**ABORIGINAL AND TORRES STRAIT ISLANDER**

**ELECTED BODY**

**(Reference: Estimates process 2017-2018)**

**Members:**

**MS KATRINA FANNING (Chairperson)**

**MS JOANNE CHIVERS (Deputy Chairperson)**

**MR MAURICE WALKER**

**MS PAULA McGRADY**

**MS CAROLINE HUGHES (absent)**

**MR FRED MONAGHAN**

**MR JACOB KEED**

**TRANSCRIPT OF EVIDENCE**

**CANBERRA**

**WEDNESDAY, 14 MARCH 2018**

**Committee contact officer:**

Ms Margaret Beattie

ATSIEB Secretariat

Office for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Affairs

Community Services Directorate

GPO Box 158

CANBERRA CITY ACT 2601

## APPEARANCES

**Chief Minister, Treasury and Economic Development Directorate** **1**

**Canberra Institute of Technology** **47**

**Community Services Directorate** **56**

**Environment, Planning and Sustainable Development Directorate** **98**

## The elected body met at 9.30 am.

Appearances:

Chief Minister, Treasury and Economic Development Directorate

Leigh, Ms Kathy, Head of Service and Director-General

Nicol, Mr David, Under Treasurer

Childs, Ms Judi, Director, Public Sector Management Branch, Workforce Capability and Governance

Wright, Mr Robert, Executive Director, Corporate

Whitten, Ms Meredith, Deputy Director-General, Workforce Capability and Governance

Peffer, Mr Dave, Deputy Director-General, Access Canberra

Arthy, Ms Kareena, Deputy Director-General, Enterprise Canberra

**THE CHAIR**: As is good protocol, I start by acknowledging the Ngunnawal people as custodians of this country for thousands of years. I pay my respects to their elders past and present, including those who are with us today, and thank them for the support they have given not only to me but also to many other Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people who have come to live on their country.

It would be remiss not to mention the passing of Laura Bell over the last couple of days. She was a foundation member of the elders council and did quite a lot, particularly in an elder role, for the Ngunnawal people. That is also the reason we are one member short today, as Member Hughes is her niece and so is attending to help with sorry business arrangements back in Tumut.

There is a short letter in front of you with a bit of an outline from the elected body’s point of view. I am not used to sitting on this side of the table. There are a lot of things to get through, and your directorate obviously covers a lot of areas. We have given priority to the community questions that have been sent to us. Some of those double up with some of your generic responses, but we have made a very public commitment to our community to ask those questions on the record. In most cases there is probably, with the questions, a little more detail as to outcomes that we are after anyway. That is just to clarify why it might feel that we have doubled up on those.

As is usual in our hearing process, the member of our body with the portfolio responsibility for the directorate will lead the questions that we have worked on collectively. Should we have time once we are through those agreed questions, if there are follow-up questions from my colleagues they will ask them. If we run out of time for that, we will provide them to you in writing and ask for a response in a reasonable time frame. As a collective, we take great pride in representing our community here today. We thank you for your time in being here and the preparation that it has taken, given that you have other similar cycles. We are respectful of the time that this does take.

A common area of focus of all our questions, not just for your directorate, is actual outcomes. I have found across most of the generic responses from directorates and in some of the annual reports—not necessarily all in yours—we are getting lots of information about activity that is happening but not as much detail on understanding the results for our community and how we are learning and growing from that. So, where possible, if you could take that as our focus area for many of these questions, that would be great.

Kathy, are there any opening remarks that you would like to make?

**Ms Leigh**: I always like to start any official ACT public service event by acknowledging the contribution that the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander members of our service make, both to the quality of the advice we give our ministers and to the quality of the service we provide to our community.

**THE CHAIR**: We would agree with that. The first questions I have are a couple that go across your directorate. How many Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander specific events has the minister attended over the past three years?

**Ms Leigh**: I am sorry that I might have to take the very first question on notice. That was not a question I had anticipated. I have not collected that data, but we will certainly do that for you.

**THE CHAIR**: I appreciate that. In your generic responses you have provided some information about the cultural awareness training. Does the package that you use through your providers cover Ngunnawal and/or traditional custodian content? Is it delivered by a local provider?

**Ms Leigh**: Yes, we do have a local provider. I will ask Robert Wright to provide some more detail about that. Robert is the new head of our corporate area, so you will forgive him if he is getting across some of that content.

**THE CHAIR**: For a few of us it is our first time, Robert.

**Ms Leigh**: Robert is currently looking at the provider we have been using for the last couple of years and reviewing the training we have been providing to see whether it does meet all of our needs. We would welcome any input from the elected body about what we should be taking into account in doing that. We still have a program of training rolled out for the coming year.

**Mr Wright**: This is week seven for me, so apologies if my information is a little thin on the ground. We do provide cultural awareness training. We have five sessions which have been or will be run in the 2017-18 financial year. They are run by a local Indigenous provider, Curijo. We have had good feedback about the quality of the cultural awareness training they provide. We are also looking at broader cultural awareness training at the senior executive level, to ensure that there is a really good understanding, not just social awareness but also a broader cultural awareness regarding enterprises which are owned or run by Aboriginals and Torres Strait Islanders, and expanding that to include a broader look at what it is that Aboriginals and Torres Strait Islanders are looking for from the ACT government in the Canberra community.

**THE CHAIR**: The main part of the question is: does it involve Ngunnawal content?

**Ms Wright**: My understanding is that it does, but I will take that on notice and come back to you with exactly the elements which do contain that content.

**THE CHAIR**: The next few questions relate to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander employment broadly across the ACTPS. Obviously you have a lead responsibility for that. Within the directorate’s RAP there are commitments to support the ongoing welfare and wellbeing of trainees and employees. Can you tell us how this is being achieved and which organisations and employment service providers you are using?

**Ms Leigh**: The RAP relates to our directorate. Robert has the responsibilities for our directorate. As you said, we also have, as a directorate, a responsibility for whole‑of‑service employment. Meredith Whitten has responsibility for whole‑of‑service employment. Probably in relation to that question I should ask Robert.

**Mr Wright**: We take our responsibilities to our trainees, cadets and graduates very seriously. The big issues are not just about recruitment, which I think is done very well across the ACT government and the federal sphere, but also about retention. Things like mentoring are very important as part of that. In 2017 the directorate established a mentoring group, where a senior Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander manager is providing support and career pathway advice for junior Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander staff members. We currently have eight junior staff participating in this group. The group meets regularly and has a focus on career development and support. Retention is something that we are very keen to ensure.

**THE CHAIR**: The question I am asking is about a specific commitment in the RAP about the ongoing welfare and wellbeing of trainees and all employees. You have more than eight of those. It does make a commitment about working with organisations and employment service providers to achieve that. Who are you working with?

**Mr Wright**: My apologies. Can I take that one on notice?

**THE CHAIR**: Yes.

**Ms Whitten**: At a whole-of-government level in 2017 we conducted a career development and retention program which was support for lower and middle-range employees. It was conducted in May 2017, nearly a year ago. Twenty-seven employees participated, to help progress their career. There was a combination of whole-of-cohort peer support and mainstream and individual activities, which included individual development plans, coaching and mentoring. I do not have at my fingertips who provided that service, but I can—

**THE CHAIR**: Could you provide that. One of the reasons for asking is that one of the only Indigenous organisations that was able to provide these services had to close its doors recently because of a lack of engagement of government at all levels. I am particularly interested in whether Habitat was someone you were using, and why the lack of work available has meant that their doors have closed, given that that is such a vital piece of work for us.

**Ms Leigh**: Habitat was a service provider that we were using.

**Ms Whitten**: Interaction did the training.

**THE CHAIR**: Are they an Indigenous organisation?

**Ms Whitten**: No, they are not.

**Ms Leigh**: We have got details.

**THE CHAIR**: The next question relates to conducting your annual staff surveys. I am just wondering: within your annual staff surveys do you include questions regarding awareness of your RAP?

**Ms Whitten**: At a whole-of-government level we have not conducted an annual staff survey for a number of years.

**THE CHAIR**: The reason I ask that is that it is actually a detailed commitment in your RAP that you will include that in your annual staff surveys, which is a bit hard to do if you do not conduct staff surveys.

**Ms Whitten**: It is.

**THE CHAIR**: Our next question is around the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander employment strategy and the commitment you have for an annual review of that. I am just wondering if you can give me some information about how that is or was conducted, what the findings have been and what follow-up actions you have had from those findings.

**Ms Whitten**: Could you repeat the beginning of the question?

**THE CHAIR**: Yes. The Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander employment strategy has a commitment for annual review. I am just wondering how that process has been conducted, what you have found and what you have done about those findings.

**Ms Whitten**: At the moment I am not in a position to explain about the annual review, but we can come back to you on that.

**THE CHAIR**: The next question—and I think there were some partial answers to this in the welfare question, so I appreciate that we do not need to cover that same ground—relates to the engagement of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander staff on employment and personal development issues, not on their individual issues. There is a commitment about talking to that group collectively on the programs and pathways that you are creating. I am just wondering how you have done that engagement, what did the staff suggest and how was that actioned.

**Ms Whitten**: We have got a staff network across the service. That responsibility at the moment sits with CSD, and CSD and our team had a recent conversation about engagement at a whole-of-government level about how effectively we could do that. We recognise that there are a number of staff networks that exist by directorates and we would like to explore with the executives of each of those directorate staff networks to determine how best to reconvene the whole-of-government staff networks, because we know that some networks are working very effectively, and we would like to re-engage and learn from those networks about what is working well and where we could do things differently and better.

**THE CHAIR**: Definitely there is a variety of effectiveness of those networks, but there are indeed a couple that seem to be doing quite well. That would be good. The one question I do have on that is: why would CSD lead that when the responsibility for the employment of people in the ACTPS sits with this directorate?

**Ms Whitten**: I actually do not have the background for that, but I am happy to take that on notice.

**THE CHAIR**: That would be good.

**Ms Whitten**: With the Office for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Affairs being situated in the Community Services Directorate, which has a whole-of-government responsibility, I think there is an opportunity for us to explore that now.

**THE CHAIR**: The next few questions I have relate to the ADAPT program. I am not sure who the right person is to answer those.

**Ms Leigh**: Would it be possible to go back to some of the issues you have raised? I just want to mention a few things.

**THE CHAIR**: Yes, of course.

**Ms Leigh**: In relation to the review we have done of our employment strategy, I just want to mention that we have looked at the success in terms of both attraction and retention of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander staff. For example, our Aboriginal traineeship program has been rebranded as a vocational education program, which widens the scope, and that was one of the strategies that we have taken to try to broaden the attraction of that program. That is rolling out in that form this year.

**THE CHAIR**: Can I ask you a question about that? I understand that the people who finish that program commence as APS2s and, if retention is an issue, I worry how many other people sit at an APS2 level and how strong the pipeline is from that through to senior management.

**Ms Leigh**: I think the other way of looking at that is the guarantee. People who come into that program are guaranteed to start at that level. Having done that program, they are well placed then to progress to further levels. It is a guarantee so that there is certainty and security as to what happens after doing that program.

**THE CHAIR**: And that is certainly effective. That is how I started. I appreciate that. My worry is that the effort in getting people in and supporting them is well done, but if the rest of the service and their line managers are not used to people at that level, because there are not many people at an APS2 level anymore, how meaningful the work is once they are in the mainstream, because business units are not set up for that level of position, and then how easy it is for them to transition through.

**Ms Leigh**: And perhaps partly transforming it to a vocational education program goes some way to addressing that, because we have got a very diverse service, and if we recognise where the best opportunities are for people coming in through the traineeship program, as opposed to people coming in through the graduate program, where we also target attraction of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders, then we need to do this not just in a formulaic way. We recognise that we are attracting different people with different skills and make sure that we do not just expect them to go into the service generically but actually look at the parts of the service that will offer a better career path. I think that is what we have tried to do with the refocus.

**THE CHAIR**: Sorry, I interrupted you.

**Ms Leigh**: I also want to mention that within CMTEDD we have created a position of inclusion champion. For the whole of CMTEED that is Kareena Arthy, who will be appearing later with the economic development part of the directorate. We also have a person in our shared services, Andrew Whale. Shared services is, just in terms of the number of staff, a large part of our directorate itself.

**THE CHAIR**: We are going to get to them.

**Ms Leigh**: That is another way that we have worked, both to provide an environment that is going to be more attractive for our recruits to remain and also to ensure that the service as a whole has an understanding and a focus on these issues. That is just one other measure we have taken which I wanted to mention.

**THE CHAIR**: I think having a senior officer with that responsibility is great. Can I just clarify, though, that, as inclusion champion, that is across all the diversity groups?

