference Group?

Ms Dunne: New members are provided with an induction program, which is very

flexible. It is flexible in terms of how it is delivered to meet individual's needs and flexible in terms of assessing what the ongoing needs of new members are into the future. We take into account the special interests and needs of members. For example, the current Aboriginal woman who is a member of the DRG in her second term is the chair of the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Working Group. The DRG and the secretariat support her in developing the action plan. Any additional support that is required to achieve those outcomes is provided either out of session or within the context of the meeting itself.

If people show particular interests or have needs that we can achieve through any means then we do that. It is very important for us to have highly performing members and that they are provided with the necessary support to be able to meet their work plan.

MRS HUGHES: You are not waiting for them to identify a need? There is that open communication happening?

Ms Dunne: Absolutely. As I said, it is the secretariat's responsibility, as well as the chair's responsibility, to engage in dialogue.

MRS HUGHES: In regard to connecting community, what formal arrangements have been made in progressing new reforms and initiatives to develop capability across the service system?

Ms Charles: Reflecting on the CSD action plan, this particular question goes to the governance arrangements and community-controlled management of Yarramundi and Boomanulla. I would like to talk about those, if that is what the committee is after.

MRS HUGHES: Yes.

Ms Charles: The ACT government recognises the significance of both Boomanulla and the Yarramundi Cultural Centre to the ACT Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community. Under the agreement, our actions are to transition—in partnership with CMTEDD—Boomanulla to community management and control and, in and around Yarramundi, to work with the community to foster and promote tourism opportunities.

CSD is continuing to work with the Elected Body, yourselves and key government directorates such as Chief Minister, Treasury and Economic Development and TCCS to finalise that approach to community engagement. It is furthering that conversation in terms of the long-term governance model.

In regard to the cultural centre, in the 2019-20 midyear budget \$273,000 was allocated to the government to work with the Elected Body and community to identify options to create an Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultural tourism precinct at the Yarramundi centre. Part of that work will be to develop the strategic vision and establish a community-controlled management mechanism for Yarramundi Cultural Centre. We have been having conversations with the Elected Body. Those conversations will continue.

MRS HUGHES: In relation to the communication strategy, have you worked with, or have you considered working with, the United Ngunnawal Elders Council and the

Aboriginal community-controlled organisations?

Ms Charles: Around these two initiatives, yes. We agree in the approach with the Elected Body on how best to work with community in that community engagement. That would include all stakeholders, including the community-controlled sector and the United Ngunnawal Elders as an important and key significant group.

MRS HUGHES: Bearing in mind that traditional custodianship and cultural tourism go hand in hand.

Ms Charles: That is correct. That would be key.

MRS HUGHES: Learning and the action plan: what proportion of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children and young people, families and kin, participated in the development of their own cultural care plans?

Ms Pappas: I cannot give you the numbers on that. That is not information that we can extract out of our system, other than through a manual process. What I can tell you is that the guidance very strongly directs staff on how to engage. I think I mentioned earlier that the new work and the guidance around engagement participation is front and centre in terms of how that is done, who needs to participate in that and how often we need to review that.

As I mentioned earlier, the cultural development program puts the Aboriginal child placement principles front and centre in all the decisions and in how we work and practice. It is now a process of embedding that as we go, and giving people the opportunity to experience that and get some feedback, and then continue to learn as they work.

MRS HUGHES: What is your directorate's definition of family connection and kinship?

Ms Sabellico: Again, this is something that Helen and I have been discussing for a little while. We have some work underway to identify the definition for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander kinship care, as opposed to kinship care more broadly, because our systems effectively count any family member in any situation as kin. We need to be able to know how to account for those separately in both of our data collection systems and then in our interpretation of that data.

There are then the issues that we come across on a daily basis. When we have kinship as carers and supports for kids, what level of oversight is required with that family situation? We are working on a piece to define what is Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander kinship from our point of view. We can then look to establish a draft position and consult on that more broadly to get it right, similar to how we worked through the non-adoption policy. We can then use that as the basis for our decision-making in our casework, in our data collection system and anything else. That of course then goes to how we maintain the connection with family and broader kin as well. Both will be covered.