**Ms Leigh**: It is.

**THE CHAIR**: That is a big role.

**Ms Leigh**: That is true. We also have our RAP senior executive sponsor separately from that. That is currently David Miller. He is in economic development. He is in skills. Ian Hill, who was previously in that area, had led the RAP and now we have passed on the role of being the executive sponsor. We have continued to try to make that statement about the importance of having a senior person take that—

**THE CHAIR**: And good accountability for decisions?

**Ms Leigh**: Yes.

**THE CHAIR**: Was there anything else?

**Ms Leigh**: They were a couple of things. There were some other things I could mention but they will probably come up.

**THE CHAIR**: I am just wondering what Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander involvement was utilised in the design of the ADAPT program.

**Ms Whitten**: I actually do not have the answer to that, but I might ask if Ms Childs could come up and talk to that, as I was not here when the ADAPT was developed.

**Ms Childs**: Can I just clarify, if we are talking about the ADAPT program, are we talking about the ADAPT workforce planning framework?

**THE CHAIR**: Yes.

**Ms Childs**: It is what it is at the moment, which is a framework, and it is a set of tools to do workforce planning. It is a set of tools to enable directorates to do workforce planning. The first workforce planning that we are going to be doing is in our entry level, and I would expect that there will be quite significant consultation with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander staff, OATSIA and the staff network. I would also welcome the opportunity to discuss it with you or other members of the elected body.

**THE CHAIR**: In designing the framework that you have now, was there any Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander involvement?

**Ms Childs**: No, not specifically. It is a very broad framework for strategic workforce planning across the service.

**THE CHAIR**: Does that have specific targets within it?

**Ms Childs**: The targets are actually contained within the employment strategy, rather than the workforce planning toolkit. The workforce planning toolkit is a forward‑looking forecasting process. But we will obviously include those targets as part of the inputs into the workforce planning.

Could I just clarify about the vocational program, because I was listening, that one of the reasons we have broadened it to a vocational program is that there may well be opportunities for people to come out as ASO3s rather than 2s in that program, depending on the qualification and the positions available. We are trying to expand the flexibility of the program. Also CMTEDD did do a survey last year and we did find—

**THE CHAIR**: A staff survey?

**Ms Childs**: A staff survey. I cannot remember the specific question about RAP, but I can remember that the number—it was a confidential and anonymous survey—of people identifying as Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander was higher than what we get out of the official reports in the payroll system. I think the official number we get is about 1.2. In the survey we got 1.7. I know Kathy has been active in promoting the reasons why people should identify.

**THE CHAIR**: Perhaps I have jumped the gun on where the ADAPT framework is up to. The last part was around how you are going to measure impact and particularly—

**Ms Childs**: Let us actually implement it. But, yes.

**THE CHAIR**: That is why I was saying I have probably jumped the gun.

**Ms Childs**: No. Impact is on a number of levels. Impact, obviously for the service as a whole, is that we secure our future capability so that we actually know what our future capability is, what the demands are, what our current gaps are and how we get there. But within that we also throw into all that mix our inclusion targets and other targets we may have—and we will have specific metrics on those—that we are already measuring. That will be a part of that broader piece of work and we will be looking at, from the graduate down, that whole entry cohort as one of our first activities.

**THE CHAIR**: The next question is around your leaders learning program. What Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander components does that program have?

**Ms Childs**: It is an SES learning program, and it does not have specific Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander content. It does have diversity and inclusion content, encouraging leaders to think more broadly about the available workforce. As we all know, the typical places that people go for their workforce are drying up fairly quickly, with an ageing workforce. With potential workforces like the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community, where it is a younger cohort, there is definitely more people could do to look at that.

**THE CHAIR**: So is the leaders learning program only about workforce, growing your workforce?

**Ms Childs**: It is about building the leadership skills of the senior executive cohort. Part of that is around them actually understanding how to create inclusive and engaging workplaces. So it is about how to generate a strong sense of purpose and engagement with their people so that people understand the contribution they are making and to challenge some of their paradigms around diversity and look at things like unconscious bias and things like that. It is a self-development program to try to open up people’s minds to possibilities for leading what their future workforce may look like but also leading that workforce more effectively.

**THE CHAIR**: The reason I ask about Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander components is that, given the long-term issue of growing Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander leadership in the directorate, it would seem that the next sensible step would be to have a leaders learning program that works with the existing leadership on how to improve Indigenous outcomes.

**Ms Childs**: Yes. I take that on board. If we look at the pilot career development and the leadership program that we did, one of the pleasing aspects of that is that, whilst Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander employee turnover is higher than the general average across the service, we have not lost anyone who participated in that program.

**THE CHAIR**: That is an excellent outcome. My next couple of questions are around another RAP commitment—that is, reviewing HR processes for the benefit of future applicants. Has that happened? What did you find? How did you do it? And what actions have you taken? Robert, I appreciate that seven weeks in that is a struggle for you.

**Mr Wright**: My apologies; I do not know the answer. I know we are looking at our recruitment processes in relation to ensuring that Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders are well represented in those processes, but I do not know where that is up to at the moment. I will take that one on notice, Katrina.

**THE CHAIR**: Thank you. The next one is focused on Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander leadership in the public sector. How do you identify the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander talent in the ACT public service? What training and opportunities are available to that talent once you do that? What have been the outcomes? What have you learned?

**Ms Leigh**: The reality is that as a service we are quite small and the raw numbers of our Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander members are still quite small, so we have tended to focus on the whole cohort rather than trying to pick winners out of that cohort. We probably have not as a whole service taken that approach of actually actively picking people we think have potential and giving them specialised training or specialised attention. I know that is something public services have done over the years, but we have not done that as a service as a whole either.

**Ms Whitten**: In addition to that, as you know, we have the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander employment framework. As part of that framework we have areas of action which talk about building capability, and there are a number of areas of action. That framework is building towards increasing the numbers of employees to 407 by 2019. So that is the framework by which we would build the talent across the service.

**THE CHAIR**: Could you remind me how well we are tracking on that?

**Ms Whitten**: In terms of attracting people, we have already talked about the traineeship program and we also have the graduate program. We have had a focus on graduates. Although we offered two placements this year, only one placement was accepted. In terms of the vocational employment program for the traineeships for this year, which opened in October last year and closed in January this year, we have 43 applications, which is really encouraging. We are going through an assessment process at the moment for a start in June of this year.

**THE CHAIR**: And of those 43, is it eight placements?

**Ms Whitten**: It is actually 11 available placements, which is quite significant. Then we talk about the career and development and retention program which occurred last year. So they are steps towards identifying talent. So the outcomes are increased numbers of people employed in the public service. It is then a question of how do we mentor, coach and continue people’s—

**THE CHAIR**: If we have to get to 407 by the end of next year, what is our number now?

**Ms Leigh**: At the end of December we were at 352, so we are well short. We have been increasing each year but never by as much as we need to. It has been quite a concern for me that that is the case. The previous occupant of Meredith’s role and I tried to set out a program of what we were going to do, and it was a combination of breaking down those overall service targets to targets for each directorate. In some ways they were arbitrary because the opportunities and the small numbers mean that these things are lumpy, but I wanted to give people some sense of what it meant in practical terms for their own directorate for us to achieve that.

**THE CHAIR**: That has got a bit of a stretch to it.

**Ms Leigh**: To support that we recognise we need to provide whole-of-service support to directorates. That is why we have focused on the traineeship program and increasing the number of graduates coming through the graduate program. We have tried to look at how we attract more people to put their hands up for that program and how we make sure that when people come into that program they are retained. That is why we have looked at those programs. That is why we have looked at the inclusion program. That is why we have looked at mentoring within the directorate.

We have tried to identify at each stage the strategic framework so that we can put in place to support each directorate to achieve those targets. Despite that, we are improving, but we are still lagging behind. It is a constant issue for me as to what is a new way of looking at this that can help us cut through.

**Mr Wright**: Getting back to looking at the existing workforce and the classification levels of those particular staff, one of the positive things we can say is that, of the 29 Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander staff who identify as being so within CMTEDD, we have one of those in the SES level. Nine of those are senior officers, meaning that 10 out of 29 are at that level, which is a higher proportion than for the rest of the staff within the directorate. So that is a positive. There is still a lot of work to do and CMTEDD, as well as the rest of the ACT public service, need to improve our overall numbers, but the classifications at which people are sitting is a positive.

**THE CHAIR**: My next question was around the priority focus for the next 18 months, but between the strategies and the programs you have outlined we have covered that. Is there anything else you want to add in that space?

**Ms Leigh**: The clearest focus is those raw numbers, and everything else is a strategy to get there because that is the measure. We had a planning session for directors‑general and deputy directors-general last week and this was the issue on which I started my discussion with them—here is a challenge. We are not cutting through. I spoke to one of the directorates at their planning session towards the end of last week and said again, “This is a challenge. As a directorate you are doing well. How have you done it? What are the lessons for everyone else?” It is a constant focus for me, and that, to me, is the bottom line of everything else we do.

**Ms Whitten**: Connecting with the staff networks in directorates and learning from them as well is really important. There is also the possibility of talking to the universities to see who the graduates are there and seeing whether it is possible to talk to the people who are starting at the moment about working in the ACT public service as something they might like to think about.

**THE CHAIR**: I understand both major universities have developed strategies around contracting local Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students. That would seem to be the best pipeline to tap into.

**Ms Whitten**: And, in addition, talking to our schools.

**THE CHAIR**: My next question is around staff who are exiting. Do you have a survey to understand why those people leave, and what is the exit rate for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander staff?

**Mr Wright**: We do have an exit survey. I do not know the specific reasons people have attached to those, but I can take that on notice.

**Ms Whitten**: We report in the state of the service report on the separation rates across the service. The 30 June 2017 separation rate was 11.4 per cent.

**THE CHAIR**: Which was about 4.5 per cent higher than the rest of the service.

**Ms Whitten**: That is correct. I know individual directorates have quite a strong relationship with their employees and work with them in terms of understanding reasons for leaving, and sometimes that could be around support.

**THE CHAIR**: I know the commonwealth is much larger, but are the exit rates similar?

**Ms Whitten**: I would need to take that on notice, sorry.

**THE CHAIR**: The career development and career and retention budget initiative—I think I got this from your annual report comments and it may be that these are the programs you have been talking about, so apologies if I have not got the titles quite right—are these the programs you have outlined to me, the suite of activities you are undertaking, how the trainees are funded? Is that all from that budget initiative?

**Ms Whitten**: There was a budget initiative in 2016-17, which was the career development and retention program, which was the program we conducted in May 2017.

**THE CHAIR**: So they are the results?

**Ms Whitten**: That is my understanding.

**THE CHAIR**: So the next steps from that?

**Ms Whitten**: I think that is something we are wanting to build on. We have also have the apprenticeship ASBA program as well.

**THE CHAIR**: Is that school-based apprenticeships?

**Ms Whitten**: Yes, I think so. That is an initiative we are looking to put in place. Appointment may be up to two years. So that is an initiative we are currently putting in place.

**THE CHAIR**: The next set of questions is for the economic area. Is your ED for that here?

**Ms Leigh**: They understood they were to be here at 11.15.

**THE CHAIR**: That is okay. Does sport and recreation sit there?

**Ms Leigh**: In that area, yes.

**THE CHAIR**: Shared services and property group?

**Mr Nicol**: They are here. They are mine.

**THE CHAIR**: The first question I have in relation to property relates to some comments in some reporting around the space that Gugan Gulwan currently utilise, and their need for a new facility. In response to a previous committee report, I read that the directorate is working closely with Gugan on a solution. Can you describe what that looks like?

**Mr Nicol**: Let me give you a brief overview of property group’s role and responsibilities. It essentially manages about 200 government properties. It offers them to community groups and others for tenancy and rental. They are not a developer and they are not a commercial manager; they manage existing assets. What they have been trying to do with Gugan Gulwan is essentially to find them a property that they find suitable within our current property stock, which is pretty limited, to be fair. Our occupancy rate is fairly high, so the number of properties that come up that might be suitable is very low. I think we have come to the point where we have probably exhausted that avenue, and we are now looking at other opportunities. That is probably outside the bailiwick of property group. It is a broader question, and it includes discussions with CSD and across government.

**THE CHAIR**: Who would lead that?

**Mr Nicol**: At the moment CSD are leading that. They are thinking about how the government goes about considering what options are available for Gugan Gulwan in the medium to longer term. I can say that discussions have commenced at cabinet level. There have not been any decisions yet, but they will happen, I imagine, in the near future.

**THE CHAIR**: That is great, but my question is about the statement that you are working closely with Gugan. I want to understand what “working closely” looks like.

**Mr Nicol**: “Working closely” means that, whenever a property comes up that we think might be suitable, we contact Gugan Gulwan and—

**THE CHAIR**: And check?

**Mr Nicol**: identify that. We offer to show them the property. My understanding is that they do not always come out and see each one. They make a desktop judgement, which is fair enough—no criticism. They say, “No, that’s not suitable.” To date, they have said that the properties that have become available, the limited number of our own properties, have not been suitable. We have discussed at various times modifying existing properties. That is an offer. We are not presupposing that will suit what Gugan Gulwan wants, but that offer is on the table as well.

**THE CHAIR**: Do you have from Gugan the list of, at least from a functional point of view, what they want?

**Mr Nicol**: I do not have it in front of me, but in broad terms I think—

**THE CHAIR**: Just broadly, you have had those conversations?

**Mr Nicol**: I think we have. I think the issues are about size, largely.

**THE CHAIR**: If that exists within the network that you have.

**Mr Nicol**: That is right. It is about size of property, both outside and indoor sizes, and getting that mix right. At the moment we have not been able to match their desires. That is why the longer term solution is to expand it beyond our limited number of properties and see what else is out there and what other opportunities are out there. That, at the end of the day, is a matter for government.

**THE CHAIR**: You have probably covered my next question, but given my opening statements about a commitment to passing on some of these questions—

**Mr Nicol**: Sure.

**THE CHAIR**: There is a real issue of capacity, not capability, for Gugan, based on the impediment of their infrastructure. You have detailed that CSD are now leading a broader cross-government look at that. Is that the way it will be resolved, through a CSD-led look—at least as an option back to Gugan?

**Mr Nicol**: I think the way it will be resolved is that government will have to consider broader options. I suspect that will require resourcing, which of course becomes a budget question. We certainly cannot commit on that matter. We are in the early stages of looking at this, but the options include looking at what the private sector has available and what support we can give to link up Gugan Gulwan with the private sector, for example. We have not talked to Gugan Gulwan about this; I do not want this to be a shock to them in any way. That is one option that we are considering.

**THE CHAIR**: But there are other options?

**Mr Nicol**: There are other options such as modifying existing facilities, seeing what else is available, moving tenants et cetera. That becomes quite complex and difficult. At the end of the day we need to get some options and put them before government and engage again with Gugan as well at the right stage, because we do not want to have the government consider an option that Gugan does not want, so we will have to look at that. It is up to the government to make some choices.

**THE CHAIR**: I have some questions on shared services and Access Canberra.

**Mr Nicol**: Shared services is in my area.

**THE CHAIR**: We can do that?

**Mr Wright**: Chair, I have the answers to a couple of your earlier questions. Would you mind if I went to those?

**THE CHAIR**: That would be great.

**Mr Wright**: I might start off with the results of the survey. This was a workforce diversity survey rather than a staff survey. With some of the results from that which pertain to Aboriginals and Torres Strait Islanders, as Ms Childs said earlier, we had a higher number of respondents identify as Aboriginals and Torres Strait Islanders in the survey than in the statistics that we keep in our HR records.

We also had some quite positive results from Aboriginals and Torres Strait Islanders across all areas of the survey—typically more positive. One of the areas where they did think that CMTEDD could improve was reconciliation and cultural competence. That is something we obviously need to continue to work on, but overall the results were above the average.

One of the things that we are quite keen to do, coming out of that survey, is to change the perception of staff who identify as Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander, regarding that culturally inclusive and competent employer component. They are the major results coming out of that survey which are specific to Aboriginals and Torres Strait Islanders.

**THE CHAIR**: My questions about surveys were in two streams. There is a commitment in your RAP—in fact, it is part of every RAP; it is part of how they do their evaluations—regarding how many of your staff actually understand that you have a RAP and how it relates to them. That is a key accountability factor—whether you have actually implemented your RAP or not. That is what that survey question was about. The other question was around exit surveys.

**Mr Wright**: I do not know if that specific question was in the survey, because I am looking at a paper with some highlighted results, and I am waiting for the exit survey result to come through. The other one I wanted to go through is cultural awareness training. You asked a question about what was in that and what was the—

**THE CHAIR**: I asked if it had Ngunnawal content, actually.

**Mr Wright**: The answer is that it does not at this point in time. I can go through the areas—

**THE CHAIR**: It does not?

**Mr Wright**: It does not have specific Ngunnawal elements in it at this time. It is run by a local Ngunnawal company, as I suggested, but—

**THE CHAIR**: It is run by an Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander company.

**Mr Wright**: Yes.

**THE CHAIR**: I do not know that it is a Ngunnawal company.

**Mr Wright**: My understanding was that it was a Ngunnawal company, but apologies if that is not the case.

**THE CHAIR**: They are not.

**Mr Wright**: Okay; my apologies. Do you want to go through the outline of that particular cultural awareness training, chair?

**THE CHAIR**: No. We were interested in the Ngunnawal content of it, or the lack thereof. Can we turn to shared services and Access Canberra?

**Mr Nicol**: Chair, I should point out that I am not responsible for Access Canberra.

**THE CHAIR**: Okay. My questions cross both areas, so we will see how we go.

**Mr Nicol**: We will see how we go.

**THE CHAIR**: In what ways do shared services enable all staff to be informed in servicing Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander citizens?

**Mr Nicol**: Citizens in general?

**THE CHAIR**: No, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander citizens. Because it is a mainstream service.

**Mr Nicol**: Yes, but Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander citizens in general?

**THE CHAIR**: Yes, in general.

**Mr Nicol**: It is probably fair to say that shared services is an internal service provider to the ACT government. We do not provide services directly to the citizenry of the ACT. Our services are indirect, if that makes sense. Access Canberra provide services directly to the citizenry, but they are not under my control.

**THE CHAIR**: Let me rephrase it. If someone internally rings shared services for information on Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander affairs, is the service any more than a referral to OATSIA?

**Mr Nicol**: I would have to take on notice whether we would get—are you talking about a specific question?

**THE CHAIR**: My experience is that, if you ring shared services, their default response is to pass that on to OATSIA, regardless of what the question is.

**Mr Nicol**: I would have to take that on notice. I do not have the information.

**THE CHAIR**: I am worried that they do not actually understand how Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander policies and programs run anywhere else in the service.

**Mr Nicol**: I suspect that is right. It is more of a generic service. They provide basic HR-type and payroll services, not complex training and development-type services. That is not their business.

**THE CHAIR**: Nor is it OATSIA’s.

**Mr Nicol**: No, I am not saying it is. I will take it on notice as to who we refer it to.

**THE CHAIR**: Thanks. This is probably more for Access Canberra. Is there someone here that can help?

**Ms Leigh**: No. I have just asked somebody to go and contact Access Canberra and see whether somebody can attend.

**THE CHAIR**: Okay. We can come back to that. If they cannot, I can give you the questions on notice. It is around specific customer service strategies for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people. Treasury?

**Mr Nicol**: Yes.

**THE CHAIR**: We can do those?

**Mr Nicol**: Yes.

**THE CHAIR**: I am not necessarily interested in specific Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander budget initiatives, for example, but in undertaking economic assessment and advice, what ACT Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander data do you consider?

**Mr Nicol**: With general economic advice, we probably do not do a lot of specific Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander data, because at a general economic macro level it is difficult to get. Even for the ACT, our general economic statistics are subject to a higher degree of uncertainty than the rest of the country, simply because of our size. We are two per cent of Australia, and the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community is two per cent, roughly, of the ACT community. So it becomes quite a small population sample.

**THE CHAIR**: The reason for asking is that for many of the services and programs you do the assessment for, we are not two per cent of the clients.

**Mr Nicol**: No; I understand. That is the general—

**THE CHAIR**: That is what I am getting to.

**Mr Nicol**: My comments were very much in the general economic area, about salary levels, income levels, wage growth and all that sort of thing.

**THE CHAIR**: It may be that you do not do this across the board. I am just trying to understand—

**Mr Nicol**: No, we do not. We generally do not do this.

**THE CHAIR**: Each directorate would do that for themselves?

**Mr Nicol**: That is right. We occasionally do deep dive evaluations of particular programs.

**THE CHAIR**: Yes.

**Mr Nicol**: I do not think we have had one that has been particularly focused on the Indigenous community in recent years. I will take that on notice and correct myself if I have forgotten one.

**THE CHAIR**: Thank you.

**Mr Nicol**: What I could say is that a big part of our job is to provide advice to cabinet when considering budget proposals and spending proposals. Certainly we identify proposals that have an impact on the Aboriginal and Indigenous community. We give an assessment—

**THE CHAIR**: How do you do that?

**Mr Nicol**: First, we have a look at what the proposal is about and we make judgements about who the likely impact group is going to be, based on our knowledge of the communities.

**THE CHAIR**: What things would you look at that would not impact on Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander persons?

**Mr Nicol**: For example, building a road would impact on Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people just like any other group, but a service that dealt with mental health—

**THE CHAIR**: Except if you are digging up a site.

**Mr Nicol**: For sure. There are always exceptions. But in thinking of issues like mental health, health services, family services and those sort of services, our judgement will be that that will probably have a potentially bigger impact on the Indigenous community, so we have a look at it from that perspective. We also ask directorates to identify proposals that have specific Indigenous impacts, as part of the business case.

**THE CHAIR**: Do they have, as part of their—I do not know if you call them—

**Mr Nicol**: It is called the business case.

**THE CHAIR**: Business case. Is there a segment that asks them to articulate perhaps the client base that might be Aboriginal?

**Mr Nicol**: Yes; it is part of our triple bottom line assessment.

**THE CHAIR**: What closing the gap targets it impacts and those sorts of things?

**Mr Nicol**: I can take that on notice and try to get you some examples, perhaps, to show you exactly. That might be better than me trying to explain it here.

**THE CHAIR**: Yes. The question is really, I guess, in taking it on notice, the target impact you are trying to have for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people when you do those assessments. When do you want to see that information, and why?

**Mr Nicol**: We ask it on every proposal that comes forward. Again, as I said, some, in the judgement of my officials and those of the directorates, will have a more significant interaction with the Indigenous community than others. With those effects, we try to assess them, we try to identify them and we try to make our best judgement about whether we think those effects will be positive and effective. We make those judgements for every proposal, for every element of the targets.

**THE CHAIR**: I get that you have very broad responsibility for that.

**Mr Nicol**: That is right. That is an informed judgement, to the best we can get it. We try to get directorates to produce data to support their proposals. A proposal that is obviously based on an evaluation, a report or some sort of inquiry, will often have a much better chance of supporting evidence to get supported in the cabinet process.

**THE CHAIR**: Informed judgement is critical in this area.

**Mr Nicol**: Yes.

**THE CHAIR**: I am interested in who on your staff are either Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people or have experience particularly with the local community so that they are informed and able to judge those things.

**Mr Nicol**: We participate in general cultural awareness training. I do not have in front of me how many of the people in that area are Aboriginal people. I do not know personally their exposure to the community.

**THE CHAIR**: People have the right to—

**Mr Nicol**: I think it is a fair question. Can I take that on notice?

**THE CHAIR**: Yes, of course.

**Mr Nicol**: To find out how we can engage in that? We have certainly engaged with the elected body in past budgets.

**THE CHAIR**: Absolutely.

**Mr Nicol**: We have had exchanges and interactions and tried to have a two-way communication. I do not think that is sufficient for where you are going, chair, but the start of the communication is there. It is an important feature. I encourage all my staff to know their subject areas. This division is about 35 people, and they have to cover the entirety of the ACT government activity. Part of that is understanding their programs and activities. The extent of that I can take on notice and see if I can get you more information.

**THE CHAIR**: Thank you. I think you have probably covered this, but for the record, how do you ensure that mainstream initiatives impact positively on our community? That is tied up in that informed judgement.

**Mr Nicol**: Yes.

**THE CHAIR**: Given that a lot of what you assess is quantitative, I get that you have a lot of that. I am probably more interested in how you do the qualitative aspect of those assessments, or even if that is your responsibility.

**Mr Nicol**: We do qualitative aspects of proposals. This is not always an exact science, and I think there is an effort that the bureaucracy is making to try to get much more evidence-based policy into our proposals so that we can direct resources into areas where we think they will have the best effect. It is not only in this area but more broadly. We are probably in the early stages of this. Those early stages have been putting more identification on proposals that affect Indigenous people positively—and negatively. We want to avoid the negative ones.

**THE CHAIR**: Thank you; we appreciate that.

**Mr Nicol**: Proposals always can have negative effects. Building a road where it should not be built is one good example. We have also, as I said, engaged in that discussion, essentially in each budget for the last four or five years now, with the elected body.

**THE CHAIR**: When you say you have engaged with the elected body, my colleagues here may be far better informed than me, but do you come to the elected body with the packages that are being considered or at the stage when requests for ideas come up?

**Mr Nicol**: No; it has been more that I and my executive director of the finance and budget division have come and met with the body for a couple of hours in each budget, early in the budget process, to outline the process, to answer any questions about how it works, to give you our advice on how you can best influence the directorates. It is the directorates who build the business cases that go to cabinet.