MRS HUGHES: In your research and in making that decision will you involve

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people?

Ms Sabellico: Absolutely, yes.

MRS HUGHES: I note that Our Booris, Our Way looked at what was already available out there and were very supportive of the Queensland definition.

Ms Sabellico: Yes, we note that.

THE CHAIR: One of the things that has been raised with me in a few different forums is to make sure that that definition of kinship and family does not become a disincentive to take care of our children. For example, grandparents who end up taking that responsibility are not considered to be in the system in a formal way and may lack the supports that they would get if the kids were to end up in the system. If that can be looked at, that would be excellent. Thank you.

Ms Sabellico: Yes. We will be looking at it quite comprehensively in terms of what it means for the supports and the systems as well.

THE CHAIR: Excellent. Thank you.

MRS HUGHES: What is the strategy for successfully transitioning young people to return to education when they are released from Bimberi?

Ms Pappas: The Education Directorate runs the school within Bimberi. As you would expect, the kids in Bimberi have very good school attendance. This is fantastic to see. We have good connections with the school. A transition officer, which I understand Education funds, works with kids at Bimberi to successfully transition them into mainstream or other forms of education.

Ms Robinson: As Ms Pappas was outlining, the Murrumbidgee Education and Training Centre is delivered by Education within the grounds of Bimberi. They have a dedicated transition officer whose role it is to work between Bimberi and back into education, whether that is mainstream education or other types of education and training. They assist with those transition plans back to school. They provide practical assistance to young people once they leave Bimberi as well, assisting them to make sure they make the connections with school or training opportunities.

The Education Directorate has just done a restructure, bringing together its additional supportive education models under one executive. That transition officer is able to support young people transitioning across some of those additional supported education models.

MRS HUGHES: With the transitioning, some young people may be returning home to families. For the young people not returning home to families but to Narrabundah House, when will Narrabundah House be available again?

Ms Robinson: We are working to re-establish Narrabundah House at the moment. A range of particular circumstances unfortunately have meant that has not been available, including recent hail damage.

MRS HUGHES: That is right.

Ms Robinson: We are working on the physical repairs to the property. We are also working on building our staffing capability in Bimberi to be able to respond to Narrabundah House. Ms Brendas, who is a director of Bimberi, indicated to me that a recruitment process is underway at the moment. It looks like we will be able to offer about 30 staff positions. This means that we will be able to re-establish that to its full capacity, once staff complete the induction program.

MRS HUGHES: What is the time line?

Ms Robinson: The induction program is commencing on 20 April. Upon completion of that we will be able to reinstate that immediately.

Ms Pappas: The induction process takes seven weeks.

MRS HUGHES: With the hail damage, what is the expected time line for the house itself to be available?

Ms Robinson: The house, I imagine, will be available in a quicker time frame than the staffing availability.

MRS HUGHES: Is there a strategy to successfully transition young people to accommodation after they turn 18, to reduce homelessness?

Ms Robinson: Our priority for young people exiting Bimberi is always getting them back at home. We have a family engagement officer at Bimberi, which is an identified position. She works with families whilst young people are in Bimberi, assisting them with a range of issues, including support for young people to transition back home.

In the event that is not possible, accommodation options are explored as part of the standard exit planning that happens for all young people through case management and through case conferencing prior to exit. We work with providers such as OneLink and the youth housing program to identify appropriate options for young people as they exit Bimberi.

THE CHAIR: Is that to make sure that they have not just accommodation but also some wraparound service? Is that why they do that?

Ms Robinson: That is right. It is the ongoing support and assistance. We consider the accommodation within their holistic needs. The holistic needs are identified within the case management plan. Where child and youth protection services have an ongoing role in relation to young people, such as an ongoing supervision role through an order, then we continue to provide the case management support to them. Where we do not have an order identified, then we look at a community provider to provide the ongoing case management support for the young person and their family.

MRS HUGHES: In relation to young people transitioning post-release, what measurements are in place and how are they monitored?

Ms Robinson: We have some further work to do in this area. One of the complexities for us is around, as I was just explaining, not having a youth justice order to supervise all young people when they leave custody. Typically we will have one for young people who had a period of remand in Bimberi but not for young people who have completed their sentence. It is challenging for us to track and monitor young people when they exit Bimberi.