**THE CHAIR**: So your engagement is around helping us understand the process?

**Mr Nicol**: Yes; it is about process, not about individual proposals.

**THE CHAIR**: The package. Okay.

**Mr Nicol**: I met 35 people, I think; we have, what, 400 proposals.

**THE CHAIR**: Like I said, other people here probably know that better than me.

**Mr Nicol**: That is right. I think this has been successful. It is hard to measure; it is about building links with the directorates and having that longer term conversation. With a budget process, yes, it is an annual process, but affecting budget proposals is a medium to long-term gain.

**THE CHAIR**: Especially for significant packages.

**Mr Nicol**: That is right. You have to build those cases over time. The other thing we have done—again, I think other members of the body might be aware of it—is, in the last three or four budgets, created an Indigenous-specific process where those proposals that are really Indigenous focused come up as one package. So cabinet can have a full view of those key points, touch points, in each budget, and they can consider those separately rather than—

**THE CHAIR**: Who is that coordinated through?

**Mr Nicol**: Treasury takes the lead in terms of setting out the instructions, and then directorates need to make context.

**THE CHAIR**: What I am getting at is this: is it strategy driven, where perhaps the subcommittee for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander affairs identify some priorities and each directorate has bids that build towards that, or is it that each directorate operates individually and then those are pulled out and progressed together?

**Mr Nicol**: I think it is a mixture of both. There are individual proposals that come out that just have to be addressed for whatever reason. They are not necessarily part of a core strategy. This is where the budget process is not just one year; it is multi-years. You get a strategy that evolves over time, essentially. The agreement influences proposals. I can see that in the proposals that come forward.

**THE CHAIR**: Yes. That is good.

**Mr Nicol**: The government does have strategy sessions, and committees have strategy sessions, early in the budget process, and try to identify the key needs through the process.

**THE CHAIR**: I was just trying to understand if the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander components are done collectively or still within directorates?

**Mr Nicol**: It is a mixture of both.

**THE CHAIR**: Okay.

**Mr Nicol**: We get both. We do encourage—and the Chief Minister has said this to all directorates, not only in this space but in others—cross-directorate proposals. They will get a more favourable look than proposals that sit out by themselves with no connection to anything else in government. That is the direction, not only in this space but in all spaces, that the government is going in.

**THE CHAIR**: That is good, because the broader issue for us is that we normally ask questions of other directorates later and it will be, “Well, this works except that we need other directorates to be doing other things.”

**Mr Nicol**: That is right.

**THE CHAIR**: That is why I need to understand this.

**Mr Nicol**: It is a challenge because our structures are hierarchical and, again, it has to fit not only this space but all others. That is a big part of my job and Kathy’s job—to break down some of those barriers and get those teams working together across directorates. I think we are only on the start of the journey, I would suggest, but we know it is a journey to start.

**THE CHAIR**: Kathy, is there anything on those questions you want to add before I change tack?

**Ms Leigh**: No, thank you.

**THE CHAIR**: The next series of questions are around procurement, particularly some of the capital works projects, reform programs and things that sit within your annual reporting. In the smart modern strategic procurement reform program, what are the targets for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander economic outcomes?

**Mr Nicol**: That program is not focused on that sort of activity. That program is essentially focused on driving efficiencies in our procurement methodology. It is essentially about getting our current output at lower cost. We are doing what the intent of your questions is, I think, in different ways.

**THE CHAIR**: That might come up in some other procurement questions we have.

**Mr Nicol**: On that one, a very simple example is that every agency had a separate electricity contract and we have bundled them, put them into one contract and got a better price. It is that sort of thing.

**THE CHAIR**: That explains it; thank you. My next question is around the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander dedicated page on the website for business procurement. There is a business list that appears on the website. I would like to understand how it is utilised. How many hits has it had? What outcomes has it led to?

**Mr Nicol**: I would have to take the hits and those outcomes on notice. For questions specifically on the website, I do not have the details to hand. It is sometimes hard to judge whether we have had a successful procurement outcome with an Indigenous tenderer because of the website or because of other means. That is very hard to assess. We do not ask tenderers whether that has had an influence on whether they bid or whether they won a contract.

**THE CHAIR**: How do you make Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander businesses aware of the website?

**Mr Nicol**: That is a good question. I do not think we do any specific work. That is one area I want to focus on in terms of procurement, I think we need to work on our demand side: how we do our tendering processes, how we assess bids from Indigenous companies, and how we remove any unconscious or conscious bias in that process and level the playing field. Then, on the other side, a program of work I want to get underway is on how we can improve the capability of Indigenous businesses to be competitive in putting a tender up. We are only at the start of that journey, I think it is fair to say. It is a journey I want to take not only with the Indigenous businesses but also with other local businesses, because I want them both to compete more effectively.

It will get down to a program, I expect, of education both ways: not only educating businesses but also educating us about how to write tenders. Another piece of work that we have underway, which is a broader piece of work than just Indigenous businesses, is that we sometimes write tenders which tie us in knots in terms of assessing the tender that is produced and sometimes get us a result that we should have foreseen but did not. We need to do a bit of work in both those areas. That is where we are heading in terms of the engagement with Indigenous businesses.

**THE CHAIR**: How many businesses are listed on the website?

**Mr Nicol**: I would have to take that on notice; I do not know.

**THE CHAIR**: Okay.

**Mr Nicol**: We are a member of Supply Nation. I am conscious that that is not the be all and end all of everything in this space, which is something I have asked the procurement area to look into. We are encouraging directorates, and it has probably not been done formally enough at this stage, to identify Indigenous businesses where they can and, if they are going for tender processes, to be aware that Indigenous businesses are out there and should be involved in those processes. We are looking at ways to formalise that beyond just communications and messages to procurement officers in directorates. We are looking at what it means for our formal frameworks for assessing tenders and our processes for assessing tenders from Indigenous businesses.

**THE CHAIR**: There are some similar types of work in your sector that you could learn from. You do not need to make the same mistakes. They are obviously not all transferable, but there are some other processes.

**Mr Nicol**: Are you talking about the commonwealth?

**THE CHAIR**: There is the commonwealth, but there are other minority supplier types of arrangements both here and abroad that—

**Mr Nicol**: I see, yes. You are right. We are trying to learn from those.

**THE CHAIR**: There is plenty of stuff out there. We do not have to start from scratch.

**Mr Nicol**: That is right. We are looking at what everyone else has done. I am aware also that we are not the Northern Territory, so our business community is different.

**THE CHAIR**: What does that mean?

**Mr Nicol**: They have a different level of services, different providers. We have a different geography, so we have a different set of businesses and a different set of skill sets out there, and a different set of needs as well. So we cannot replicate it. I am not trying to—

**THE CHAIR**: I am not quite sure why you picked the Northern Territory.

**Mr Nicol**: It is just that they are big. They are just completely different to us. I am trying to—

**THE CHAIR**: It never came up. I am not sure—

**Mr Nicol**: No. I am just conscious that we do not take another jurisdiction’s ideas and adopt them without thinking about it.

**THE CHAIR**: No, they need to be transferred to this context.

**Mr Nicol**: That is right. That is my only point. I am not having a go at the Northern Territory at all.

**THE CHAIR**: I am more interested in areas like some of the general procurement that the New South Wales government has done recently that sets basically financial penalties if people do not meet their obligations on Indigenous procurement within their supply team. That is what I was interested in.

There are a couple of building projects outlined within your report that are either specifically for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people or have made some claims around Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander outcomes. I want to test those because some of them, and it is probably my poor maths, do not add up for me. One is the Ngunnawal Bush Healing Farm. I am only talking about the building project, not the service itself. I am keen to understand what the direct economic impact of that procurement or build for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people was, either through direct employment or businesses contracted.

**Mr Nicol**: I do not know that I am the right person to ask about that. The building was finished prior to this function coming under my stewardship, and it was commissioned through the Health Directorate.

**THE CHAIR**: It appears in your annual report.

**Mr Nicol**: Yes, I am aware of that. My guys are the builders, but they do not necessarily do the analysis of the impact on clients et cetera.

**THE CHAIR**: They do not look at the procurement outcomes of the contract?

**Mr Nicol**: That is right. My capital works division—their job is essentially to take work commissioned by directorates and deliver that job. They are a project manager.

**THE CHAIR**: But would they not be managing for those outcomes as well?

**Mr Nicol**: It depends on how they are specified. I took on this function on 1 July last year, so I do not have personal knowledge of how that was specified. I will take it on notice. I am not trying to not answer your question; I am just trying to find out who would be best to answer your question, because I do not have that information.

**THE CHAIR**: My next questions are around the Dhulwa Mental Health Unit building project.

**Mr Nicol**: Again, Health would be the sponsoring directorate.

**THE CHAIR**: The achievements are in your annual report. If you are reporting on those outcomes, I would assume that someone in the directorate understands them.

**Mr Nicol**: Again, we deliver a project on behalf of our client in that respect.

**THE CHAIR**: I understand that, but you report the outcomes, so I assume someone in the directorate is responsible for what detail is put into the annual report.

**Mr Nicol**: Chair, I suggest that you ask your question and we will try to answer it.

**THE CHAIR**: Within the annual report it says that 15 jobs were achieved for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people on the project. What I want to understand is for how long and in what capacity that was.

**Mr Nicol**: I will get that detail for you. We will be able to answer specific questions on who was employed on the project to deliver it.

**THE CHAIR**: These ones are specific.

**Mr Nicol**: I can answer those questions or get answers to those. I cannot answer the impact on the community or service delivery questions.

**THE CHAIR**: I was not asking about the community. I want to know about direct employment and business contracts on the other as well.

**Mr Nicol**: I can take it on notice to get that.

**THE CHAIR**: Those two things have an economic impact on our community. That was a $47 million building project. It is a specific Aboriginal building. I want to understand, out of that $47 million, what the direct economic benefit, through either employment or Indigenous businesses, of that build was.

**Mr Nicol**: I will take that on notice and see what we can get for you.

**THE CHAIR**: Similarly, the next is around the University of Canberra hospital building project, and this is the one where I may have misread the numbers. In the annual report it talks about that project having 448 trainees, 240 apprentices and a target of 10,000 work hours. By my maths, that equates to actually six, at best, full-time jobs. I am not sure where the number of 448 trainees comes from. Were they all Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people on that project?

**Mr Nicol**: I would doubt it, but I will take it on notice.

**THE CHAIR**: And the same for the apprenticeships?

**Mr Nicol**: The number of individual apprentices and trainees looks high for that building for me as well.

**THE CHAIR**: Maybe I have misread how that is presented. I am happy for that to be clarified.

**Mr Nicol**: I do not have the annual report with me. I will get that information clarifying that, what that means and what it means in terms of Indigenous employment.

**THE CHAIR**: There are three parts. There are the 448 trainees and that question about the apprenticeships number. I also want to know: was the target of 10,000 worker hours for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander employment and what was the composition of those hours and was that achieved? It is only written up as a target of hours as well. At best it is six jobs. How well did we go against those?

**Mr Nicol**: I know you will probably be aware of this, but on these projects much of the employment is through contractors or subcontractors. It is not—

**THE CHAIR**: Not 100 per cent?

**Mr Nicol**: It is some way down the chain.

**THE CHAIR**: If we want to put it in our annual report as an achievement—

**Mr Nicol**: No. I just make that point because it is not our direct employment.

**THE CHAIR**: And we need to start with best endeavours. Is that what you said?

**Mr Nicol**: No.

**THE CHAIR**: I am happy to know how well we went.

**Mr Nicol**: Yes.

**Ms Leigh**: And if I could just add that we do actually require the contractors to report on that.

**THE CHAIR**: So it should be there somewhere?

**Ms Leigh**: Yes.

**THE CHAIR**: Following on from that, I would also like to know, I guess, the number of jobs that were created overall on the project and what the ratio then looks like. Ten thousand hours sounds fantastic but not if it is a billion hours on the project and we are 10,000 of it. I just want to know: relatively, what does that look like, notwithstanding that it is a good start? Again, this might be something that you need to take on notice, given our current discussion. Presuming they were not, why were Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander outcomes and accountability not measured for the project, and do you do this in any of your projects?

**Mr Nicol**: For which? For any project?

**THE CHAIR**: For this, for the University of Canberra.

**Mr Nicol**: We will have the data, I am sure. My one caution is that, even though we do require reporting, the quality of that reporting is sometimes difficult. It is a matter of identification et cetera. We will have the data and I will provide it.

**THE CHAIR**: It will give us something to work from. If it is already built into the process, we can improve how the reporting happens if we check on it.

**Mr Nicol**: Indeed.

**THE CHAIR**: The rest of my questions are either for the CIT or for our economic colleagues, but can I just check, before we do go to morning tea, if any of my colleagues have any additional questions from what they have heard this morning?

**Ms Leigh**: Excuse me; you asked about Access Canberra. Dave Peffer has come to represent Access Canberra, if you would like to ask some questions.