We have identified a piece of work to progress in the first half of this year: throughcare support for young people exiting Bimberi, and youth justice generally. In fact, we were discussing in general this project this week at the Bimberi oversight meeting. The Children and Young People Commissioner and the two official visitors, including Ms Tracey Harris, the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander official visitor, will work with us on the initial scoping of that work. We have already indicated in those early discussions the importance of being able to monitor where young people are going post-release from Bimberi. That is a piece of work we are about to embark on.

MRS HUGHES: I will be interested in hearing more on that and your providing advice. In relation to health and wellbeing in the action plan, has a therapeutic assessment been done for all Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children and young people in the care of the director-general? If not, what would be the time frame for this to be done?

Ms Robinson: I can talk to that; I do not do just Bimberi. Therapeutic assessments were introduced as a key component of the A Step Up For Our Kids strategy as we move to a more trauma-informed system. The undertaking was to conduct therapeutic assessments for all young people in the care of the director-general. We have been working through that process iteratively since the introduction of the strategy.

We have put considerable effort into that over the past 18 months, including having the Australian Childhood Foundation support us in some of that work. In doing that, we prioritised therapeutic assessments for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children. The vast majority of those assessments have been completed or are allocated for completion. We are on track to complete all of those by June this year.

Our internal therapeutic assessment team is currently able to allocate therapeutic assessments for children as they enter care. They are again prioritising Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children.

MRS HUGHES: What progress has been made by the office of family safety to establish an innovative community-led solutions and engagement approach to engage with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander men and boys across the community?

Ms Wood: That work is wrapped up in the work with the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander reference group of the DBPC. The reference group have indicated in early conversations that they think that a focus on support for men and boys may be one of the early actions coming out of the community engagement. But they obviously want to undertake community engagement to establish that.

Part of the work we are doing is making sure we are aware of where there is good practice we can bring to the table and support the reference group to explore. Last year

we looked at the evidence around perpetrator interventions generally. We brought in some experts from other jurisdictions to present on what the evidence was saying in the ACT. That led us to some connections with some of the innovative projects in Victoria in particular, where they are funding a range of pilots to look at different responses to men who use violence.

We have connected with a couple of those projects that either are led by an Aboriginal-controlled organisation—there is a really interesting program in Bendigo led by the Aboriginal-controlled organisation there—or are a model where there is a partnership with an Aboriginal-controlled organisation to bring the cultural competency into the design of the program.

We shared those connections with the reference group. We will continue to use our networks with other governments and, in particular, to find where there are other projects that have a particular focus on Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander men and boys. There is also the upcoming ANROWS conference. There will definitely be some people with really good expertise attending that conference where we can support the reference group to make connections. Again, that might lead to some follow-up engagement and potentially some site visits.

MRS HUGHES: How does your directorate progress the Indigenous housing strategy? Does it include Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people with disability and high needs?

Ms Gilding: Are you talking about the second dot point on the priority actions around progressing?

MRS HUGHES: Yes.

Ms Gilding: It starts with establishing a community participation approach. We are yet to really do that. We have done some internal thinking. We need to engage the right person or organisations who work with us to develop that framework but move beyond just a policy. I would not want it to be a policy that just sits bolt on. We want to be able to take the principles—kinship principles, cultural principles—and embed them throughout our operational policy.

I sit here looking at Helen's lovely list of things that she is starting to do. We need to go right through all of our operational policies in Housing ACT. This is a piece of work that we are turning our minds to more broadly as an organisation. We have done a lot of strategy work in the last couple of years. We now need to become a little bit more inward facing in terms of our operational policies and how they become far more engaged in terms of an ICT business transformation sense. Part of that is an opportunity to ensure that we embed culturally appropriate processes right throughout the organisation.

The last 12 months have seen us quite busy with our TFM mobilisation, which has seen great things happening in terms of social inclusion and staffing, employment, procurement, this and that. We now need to go to that broader piece of work as part of the 10-year strategy of developing the approach to policy and then working out how to embed that right through the organisation.

MRS HUGHES: Has your directorate progressed the affordable housing options for specialist disability accommodation and families escaping family violence? If so, does it include an Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander focus?

Ms Gilding: In terms of the affordable housing, some of that sits in EPSDD. My focus would be on that specialist housing homelessness sector and also public housing. So, yes, we would absolutely have a focus on Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people within public housing. Only a small cohort of people was eligible for SDA in the first instance. We have had a few folk who have been eligible. More broadly, though, the SDA is set up to drive an economic response or a market response from the market more generally.

MRS HUGHES: What strategies have been identified and implemented to support the development of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander-managed community housing in the ACT?

Ms Gilding: We have been engaging with anybody who is interested in progressing a community housing organisation. Most of our conversations have been with Yeddung Mura pathways. They are our only registered community housing organisation at the moment. I am hoping that we do not scare them off. Unfortunately, this conversation has happened a couple of times. An organisation that provides support to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people comes to us and says, “We need houses.” We say, “Great, let’s help you build your organisation and your business and your support models so that you can actually do property and tenancy management as well.” We then find that, when they get through to the nitty-gritty of what property and tenancy management requires, they say, “Actually, we don’t want to do that”. We then have turned around and said, “Okay, well, how do we then partner, say, with Community Housing Canberra or CHARMS or other organisations who actually have that property and tenancy expertise to then couple and bring that together with the organisation’s support focus?”

It is still a long journey. There are lots more conversations to be had. We have made some progress, I think, with Yeddung in terms of their partnership with JACS and looking at how the justice housing program works for them as well. We are open to looking at an incredible number of different ways that we might support organisations into that property and tenancy management space.

MRS HUGHES: We might come back to that one. One of the housing priority areas is Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander identity. How does the directorate confirm applicants are actually Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander? What documentation does the directorate request to confirm identity?

Ms Gilding: On our housing application form there is a box that they can tick. We take people at face value. Some folk bring documentation from Winnunga. But in terms of investigating further, we do not.

MRS HUGHES: How many Aboriginal people are on the priority list?

Ms Gilding: At the moment, 15.

MRS HUGHES: How long is the wait list for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people?

Ms Gilding: How long is a piece of string? It depends on where that person wants to live and what build form they need or require. If somebody comes to us who is on priority, they have a large family, they have disability needs, they need a four or five-bedroom class C house, and they want that in Belconnen, that will determine how long it takes. It will be about the availability of that house coming, whether we build it or it is on the market or becoming vacant for that family in order to meet their needs in the location that keeps them with their supports and their schools and education et cetera.

MRS HUGHES: Are you able to get us some figures?

Ms Gilding: I can. Can we have a look at that and maybe look at how long it took for the last certain number of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander families on priority to be housed?

MRS HUGHES: Happy with that.

Ms Gilding: Yes. I will take that on notice.

MRS HUGHES: How many Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people have been placed in affordable housing in the life of our agreement?

Ms Gilding: That might be a question for EPSDD. I do not know. We do public housing, as opposed to affordable housing. I can probably tell you how many people have been placed into public housing in the life of the agreement. Would you like me to take that on notice?

MRS HUGHES: Yes, that would be good. How many Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander people have been declined for the priority list since the start of the agreement?

Ms Gilding: Again, I would need to take that one on notice.

MRS HUGHES: Yes.

Ms Gilding: I suspect very few. Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people are one of our priority cohorts. I guess it is the process of application. They need to meet our first eligibility criteria, which means they are on a low income. It is targeted. They tick that box and generally move through that system. They are a priority cohort. The majority would be on the priority list.

MRS HUGHES: How many assessment officers have had the cultural proficiency training?

Ms Gilding: During 2019, 10 housing gateway services staff attended the cultural masterclasses, and 12 attended the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultural competence foundation course. We have also introduced—flowing on from what Mr Rose was saying before in terms of the core cultural competencies—induction

programs.

MRS HUGHES: How many assessment officers are Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander?

Ms Gilding: I think we have nine within the housing division. I suspect it is quite a small cohort to then go down by branch. It is probably fewer than five. I am thinking that it is probably about two at this point.

MRS HUGHES: Are you confident with that or do you want to take it away?

Ms Gilding: I will confirm that too.