**THE CHAIR**: Yes, certainly we can go back to Access Canberra.

**Mr Wright**: Can I just make a small correction for the record while we are waiting?

**THE CHAIR**: Yes.

**Mr Wright**: The advice I received regarding cultural awareness training was that there was not a specific Ngunnawal component. On my reading through the outline, one of the key topics listed in that is an overview of Ngunnawal traditional ownership of the ACT and the region.

**THE CHAIR**: That was the Ngunnawal component to the cultural awareness training?

**Mr Wright**:Yes.

**THE CHAIR**: Dave, thanks for joining us at such short notice. What I would like to start by asking you is: what is, for Access Canberra, your Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander customer service strategy?

**Mr Peffer**: We have been going through a process over the last couple of years of looking at our service as a whole. The current work that we are doing now under Minister Ramsay, given his clear focus on ensuring no-one gets left behind, is actually unpicking a lot of the averages that we have used to drive our service model. By that I mean we have been able to lift the number and proportion of digital transactions, we have been able to shorten certain processing times—all those sorts of things. But that is really driven by averages. The more we start to unpick the data, the more we realise that, yes, that might be good for the majority of the customers that we are actually serving, but some of our service delivery groups, our clients, have not benefited from the same uplift or increase in transactions that are online.

As part of our service model redesign, in the coming months we are actually undertaking a consultation that the minister has asked us to do where we will be out talking to a number of groups. We have started piloting different service delivery models where, rather than us expecting people to come into one of our service centres, because we understand and recognise that that can be quite a daunting experience for someone not used to coming into a government setting, we have started sending our employees out to community groups. I think we did a retirement village just recently as well, to provide services to people in a much more neutral setting, a setting that they are comfortable in.

Everyone in our service delivery team goes through cultural awareness training as part of their induction before they are actually operating on the front line of our service centres or our contact centre.

**THE CHAIR**: One hundred per cent of your staff have done cultural awareness training?

**Mr Peffer**: I should clarify that. One hundred per cent of our staff have not done the most recently settled cultural awareness training, but as part of our induction program we do a more extensive training of RED which looks at the diversity of our client groups that come through the front door each and every day. And we really focus on that as part of, I guess, a skill that our staff members need in dealing with members of the public.

**THE CHAIR**: So that I am clear, how many of your staff have done Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultural awareness training?

**Mr Peffer**: I will need to take that on notice. In terms of our service delivery model we have obviously got about 600 or 700 lines of business that we transact with within the community of Canberra. There are particular lines of business where we have recognised that the service delivery approach driven by averages is not necessarily delivering good outcomes for different groups of people, Aboriginals and Torres Strait Islanders being one of those.

If I chose one, just to give an example, it would be the working with vulnerable people registration process that we currently have. This is quite a large registration process. There are currently over 100,000 cards that we have issued to people working in a range of occupations that require them to hold these cards. One of the challenges we have had through the registration process is recognising that not everyone comes to us with the same type of birth certificate and passport, that originating documentation, the cardinal documents that we require for the registration process.

What we have done is a lot of training with the team. We have actually brought in someone who has had extensive experience in service delivery to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people to work in that team directly. And we have trained our team to be much more flexible in how we actually approach the registration process. For instance, when we identify people that perhaps do not have a birth certificate we will work with them to create that originating documentation, recognising the impact that that can have in their life, to support them through that registration process.

Being the regulator, we have to be very careful about the role that we play in terms of how we support people through that process. A common step that we will take is to put applicants who are struggling through that registration process in touch with support services, whether that is Winnunga or others, to assist them in following that through.

**THE CHAIR**: The question is: do you have an Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander customer service strategy?

**Mr Peffer**: No, we do not currently have an Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander customer service strategy. We are framing up a strategy that will take into account, as part of the community engagement process the minister has—

**THE CHAIR**: There is something coming that might have a component, but just for now?

**Mr Peffer**: We do not.

**THE CHAIR**: Do you have a generic customer service strategy or charter or commitment to clients sort of thing?

**Mr Peffer**: We do. We have an accountability commitment which outlines the expectation we have of our team members in how we will deal with members of the public and how we will enforce the law for the protection of the community.

**THE CHAIR**: On the example you gave of working with vulnerable people, I have recently been through that process and I think it does have, for a whole range of reasons, some good work around it to meet the legality of what is needed to help people through that process. I do agree. What I am interested in understanding—and you are talking about having a different but a similar sort of background on some of these things—is: do you measure your data against who uses your service or who is missing? What I mean by that is not just the low number, perhaps, of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people and how often they connect, but, given the size of this community, how many people are not connecting at all.

**Mr Peffer**: No, we do not specifically measure that. I guess the range of services that we provide are all determined by legislative frameworks. We have two parts to our business. One is where people come to us, whether they need registration or a permit or a licence of the type for working in the vulnerable people occupation, whatever that might be. The second is where we actually go to people. We have a big inspectorate that does a range of things, anything from gas and utilities through to working with vulnerable people out in community groups or sporting facilities.

As part of that we do not specifically capture who is not accessing our services. We might pick people up who should be registered when they are undertaking a particular activity. That is something that our working with vulnerable people inspectors, for instance, do if they are out in childcare or community settings or on sports fields on the weekend. But I guess those numbers of people who should be registered but are not are reasonably low and we would not actually break that data down into different demographics or groups within it.

**THE CHAIR**: How do you know that number is low if you do not know who is not signed up?

**Mr Peffer**: Because we have got a very extensive inspection program. We do well over 100,000 inspections of thousands of businesses, thousands of community groups.

**THE CHAIR**: If we are talking about people who do not have a birth certificate and do not have some of those documents, they will not show up on it.

**Mr Peffer**: That is absolutely right. If people require a document to do something then we pick that up pretty quickly.

**THE CHAIR**: What I worry about is if people require it and do not get it and they miss out on what they should be doing. That is where I am going with this questioning. If we do not know who is not accessing it, it is hard to provide a service or even information to help them make that connection. That is the group that I am worried about. I am trying to understand what the strategy is for those people.

**Mr Peffer**: I guess we have not done a great deal of thinking about those people who perhaps are not registered with us in any way or licensed at all but who could be missing out on services because of that.

**THE CHAIR**: And the reason I think that that would be important for us is that, not for the majority of our community, there is a level of transience for those people that are particularly vulnerable in this space. The last question I have on this—and you may have already picked up on it—is: what knowledge does the service have of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander services and programs? If I go into a shopfront, within your data systems is there information on Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander specific services in Canberra to refer people to?

**Mr Peffer**: Yes, there is. Essentially we have a knowledge system that underpins our workforce. It is what we call our CRM. That has tens of thousands of pages of knowledge that are provided by not just our own directorate but directorates right across the ACTPS. The Chief Minister had a very clear view that we were to have that “no wrong door” type of approach to government. If you call our contact centre and ask about any service or if you go into our shopfronts they do have the ability to very quickly access on the CRM details from Community Services, for instance, or from Health or from Education, whatever that might be. We can bring that up very quickly and pass that information on.

**THE CHAIR**: Are you confident that that covers the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander programs in the ACT?

**Mr Peffer**: I would be reasonably confident that it does. I would not say that it is 100 per cent at any point in time. Policies and programs change as people move through and there is a constant program of work to maintain that knowledge system and keep that up to date.

**THE CHAIR**: Which is what I am particularly worried about. Given that lots of the programs and services are six, 12 and 18-month things, how easy is it for you to refresh and be contemporary with?

**Mr Peffer**: We work very closely with all directorates, right down to the fact that if a minister is about to put out a media release on any issue, whether it is a new project or doing roadworks or we have got this new initiative, our contact centre is advised in advance so that we have information. So if someone were to pick up the phone a few minutes after a media release goes out, we could actually talk to them about the detail of what that policy or program might be. I would not be confident to say we pick up 100 per cent all the time, but I am confident that we do a pretty good job, given the volume of what actually comes through, in providing that service.

**THE CHAIR**: I am conscious of time. Do any of my colleagues have any follow-up questions on what we have heard so far this morning? One of the follow-up questions—and this is probably for you, Dave—is: how often has the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander business page been reviewed and refreshed since its establishment?

**Mr Nicol**: I will take that one on notice.

**MR WALKER**: Going back to the question about the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander staff in employment, you said that six were CSD and the functions were with the network. What is the engagement and commitment of your directorate and other directorates with the network and its suggested pathways? As Aboriginal staff members, we are all a part of that network and it has been struggling. I just want to know what is the commitment from you and the commitment from other directorates.

**Ms Whitten**: We have met in the last two weeks with CSD to reinvigorate the commitment to a whole-of-government staff network. And the way we want to do that is to work with those existing networks. I have recently moved from Education. I know what the commitment has been in terms of that staff network and where they engage with their senior executive team. The executive of the staff network in Education meets with the senior executive team in Education on a quarterly basis at one of their board of management meetings. That is my most recent experience.

That is why we commenced the conversations with the Community Services Directorate, to see what we can learn from other directorates prior to re-establishing a whole-of-government network, probably starting with the executives of each of the networks as a starting point and then keeping the conversation going from there. I think we really need to learn from what is working well.

**THE CHAIR**: We might break now until 11.15. Thank you very much.

## Hearing suspended from 11.03 to 11.15 am.

**THE CHAIR**: The first series of questions in this section is around Indigenous economic strategies. The directorate has made some commitments to funding for shaping supported pathways into existing programs and activities to foster entrepreneurship for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people. Can you tell us how that is being done, what funding has been allocated, what are your measures for success and have you got priority or target sectors for that?

**Ms Arthy**: That is a very wide-ranging question. I may have to take some of it on notice or get some of my people to try to track down some answers, but I will start at the highest level. When we are looking at Indigenous economic development, the main program we look at is something called the Indigenous enterprise development program. There was $100,000 allocated per annum for two years. I believe we have worked with the elected body before, and that you were part of our selection of Yerra to run the first project, which is called the ACT Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander business development and entrepreneurship program, for one year, with the option of extending it for another year.

That is a really exciting project for us, particularly given that it is delivered by Dion Devow, who, of course we all know, is the ACT Australian of the Year. The aim is to deliver education, training and mentoring services to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander businesses and entrepreneurs, in conjunction with CIT and also working up with the CBR Innovation Network. What we want to do is not just provide the generic skills for businesses but also help them develop a business into something that is ongoing. CBR Innovation Network is an expert at being able to convert that generic skill into delivering on a business outcome.

The first yarning circle was held on 10 February, and 35 people attended that, mainly looking at accounting, intellectual property and entrepreneurship. There was another workshop in late February around digital marketing. We have not seen the report from that yet, so I do not know what the outcomes of that are. I hope to get that by the end of March.

We are working mainly through Yerra at the moment to look at how we can take people from that beginning of providing the skills and taking them through the system into the CBR Innovation Network to actually get into business.

**THE CHAIR**: You have entered that agreement, and it is good that those activities have started, but what are the specific measures of success for the program?

**Ms Arthy**: I do not have them on me, but I can ask my team to follow them up or I can provide them out of session.

**THE CHAIR**: Thank you. And within that, have you identified particular sectors where you think there is a greater potential for success, or is it a fairly broad catchment?

**Ms Arthy**: At the moment it is a fairly broad catchment. Really we are looking at how we can provide the basic level skills to as broad a variety of businesses as possible and not trying to pick any particular sectors. In the ACT we naturally have a pull towards more of the knowledge economy and defence and cyber. We also have a fairly strong commitment around building up the arts industry as well, and tourism. So it is a very broad range, and we are not limiting it at this point.

**THE CHAIR**: Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander participation policy in the procurement space, has that been developed?

**Ms Arthy**: That is not my responsibility. I am not sure where that one sits.

**Ms Leigh**: Is it Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander procurement?

**THE CHAIR**: It is participation policy for procurement.

**Ms Leigh**: They are the issues that David Nicol has taken away to come back on.

**THE CHAIR**: There are several other questions that I will include in the on-notice stuff for David—about targets and monitoring and the process for development, that sort of stuff. These questions are focused on Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander leadership and led solutions. I am particularly interested in how many Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people hold official positions on ACT government boards and committees.

**Ms Leigh**: I do have that data; I will just have to extract that for you. That is not directly a responsibility for Kareena. Overall that is a responsibility that Community Services Directorate have.

**THE CHAIR**: For all government boards?

**Ms Leigh**: For all government boards and committees. They are currently developing a diversity register to enable people to put themselves forward so that when the government is seeking to fill positions on boards and committees we will have up‑to‑date information about who is available and what the relevant skills are to the particular board. My understanding is that CSD are hoping to have that launched by the end of this month.

Currently the only register we have, as you are probably aware, is the women’s register. So it is building on that idea, but it is going to have the capacity to be kept more up to date than that register has been able to be. You combine that with when any minister is bringing an appointment to a board or committee to cabinet; they have to report on the impact on the number of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander members that are then reflected on that board and committee as a consequence of that appointment.