MRS HUGHES: Thank you. Through the targeted home ownership strategy, how many Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people have purchased their homes?

Ms Gilding: I can talk to our internal shared equity scheme.

MRS HUGHES: Yes, that is the one we are after.

Ms Gilding: I have 2018-19 figures here. I will talk overall numbers, because then I think it is interesting to have it as a proportion of that. In 2018-19 we were assisting 61 households through the shared equity scheme. That means we held equity in 61 properties that the tenants were purchasing.

MRS HUGHES: That is the general population?

Ms Gilding: This is public housing tenants. Two of the properties, so three per cent, were being purchased by Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander households.

MRS HUGHES: What are you doing to try to increase that to encourage people to go through that shared equity scheme?

Ms Gilding: What we have seen, more broadly, is that when it began there was much more take-up. It has dropped off. We have a proposal where we want to have a look at how that shared equity, those percentages, are actually set. Is 70-30 right? Is there a possibility to change the equity share so that more people can reach into home ownership? We need to be very careful in considering people's financial circumstances, and make sure that we do not put people in a financially unsustainable position.

MRS HUGHES: That does not mean that we cannot spread the word and communicate to people so that they have a choice.

Ms Gilding: Stepping back, one of the things we do is communicate on a regular basis. We find those folk who are at the higher income levels within the portfolio. We write to them and we say, "Hey, we've got an opportunity for you." We work with people and help them understand their financial situation and see whether they are in a position to purchase outright or enter into shared equity.

MRS HUGHES: What work has been done with Indigenous Business Australia to

progress home ownership since our last hearings?

Ms Gilding: That was an action for EPSDD under the housing strategy. You would have to put that their way. As part of our shared equity work, we need to look at who our banking partner is in terms of those shared equity arrangements. I think there is then a possibility to bring them into that partnership or look at those different partnerships as part of that shared equity arrangement.

MRS HUGHES: With your preferred banking partner, would you look at Indigenous Business Australia for—

Ms Gilding: Yes. That is right.

THE CHAIR: I have been listening to the answers from you and the other directorates. Do you have anyone from children and families?

Ms Saballa: In my role as executive branch manager of children and families, I oversee the three child and family centres and the child development service.

THE CHAIR: We spoke with Education earlier this morning. We have had a particular focus on the expansion of early childhood placements for kids to go into Koori preschool and those sorts of things. We are also very conscious—in one of our earlier questions we were asking about understanding the population—of how young our population is. How many young persons are, and what are the numbers of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people, accessing your centres at the moment?

Ms Saballa: I have some data I can share with you. I will find it.

THE CHAIR: While you are doing that, I will explain why I am asking this and why we have pushed for how to do the placements for these new early childhood places. Families and their young children get very used to process. How do we pipeline people through? I think in their answer this morning they talked a little bit about the assessment process. They have been lucky enough to pick up Shona Chapman. That made the connection for me with your family centres. People are accessing some of the family programs that you are running. How many people do you have in your programs? What potential connection is there for them into these additional early childhood placements?

Ms Saballa: What I will do first is share data that I have from the last financial year in preparation. First, I will set the scene about the number of families accessing child and family centre programs. Then I can go onto the detail about Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander families and children as percentages. As for last financial year, we had at least 1,820 families accessing services at the child and family centres. That is overall. There would be more. They would be families that are accessing services. We would be recording that as part of our client recording.

THE CHAIR: Does that mean a family of, say, five kids and two adults is one count in that number?

Ms Saballa: Yes.

THE CHAIR: So it is a lot more people than that?

Ms Saballa: Yes. This is interesting in terms of complexity of the work that we do in the child and family centres. As you know, it is a universal service. Every family with young children is welcome. But quite a lot of work that we do is targeted. There is complexity and vulnerability. There are about 23 per cent of families accessing case management. That, for us, is a proxy of vulnerability.

I will now go to the data I have on Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children and families. There were at least 225 Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children involved in the child and family centres. That is about 12 per cent of the children that we see. Noting what you said, chair, that could be an undercount as well. There is a lot of work that we do within community, hosting celebrations and events, where we are connecting with many families and children. When we look at the number of families, we see that were at least 208 Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander families involved with the CFC. That is about 11 per cent of the families we worked with.

I have a note here about larger group sessions and anonymous events. This is important because over the years we have built the child and family centre program and the child development services as culturally safe and inclusive spaces that welcome families. We see families—it could be grandparents; it could be carers who have Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children in their care—coming into the centres. They are asking questions; they are having a cuppa; they are raising issues. It may not come through a formal process of coming into intake, being recorded, having a client number; it is very much about people feeling comfortable to come into the centre. There are many more families as well. That is a data snapshot.

THE CHAIR: What is the age range of the children we are talking about? In the ACT are there 1,000 kids in that age range or 225? I am trying to get the proportion of our kids that come through the centre.

Ms Saballa: It varies. I could share some census data that I have from the 2016 census.

THE CHAIR: Yes, which is the best we can go with.

Ms Saballa: For 2016 census data, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children birth to four years, the data I have is 354 children versus a total of 11,531; that is, 3.07 per cent. For Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children five to nine years, it is 363 children versus a total in the ACT of 11,709, so it is 3.1 per cent. And then Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children birth to nine years is 717, versus a total in that age cohort of 23,240, so it is 3.08 per cent. Could I go quickly to what you are asking about our role in engaging with families and working with Education?

THE CHAIR: Yes.

Ms Saballa: We have three early years engagement officer roles. Two of those roles are co-funded with the Education Directorate. They are based in the child and family centres. We have one in the child development service. They play a very important role. They work with the Koori preschools and link families into child and family centre supports. And vice versa: we link families from the child and family centre programs

that we run into Koori pre and into education. That is an approach that works well in terms of tailoring supports to meet the needs of families.

THE CHAIR: That is what I was particularly interested in. If roughly in that age group and general population you are looking at about three per cent but accessing your services is closer to 11, 12 per cent, it shows that our families do want these sorts of services. They are most likely to be the same family groups that we are trying to give these other opportunities to. I just wanted to make sure that there is a connection between this really nice entry point for families and knowing that these other options are available rather than just going to try to find them.

Ms Sabellico: I will just add to that. We work very closely with the Education Directorate in looking at how to identify the children who are three or going to be three in this year. They then target the placements for more vulnerable children. We undertook an exercise whereby we looked at all of our datasets across housing, child and family, inclusive of the child and family service and the CDS as well as other programs, as we fund some childhood places, early care places. We also looked at all the information that we have in terms of the concern reports coming in. We did a data linkage exercise. Before we did that, we sought consent for people to be part of the data linkage and it was on an opt-out basis. We had a very small number of people who opted out. Most were opt in.

We did that piece of work. We then looked at how we could prioritise all of those vulnerable groups. They would then be the first groups to go through the process of referral and be considered for placement to education. We worked with them around developing the form by which we would collect the information to show the families' wishes in terms of location and extra supports or requirements.

We were also clear with Education that it was not just about placement for the child but also about access to the supports for the family to sustain the child in placement. We undertook that exercise with them. We are now working really closely with them to get the people who we know are on the list to completion of the assessment forms through to then consideration of the placement in the early childhood.

THE CHAIR: Although this line of questioning started here, where I am going will not surprise you because I have asked this type of question before. I am particularly interested in the children in out of home care placements of the right age to be going to Koori preschool having that connection to cultural activities that perhaps their caregivers are not able to provide them. It also becomes a support for those caregivers. That was my roundabout way of getting to asking how that might be working for that cohort.

Ms Sabellico: They were a priority group for consideration. That cohort was quite easy to define. Not surprisingly, they were a potential for accessing some of our other services. In our conversations about who we would go to first, we were sure there were particular groups within the child and family centres that were already seeking extra supports as well as those children in out of home care and another couple of other priority areas.

THE CHAIR: Thank you for everyone's time this afternoon and for sticking with it

that little bit longer. We appreciate that. The last thing I leave you with is that we are obviously, as your directorate above all would understand, in our final few months as the current Elected Body. A timely response to those questions on notice would be most appreciated so that we can wrap up our report and recommendations prior to the end of our term. Thanks again for your time and enjoy the rest of your day.

Hearing adjourned at 4.23 pm.