**THE CHAIR**: Is that regardless of the responsibility of that board and committee?

**Ms Leigh**: Yes.

**THE CHAIR**: Excellent.

**Ms Leigh**: That means that issue is front of mind. When there are particular responsibilities of a board, there will be focused advertising for that board. *Koori Mail*, for example, might be used to make sure we have reached out as far as possible to ensure that everyone who might be appropriate to put themselves forward for that position is aware of it. I understand that currently the number of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander members of boards and committees is at 1.6 per cent, and that excludes the elected body.

**THE CHAIR**: The next few questions are around the 28 May Reconciliation Day event. Could you tell us what the whole-of-government reconciliation event is that you will be hosting in 2018?

**Ms Arthy**: Sure. At this point we are looking at holding a very community and family oriented event in Glebe Park on the day. We are yet to do any sort of detailed planning because we are working on getting an event manager on board. We went out to the market once and we did not get any takers. We are now looking at what our options are and whether there are any more people in the marketplace who could deliver this. If not, I will be taking a team offline. Once we have the event manager, I plan to get a working group together of yourselves and a few other representatives. I believe that when we last met you gave me some suggestions. We will get a working group together so that we can get advice about what would work on Reconciliation Day for an event.

At this point we are looking at how we can provide an atmosphere where people can come together and look at what is being done really well in terms of reconciliation within the ACT. We know the ANU does a lot of good work. We know the Brumbies and Raiders do a lot of good work. It is about how we can bring them in. It is about how we have a wide range of offerings for food and entertainment and particularly how we feature local talent. But we have not made any decisions at all because we want to make sure that we do it with the elected body, in particular, so that we can make this a success. Beyond that, we do not have any more details apart from the fact that we have booked Glebe Park.

**THE CHAIR**: Time is getting away from us.

**Ms Arthy**: That is right. We are very disappointed that on our first going out to market we did not get any takers. We had hoped to have the event organiser in place now. But if we do not get an external organiser, we are looking at how we take people offline from our existing events team, because we are completely committed to making this a successful event.

**THE CHAIR**: You have already mentioned a couple, but I am interested that the RAP commits the directorate to external stakeholder engagement to promote reconciliation. I am always a little worried that RAP activities are about just what our part of the community is doing. Can you tell us some of the non-Indigenous entities that are involved in the promotion of reconciliation and the work the directorate is doing?

**Ms Arthy**: If I look in terms of the broad things we are doing across the directorate, it is mainly around arts and the sporting codes and, of course, the work with Boomanulla and Winnunga. If we look at what we are doing with the sporting codes, we are working now with nine sporting codes around how we can provide grants to increase participation from Indigenous kids in these different sports. I have the list there. I can find them at some point. We are doing a lot of very active work with the sporting codes on how we can improve that.

**THE CHAIR**: What is the “active work”, though? Besides the registration costs for participation, what are the other reconciliation activities you are engaging in?

**Ms Arthy**: A lot of the work we do is talking to the codes about what things we can do. I am not involved in the detail of those discussions, and I can certainly provide more information out of session if we need to, but we are always talking to every code about participation generally. Each of the codes is very different from the other, so there is no one-size-fits-all approach to how we improve participation. I have not got specifics here, but I can get some information for you. It is really around what we can do to help the codes improve participation in sporting activity.

**THE CHAIR**: And that is the key measure of success?

**Ms Arthy**: Basically, yes. When we look at what we are doing around sport and rec, participation is our main key to success. There is a national survey that is done around participation, and we are working with them on how we can get better data on participation in the Indigenous community, because I do not think we really have any that is reliable in the ACT.

The other area, of course, is the arts sector. As you are probably aware, the first arts network has been convened, and the first meeting is on 21 March at Tidbinbilla. Five people will be part of that. We will be working through those people: Jilda Andrews, Adrian Brown, Sam Faulkner, Dale Huddleston and Jenni Martiniello. They each represent certain parts of the arts community.

**THE CHAIR**: So there is quite a diversity in that group?

**Ms Arthy**: Quite diverse. We will be working through them to get advice about how we best engage with the community around the Indigenous art sector. That is something we believe very strongly is an untapped potential in terms of not only promoting the vibrancy of the artistic community but using that as a way, frankly, to boost tourism and our visitor economy and looking at how we can help turn that into more of the business side of the economy.

**THE CHAIR**: How does that fit with the report that you have only recently released around consulting on that particular issue?

**Ms Arthy**: It is an outcome of that report. The network is a direct outcome of the work that we did on the consultation. Where are we up to with that? The government appointed five members. There are another five members that can be appointed from the general public. We have the register open. At the moment we have received only two expressions of interest to be on that and only one has been identified as an Aboriginal person. That is going to be discussed with the network on the 21st: how we go about providing that broader range of consultation.

**THE CHAIR**: In respect of the 47 people who responded to that consultation process, there is a breakdown in the report around age and gender. I could not see how many of those 47 were actually Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander people.

**Ms Arthy**: I will have to take that one on notice and come back to you. I do not have that.

**Ms Leigh**: All.

**Ms Arthy**: How many?

**Ms Leigh**: All.

**Ms Arthy**: All of them, sorry.

**THE CHAIR**: I also found the reference to Ngunnawal people in the report interesting—going back to the use of brackets in the spelling of the name. I was wondering how that came about.

**Ms Arthy**: That is on the advice from OATSIA, the office. It advised us to do that.

**THE CHAIR**: That seemed to go a lot against the way the government recognises the Ngunnawal people.

**Ms Arthy**: If we got it wrong, I will take that one on and make sure we do not do it again.

**THE CHAIR**: Thank you. The next questions are around the Yarramundi markets. There is a commitment in the RAP relating to the markets out at the cultural centre site. How are they are resourced and managed?

**Ms Arthy**: I will have to take that one on notice because I do not have any oversight of that one at all.

**Ms Leigh**: I think it is managed internally by OATSIA.

**Ms Arthy**: Apparently that one is a question for OATSIA.

**THE CHAIR**: It is in your RAP.

**Ms Arthy**: It is in our RAP, but I will follow it up.

**THE CHAIR**: It is interesting how many things are defaulting to OATSIA. I have a question relating to the reconciliation action plan for the directorate. This may be a question for someone else. Is it included in general staff induction packs or in executive induction?

**Ms Arthy**: That is a question for Robert. I will take that on notice.

**THE CHAIR**: Yes, apologies; I have some of these a bit out of whack. Again, this might be a more general question for the directorate. Is there a cultural awareness strategy? I understand, particularly with the training, that it is optional. There are three or four sessions a year set down, which at the most is maybe 60 people if they are fully subscribed to. Is there a broader strategy around how to build that cultural confidence in the directorate?

**Ms Leigh**: As you said, we have the training. We have three sessions this year. We had one in March and we have two more scheduled this year. There is a strong encouragement from senior staff for staff to attend that. It is made very clear by the senior staff of the directorate that staff are encouraged to do that so that nobody feels they are too busy to go or something like that.

**THE CHAIR**: Are senior staff attending?

**Ms Leigh**: Yes, senior staff are attending. I am listed to go to the next one in June.

**THE CHAIR**: Good answer.

**Ms Leigh**: Also, we are looking at what we can do for directors-general as a group. A couple of years ago we went out to Yankee Hat. That was really great for directors‑general. A number of the Aboriginal rangers took us out and showed us the artwork and plants. I think that was a really good way to step outside the office environment and really stop and reflect on our own knowledge and what we learnt on that day. I have been looking at what we could do again for directors-general, whether it is something as a group in the office or something that we can get out and do.

Going back to the directorate, yes, we have cultural awareness training and it is taken seriously. People are encouraged to attend. We have our induction training for our new staff. That is just a part-day session, obviously, covering a lot of things. But inclusion and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander awareness are part of that, to make very clear to all new staff about how important that is and also how inclusive we seek to be as an employer. In terms of induction, yes, it is one of the many things that we try to pack into that short time.

As I mentioned earlier, we have senior staff allocated to be champions. Again, that is making very clear that this is taken seriously. Then we have some of those programs that were mentioned earlier, such as our mentoring program. So there are a number of strategies that go to making sure that the general staff are both trained in cultural awareness and understand that this is something that, as a directorate, we take seriously and that everyone is expected to take seriously.

**THE CHAIR**: I guess that the question about the strategy is this: once people have done that training, how is the directorate ensuring that they are then able to use that when they are back in the workplace—for example, understanding the demographics of the community in respect of the programs they are running? What do our participation rates look like? Rather than a generic 1.7 per cent, how are people provided with the tools and the information to get better outcomes for our community?

**Ms Leigh**: I guess that is going to vary across all of the wide variety of roles that people might have. If there is someone specifically in either our directorate HR area or our whole-of-service people area, then that should provide a basis for understanding what might be some of the retention issues for our staff.

I think it is grounding to be able to start to think, “I had not thought about these things before. These are the things that I can look into further if I am trying to think about how we maintain attraction.” If it is somebody in Access Canberra who is dealing with staff on a day-to-day basis, it is a case of understanding better how to relate to people who are coming into Access Canberra or the particular issues they might face. I think we—

**THE CHAIR**: Yes. I am more interested in that next impact level.

**Ms Leigh**: need to provide a platform to build on.

**THE CHAIR**: I understood from the generic responses of your senior level staff that there are some accountability measures in their performance agreements, for example.

**Ms Leigh**: That is right.

**THE CHAIR**: I think I have a good picture of what is provided now for staff supports. I am more interested in how you are becoming better informed to deliver impact to the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community.

**Ms Leigh**: Again, that is going to depend on the particular area. As I said, I have tried to roll the targets down to directors-general. Directors-general report to me quarterly on how they are going against achieving them and what they are doing to try to improve that. I expect that means they are doing the same with their staff.

**THE CHAIR**: Yes.

**Ms Leigh**: I certainly am, internally, with my staff. Equally, ministers have set policies in some areas. Then that will be a measure for staff working on those policies—the extent to which they are achieving the substantive policies that ministers have set for our community.

**Ms Arthy**: Perhaps I can talk about it from an economic development point of view as well.

**THE CHAIR**: Yes.

**Ms Arthy**: In Kathy’s area, we are probably the ones that have the most direct—

**THE CHAIR**: Outward facing.

**Ms Arthy**: Outward facing; so since getting responsibility for Reconciliation Day and really looking at what we are doing for the event and looking at what we do around developing the Indigenous arts sector and our broader ambitions about how we lever our Indigenous communities in our visitor economy, we have realised that we need a lot better training in cultural awareness, but not just the very general stuff. It is about how we engage very effectively with Indigenous businesses and people within the community.

That is something we have started talking about now. In the next couple of months we really want to roll this out to every staff member within economic development who does have a touchpoint out in the community so that we actually do come off a very informed base. As I said, when we have been working on the Reconciliation Day event, we have realised that we all thought we had had cultural awareness training, but really we need to go deeper.

That is something that I would be really grateful for some further advice on, or discussions with you out of session about how best to do that. In Skills Canberra we require every person to undertake cultural awareness training in particular, and we get that through the CIT. We make sure that the people who are dealing with apprentices, trainees and students are aware. But when we are talking about how we develop more of the business side and have that economic impact, as I said, that is something that we have acknowledged as a gap in our skill base. It is something that we want to address.

**THE CHAIR**: It is encouraging to hear the realisation of it being a journey. Picking off business bits rather than information bits is good. I think I have missed the right group to ask this next question of. But I put it on the record. It is around the processes that you use to review HR policies to ensure that there are no barriers existing for staff to access NAIDOC Week. From memory, that requires an annual process to be eligible. I want to make sure that that is still happening.

**Ms Arthy**: Thank you.

**THE CHAIR**: The next set of questions are, I promise, back in the right area. They are in the sport and recreation space. They come back, I guess, to the endgame of Boomanulla Oval. But initially I want to ask about the strategic priorities for infrastructure in sport, such as ice sports and indoor facilities in Woden, Gungahlin and Belconnen. If the Woden region needs an indoor sports venue, in the consideration of facilities that need to go into Boomanulla has that site been considered?

**Ms Arthy**: We are not at that point. I think that that is the easiest answer. We have currently got the consultant looking at potential options around the indoor facilities. At the moment, from memory, they are still talking to all the different sporting codes about what their needs are. We have not actually got to the point of looking at different sites. That is where the broader—

**THE CHAIR**: You are putting it on the record.

**Ms Arthy**: That is right. All I can do is say that I will take it back and have a look at it. With the ice rink, consultancy is still very much underway.

**THE CHAIR**: We will get to some of the other questions around the oval, but it seems, going on the ice sports annual reports, that they are, compared to the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander population, smaller numbers. That is a large infrastructure investment that we could potentially get leverage from as well. Maybe I have misunderstood my readings, but what is the engagement of the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community in those indoor sports facilities reviews?

**Ms Arthy**: I will have to take that one on notice and get my team to follow it up, hopefully while we are in the hearings. I just do not know what we have tasked the consultant to do on that in terms of specifics, but I can find out.

**THE CHAIR**: Thanks. The next few questions are around the sporting grants utilisation in the past year. I believe they come through the Indigenous advancement strategy, that funding.

**Ms Arthy**: That is right.

**THE CHAIR**: Can you let me know the number of recipients?

**Ms Arthy**: There are two parts to it. There are the small grants, which focus on the $200 towards registration and membership of the sport and rec. In the last round we only got 288 applicants for that, which we were not happy about. That is why we have changed the model this year to put the funding out to the individual associations, hoping that we can get more. That is yet to open, so we do not have any outcomes from that. The partner program was a total of $105,000. We have funded five proposals, in total $116,728. We must have found the extra money. The AFL kickstart program got $13,000. Ainslie Football Club, for an Indigenous pathway program, got $5,700. The Guramaa Global Indigenous Corporation, for surfing, got about $26,000.

**THE CHAIR**: Surfing?

**Ms Arthy**: Global surfing. I did not know we had a surfing community in Canberra. The National Indigenous Basketball Academy, for pathways for Indigenous people, got $2,000. Ted Noffs, for deadly dreaming, got $20,000, and the Winnunga Warriors sporting club, for basketball, got just over $4,000. The minister agreed to do another two projects. Yeddung Mura, Good Pathways, for a women’s fitness program, got about $6,000; and Outward Bound Australia got just over $3,500. Those are the main projects that we have funded.

**THE CHAIR**: Those projects came to $113,000?

**Ms Arthy**: About $125,000 off the top of my head, just doing the quick calculations.

**THE CHAIR**: In those funding rounds, what are the measures of success for each of those programs?

**Ms Arthy**: I would have to come back to you with the official one on that. I do not have it in front of me. I would say it would be around participation, because that is overall—

**THE CHAIR**: I am just trying to get a sense of how big that number is.

**Ms Arthy**: I will get the actual targets to see whether we have some. We have also provided $25,000 in relation to a study on engagement, looking at how we can grow participation through Indigenous families in sport.

**THE CHAIR**: Has that been completed?

**Ms Arthy**: It was presented in December 2017. It is available on sport.act.gov.au, but we can send you a copy of that report.

**THE CHAIR**: I am more interested, if it is completed, in what the plan is next.

**Ms Arthy**: I will have to take that on notice, because it has not come to me yet—

**THE CHAIR**: I understand that it is fairly new.

**Ms Arthy**: in terms of what the next steps are.

**THE CHAIR**: You mentioned the change in focus. I think that that streamlines the process for picking. I am not sure what the sports are, but I presume they are our highest participation rate sports. When does that start?

**Ms Arthy**: It is starting around now. We have gone out to all of the sports. The sports are rugby league, basketball, football, touch football, AFL, softball, netball, rugby union and athletics. We have gone out to all the sports now. They are just gearing themselves up to open up for winter registrations. Each of the codes is at a different stage. We know that some of them have already had meetings. Others have not. Some are not quite ready. We have also got a facility whereby people who do not want to participate in those sports can still come in to us and apply.

**THE CHAIR**: What has been the requirement on those sporting codes to get ready for that program? Some of the advice from the community has been that they heard about the program and rang one of those sports, and they did not know what they were talking about. It might have just been who they got on the phone.

**Ms Arthy**: I think I know the example. I suspect it is more just a matter of timing, because most of the sporting codes were getting ready to gear up for either now or the next couple of weeks.

**THE CHAIR**: Yes, peak time.

**Ms Arthy**: Certainly, with a couple of the sporting codes their registrations have not opened yet, so I suspect it was a matter of timing. We have gone back out to all the sporting codes and made sure that they are able to answer questions from the public if they ring in.

**THE CHAIR**: If the grants have opened, it would be good if they could—

**Ms Arthy**: That is right.

**THE CHAIR**: The next question is about the Boomanulla tender that was released in June 2016. When will that be completed?

**Ms Arthy**: As you probably know, because of the tender and probity issues I cannot comment in detail on this. I can say that we are currently working through with Winnunga, which is, as you know, the preferred tenderer at this point, what the next steps in the process will be. Beyond that, I am unable to talk publicly about any detail.

**THE CHAIR**: Is 20 months an unusual period of time for that process to run?

**Ms Arthy**: I have only been in the ACT public service for nine months. For the ones that I have come across, it is not unusual. It is an important development for us. We want to make sure we get it right. Taking a bit more time in the planning stages usually gets a better outcome later on. But from what I have seen in the ACT, and certainly in my experience in the commonwealth, for a project of this scale it is not unusual.

**THE CHAIR**: Is that because it is looking for a longer term sustainable solution? It is on a larger scale than putting some goalposts up and—

**Ms Arthy**: Yes. We are aware of the cultural significance of the area and also the potential in terms of what the future of that area might be. It is not a simple matter.

**THE CHAIR**: That is why I questioned you about the basketball courts in Woden, where there is high demand for use. It seemed like a good opportunity to be cheeky with you. Arts and culture and the cultural centre are our next series of questions. How does the ACT events policy ensure that it is inclusive of traditional owners and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people?

**Ms Arthy**: I will have to go back to the actual events policy. But in our general approach to events, promoting Indigenous involvement in terms of both performers and art is something we want to do. I am not sure that we do it well in terms of being able to articulate right down to the experience at an event that celebrates our Indigenous culture, business and experience.

One of the things we are looking at, particularly through our community events, is how we can promote more local performers. It is not just necessarily Indigenous performers; it is across the board. Also, how do we celebrate our local art? We are looking at how we can bring art into all of the events and, because we are so proud of all our Indigenous artists, how we can bring that in more. I am not saying we do it well; I am saying that it is something we are thinking about very carefully.

At the moment we are looking at our plan for the next year around community events and how we can make it much more inclusive, in the broadest sense of inclusive, of the Canberra experience. The Reconciliation Day event has opened our eyes quite a bit in terms of the scope and how much we do not know and what we can do to be better. This is really a work in progress. I certainly hope that over the next 12 to 18 months you will see a significant improvement, because we are looking at all of our events, even the big ones, Floriade and Enlighten, to see how we can make them more Canberra.

**THE CHAIR**: Floriade has done a good job of using some of our local Ngunnawal people to do that. Enlighten has probably got some work to do. In reading the events policy—I am probably the biggest nerd on this, unluckily for you—I was troubled by the phrase “Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander culture will be acknowledged where culturally appropriate”. I would like some advice on when it would not be.

**Ms Arthy**: That is a very good question. The arts policy was 2015, was it not?

**THE CHAIR**: Yes.

**Ms Arthy**: We are looking across the board at how we work with Indigenous communities. The consultation report that came out more recently is probably a better reflection than, necessarily, that document. I agree with you in terms of that statement.

**THE CHAIR**: It is about trying to line up that progress in the arts space and the event space.

**Ms Arthy**: Absolutely.

**THE CHAIR**: But it is encouraging to hear that you are looking at multiple outcomes from existing events.

**Ms Arthy**: Absolutely. We have so much opportunity. I think the advantage of the suite of responsibilities I have—I have arts, I have events, I have economic development and I have higher education—is that I can bring so much together and we can create something better as a whole and as an experience than we could do in each of the individual sectors. One of the reasons why I find it hard to answer some of the questions is that I have tried to get outcomes by doing it slightly differently.

**THE CHAIR**: That is a nice segue to my question. With a national event like the Multicultural Festival, we have gone from, half a dozen years ago, working with government on an economic opportunity as much as on a cultural or an arts activity, hosting a showcase at the festival, to a couple of hours late on a Saturday night with no stalls, and with a very limited Ngunnawal presence at the opening. The question is around national events like the festival. What is your policy or position around the role that traditional owners play at the opening of those events, and including an Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander presence, as we have just discussed, in a range of opportunities at those events?

**Ms Arthy**: Multicultural is not one of mine. That is CSD. I will come back with how we can have a better way of doing this. I do not think we have a written policy, but I hope you have the view, from the conversation so far, that we are looking at how we can do things better. I would really like to have a discussion with you, either now or out of session, about how, with all of our events but particularly our bigger ones, we can really highlight what we are doing and how we can make it better.

**THE CHAIR**: Yes, and regardless of who manages the core event, we are working together.

**Ms Arthy**: Absolutely, yes.

**THE CHAIR**: In that same vein, the last of the questions in this space relate to the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Cultural Centre.

**Ms Arthy**: It is CSD, apparently. It is not us.

**THE CHAIR**: It might well be, but I want to talk about it in the vein of what we have just been talking about. I am wondering why it does not have any funding for arts or cultural operations.

**Ms Arthy**: I cannot answer that because I do not have any direct line of sight into that.

**THE CHAIR**: Into artsACT?

**Ms Arthy**: Into artsACT, but not in terms of how that cultural centre is funded.

**THE CHAIR**: The only funding for it at the moment is as a facility that can be booked. I am asking why there is not any artsACT funding for cultural programs at the cultural centre.

**Ms Arthy**: Can I take that on notice and come back? I do not want to mislead you. I have just heard here that we do fund certain projects. I just do not have the information here. I am not sure about what the ongoing relationship is in terms of how we all work together and whether the government funds outcomes there through a different source. With respect to artsACT, we do not fund all of the arts in the ACT. We tend to fund where other parts are not funded. It could be that that is getting funded through another part of government. I will need to go back and have a look at all the detail.

**THE CHAIR**: I will check with CSD, but my understanding is that the cultural centre at the moment is just a facility that is hired out. I actually thought that sat within this directorate.

**Ms Arthy**: No. I will try and find out; I just do not know.

**THE CHAIR**: Do arts facility upgrades sit with you?

**Ms Arthy**: Yes.

**THE CHAIR**: Is the cultural centre at Yarramundi on that list?

**Ms Arthy**: That is not a facility of ours. That is not our facility.

**THE CHAIR**: As in not the ACT government’s facility?

**Ms Arthy**: It is not artsACT, so it is not—

**THE CHAIR**: So the arts facility upgrades are only for your specific—

**Ms Arthy**: Only for the ones that we operate.

**THE CHAIR**: Why doesn’t it sit with arts?

**Ms Arthy**: I do not know. I suspect that, as with a lot of government things, it is historical.

**THE CHAIR**: It did start in this directorate. I was working in the directorate at the time. You can’t help me with the usage rates for the cultural centre?

**Ms Arthy**: No.

**THE CHAIR**: I will check whether my colleagues have any follow-up questions that they wish to ask.

**MS CHIVERS**: Yes, I have a couple of follow-up questions in relation to the Indigenous sports grants program that you mentioned. You spoke about timing and some of the partner organisations not being ready. Why was the program launched last Tuesday, prior to having all partner organisations on board? People saw it on the website and it said you had to contact Basketball ACT for basketball—or there was athletics et cetera. Why was the program launched with that information if they were not all on board?

**Ms Arthy**: The program was launched because many of the sports were ready to go. I do not have the actual launch information with me, but the program is meant to be for winter registrations, so it was reasonable to expect that the organisations would be ready to go when their winter registrations opened.

**MS CHIVERS**: But shouldn’t they all be ready so that you do not have community members contacting those that have absolutely no idea about it when those community members contact them?

**Ms Arthy**: I do not know the specifics of the example that you are referring to, but I can assure you that every organisation was given a full briefing, a full set of information, and I do not know why other advice was put out. We have gone back and double-checked and made sure that all the associations were given the information, so I do not understand some of the advice that has been provided.

**MS CHIVERS**: According to the program manager, for example, with Basketball ACT, when contacted, none of their staff had any idea. The program manager indicated that he had only been dealing with their CEO. That was obviously an issue when community members were contacting them; they had no idea.

**Ms Arthy**: I hope that that has now been rectified.

**MS CHIVERS**: It appears that some of the partner organisations, when contacted by members of the community, were not aware of the actual grant guidelines, including things like confirmation of descent and what they may need to do to ensure that the applicants are actually Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander. One partner organisation in particular has talked about means testing applicants, which is actually against the guidelines. They indicated that they thought they were only getting $10,000. I understand from the program manager that if they spend that, there is other money available. What work has been done with those partner organisations to ensure that they fully understand the grant guidelines, to rectify any of those issues before we get a large number of our community members contacting them?

**Ms Arthy**: I am actually quite concerned that one of your community members got advice on means testing, because it is just plain wrong. If you feel comfortable sharing with me, out of session, the actual association, we will follow that one up very quickly. We do not want that to go out, because it is wrong.

In terms of guidelines, we have done a lot of work, but I will take on board the fact that you are getting confusing messages out in the community. I will go back to the Active Canberra team and we will work out again how we go out and make sure that the associations are ready and that they do know the guidelines. It does concern me that, despite all of the work we have done, the associations are not appearing to give consistent messaging and information. If you are willing to share the name of the association, around the means testing, I will follow that one up urgently.

**MS CHIVERS**: Another concern was that, for example, one of those organisations said, “We know there’s an Indigenous club; we will just fund all participants in that club,” yet not all of those participants, for example, are Indigenous. I think there needs to be some clarification.

**Ms Arthy**: Okay. We will go back out—

**THE CHAIR**: Collectively, they have the guidelines; are they clear on them?

**MS CHIVERS**: Yes.

**THE CHAIR**: And you will let us know—

**Ms Arthy**: We thought they were, but obviously not, so we will go out again.

**THE CHAIR**: Thank you.

**MR WALKER**: I have a follow-up on the Multicultural Festival organisation. We recently had a chat collectively, as the elected body, in the absence of or the small part that the Ngunnawal elders played in the opening of the Multicultural Festival. We reflected on whether it could be made into a bigger event, with the focus of Australia and probably the world on us for that weekend. Given that there are custodians here, could whoever is starting to organise next year’s function get in touch with the elected body and/or Ngunnawal people to develop a 30-minute visual spectacle rather than a five-minute welcome to country speech?

**Ms Arthy**: We will pass that on to the organisers, CSD. We will certainly pass that on. As I said before—

**MR WALKER**: We will mention that to them, too.

**Ms Arthy**: Yes. In terms of the broader ones, particularly around Floriade, I think we can do a lot more. It would be good to have—

**THE CHAIR**: And to have a visual display like that—

**Ms Arthy**: Yes.

**THE CHAIR**: that can be repeated at those events.

**Ms Arthy**: Yes, that is right.

**THE CHAIR**: That would seem to be quite an effective way to do that as well.

**Ms Arthy**: I think we can do some incredible things. We have a creative producer for Floriade for this year, and we are also planning for next year. Now is a good time, particularly talking about planning for 2019; we can get plans in early, but we could also do something this year. It would be really great if we could.

**THE CHAIR**: Particularly around the performance side.

**Ms Arthy**: That is right.

**THE CHAIR**: The plants have to be ordered, but—

**Ms Arthy**: Yes, the plants have to be ordered, but it is around the experience. I think we could do a lot more, so it would be good to talk more.

**THE CHAIR**: I think that covers off this section. Thank you.

## Short suspension.

Appearances:

Canberra Institute of Technology

Cover, Ms Leanne, Chief Executive

Smith, Ms Cara, Team Leader, Student Support, CIT Yurauna

Fuzzard, Ms Rhonda, Manager, Student Support

**THE CHAIR**: Thank you for your time in preparing for today and bringing many of your colleagues with you; we appreciate that. You now sit in the portfolio of the Chief Minister. That is my directorate portfolio. Our process is that we have developed questions that collectively we have come up with or the community have given us and your portfolio person will answer those. If there is any follow-up towards the end, that could come from across the board. We do go out to community and ask for questions across the breadth of ACT government as well, and some of those may double up where you have already provided some generic responses. We have prioritised those as far as coming forward is concerned, to help the community to feel as though their voice is coming through to government, which is, obviously, the point of the elected body.

My first question for you is around what the CIT is doing to promote the institution as a preferred place for study for all Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people, and what strategies you have in place to attract people to the nation’s capital and to Ngunnawal country.

**Ms Cover**: Thank you for the opportunity to appear before the committee this morning. I have brought, as you mentioned, a number of staff with me, because I think it is a much stronger story being told by staff who are actually at the coalface doing some of the actions that you have asked about or may ask us questions about. So, if you do not mind, I will probably ask staff to come up. As a bit of a segue to that, I will ask Rhonda and Cara to come up in a moment. I will start answering the question and then flick to both of them.

I would say it is a variety of things at different levels. Central to our activity at CIT is our stretch RAP. And also absolutely central to our program of offerings in education and training for students, but also attracting the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander workforce and building that capacity, is our dedicated Yurauna centre. I am sure members are very familiar with that, so I will not go into all the details. Cara Smith is a team leader of our student support, and that is a really important role, in the Yurauna centre. I have asked Cara to come today because I think there are some really rich, important stories to be told from Cara, from that student perspective but also as a staff member within the Yurauna centre.

The RAP has our targets and our stretch goals that sit there. I know you all have the detail around that. Really, it is about strengthening respect. It is about increasing opportunity and partnerships. Predominantly our work is through the Yurauna centre, with a framework of our stretch RAP.

The team that I have brought today gives some indication of the institute’s approach to building workforce opportunities for staff, to attract and retain staff, and also for students. I might touch on a couple of the highlights around what we have been doing in the last year in that space.

**THE CHAIR**: That would be great, particularly with outcomes rather than just the activities.

**Ms Cover**: Sure; okay. In 2017 the Canberra Institute of Technology, predominantly through the Yurauna centre, hosted 795 students of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander identification. We provided 131 scholarships to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students, to a total cost of $85,800. The Yurauna centre that I mentioned had a number of exhibitions and recognition, celebration and award ceremonies throughout the year. Two that I would like to mention, because I thought they were outstanding, were the winds of change display at the Reid library, through the CIT, and also the really powerful short story presentations that I attended, along with a number of other staff across the institute, and many members from the community, called “My story, my voice”. They were a really inspirational acknowledgement from Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people within our community.

We have also, particularly through the CIT library, this year really focused on resources and collections. That was completed in 2017 and highlights a real focus on Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander resources through the library, predominantly at Reid but available to all students and staff across our campuses. We have been a partner to the new bush healing farm, to provide training across a number of qualifications there.

I would like to talk very briefly about the leadership of the Yurauna centre and the leadership of staff within the Yurauna centre, and particularly comment on the fact that Caroline Hughes—who is the director of our Yurauna centre, and is on the elected body, of course, as you know—in the last fortnight was a finalist in the ACT Woman of the Year Awards. We are really proud of her in that role. But it is not just Caroline; it is people like Cara, who lead the workforce within the Yurauna centre and also students.

I have got more detail, but I might pause and ask Cara to say a few things, unless you would like me to move on, which I am also happy to do.

**THE CHAIR**: I do have one question, then I am happy to hear from Cara, who I know quite well. The student intake numbers that you refer to have seen a fairly steady rise over a seven or eight-year period, but what did stand out to me was what seemed like a significant drop between 2016 and 2017. Was that anticipated? Perhaps there was not another course. Has that rectified itself this year?

**Ms Cover**: The institute works on a demand-supply sort of model. If students present, we will provide opportunities for them. If they do not present, sometimes the numbers are down. I think 2017 was a bit of an anomaly in that.

**THE CHAIR**: It seems like it. The six years before had seen a very steady increase. I was just wondering what might have happened.

**Ms Cover**: I might ask Cara and Rhonda from student services to make some comment about it from their perspective as well. But, having said that, what we are seeing is that the qualifications that Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students are doing within the Yurauna centre, and more broadly outside the Yurauna centre across the various programs of CIT, are increasingly stable at the certificate IV to diploma level. We have also seen some increasing numbers around areas like the plumbing qualification. The demand varies from year to year, depending on what students’ interests are and what the job or labour market looks like for those students.

Cara, do you or Rhonda want to add anything to the earlier question?

**Ms Smith**: I would like to add something, yes. I am a Gidabal woman from northern New South Wales. I would like to pay my respect to the Ngunnawal people as well, especially Uncle Fred. I acknowledge the sorry business at this time, and pass my respect from my family on to the Bell and Hughes family as well.

In regard to that steady drop, we are very big on linking our students up with employment after they finish their certificate IV or progressing them into diploma or even degree level qualifications. 2017 saw a lot of our students get paid employment from completing a certificate IV and certificate III in community services, and we have a number of students out working at places like the Red Cross, the Smith Family and places like that, and also applying for government development programs. I think that is testament to us not only providing that vital education component but also instilling that empowerment for our people to go into economic development, increasing their skills and knowledge.

**THE CHAIR**: Are you able to tell us what that rate looks like? Of your completing students, do you know how many have transitioned into employment, and in what period of time?

**Ms Smith**: I cannot say right now, but I can definitely get back to you, yes.

**THE CHAIR**: On notice? Yes, thank you.

**Ms Smith**: What was the other question originally, sorry?

**Ms Cover**: It was around promotion, attraction and retention of staff members, and also students, to training opportunities.

**THE CHAIR**: Actually, it was around the promotion of the institution as a place to study.

**Ms Smith**: Our main role is to be present in the community. As you know, I am very involved in community. I like to get out and physically meet people and know people. We can have all the promotional material in the world, but it is not going to attract students if they do not know someone in the centre.

Our one-on-one case management is really important. We like to really tailor our support to the individual, not the group as a whole. That translates into promotion of the courses. If one family member sees that their cousin, their brother or their sister is doing really well, they are going to come back to Yurauna and ask for our advice.

My main role is looking after the students but also going out to the community, promoting our courses. We do a lot of work with the liaison officers in the school, attending employment and educational exhibitions and expos, just to give the students and community members a different kind of view of CIT and Yurauna. We also are involved in community fairs and events, as you would know. You see us. Caroline is very—

**THE CHAIR**: We are at the stall next door.

**Ms Smith**: Yes. They are some of the ways we promote ourselves to the community and increase that.

**THE CHAIR**: Rhonda, maybe I am cutting your grass, but besides that ebb and flow of the business model, was there anything between 2016 and 2017? Was there a high completion rate of students moving into the workforce, or is it just part of the business that sometimes there is a dip in the numbers?

**Ms Fuzzard**: Thank you for having me here. I think that there were a lot of people who had started in 2016 who were completing, so there was an anomaly, in a sense, in 2016 in that there were so many.

**THE CHAIR**: So that was more the anomaly, that it was a big number rather than it—

**Ms Fuzzard**: I think so. The number shot up, but the Yurauna centre was doing a great job and had quite a few commercial courses running as well. It depends on where the work is coming in. It is not for any other reason; it is just that one year was abnormally high. If you took that year out, you would find that 2017 was still growing from 2015.

**THE CHAIR**: I had not picked that up. Thank you. The contracts of a number of accredited Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander teachers have terminated or lapsed, yet there is still a high level of turnover of staff within the Yurauna centre. Does the CIT have strategies in place to remedy the level of turnover within the Yurauna centre to create a permanent and stable environment?

**Ms Cover**: I am not aware specifically of the contracts you are talking about, but certainly the institute has very well-resourced number systems that track our new starters and our separations. I personally look at that every month. It is one of the areas across the institute, in terms of contract positions and wanting to transition to a more permanent, stable workforce, that I am looking at the moment. I am happy to have a look at that specifically within the Yurauna centre to provide a more fulsome response to the situation. But it is something I am well aware of. It has been probably reflected across the institute, with a number of changes—me coming into the role, new exec and new structures in place. Sometimes associated with that is some disruption to contracts and the structure of the workforce.

**THE CHAIR**: I think your point is very valid. It would be interesting to understand if that is unique to the Yurauna centre or consistent with this type of workforce and what is transitioning.

**Ms Cover**: Sure. I am happy to have a look at that specifically around the Yurauna centre but, as I say, the ebb and flow of contracts is driven by a number of things, including the demand of the students and the courses we are running. But it is also in the way we are regulated in terms of the training package requirements and the particular skills, competencies and currencies that teachers need to have to deliver courses. That can sometimes impact on that as well.

**THE CHAIR**: Can I get a sense from the Yurauna staff that are here about what the numbers look like for your permanent staff, the stability of the people who are there and what the changeover looks like. Do you have an idea of what that rate is?

**Ms Cover**: I certainly have the staffing numbers.

**THE CHAIR**: But you cannot tell from that what the change in those people has been. It is six bodies, but is it the same six bodies?

**Ms Cover**: I have not got that with me today, so I can certainly have a look at the detail of that. I know there are 19 positions and I know there are nine females and 10 males, but the breakdown in terms of casual and permanent is not something I have with me today.

**Ms Smith**: As far as I know, it is the same staff members. There has not been too much of a difference in that.

**THE CHAIR**: The next question is not so much for the Yurauna centre but more broadly for the CIT: can you outline to me the processes undertaken in recruitment or interviewing for CIT to assess the suitability of general candidates around cultural safety for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community members who might be being taught by those people or receiving a service from them?

**Ms Cover**: Certainly safety, inclusion and a welcoming environment are really important. When I speak to students in the Yurauna centre and to community, the importance of being welcomed is often raised with me, feeling like there is ownership of that space and being included in all activities, not just within the Yurauna centre—although that has a very strong welcoming presence and inclusion focus—but across the whole of the organisation. Very prominent activities are run in very prominent locations that really try to embrace and promote inclusion, whether it is NAIDOC Week celebrations, et cetera.

In terms of recruitment, obviously adherence to the broader policies and practices around the promotion of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander staff members, depending on whether staff are joining the institute as teachers or whether they are joining as general staff, goes some way to set the conditions around the criteria, the skills and the capabilities that staff need coming in to those roles.

Because the vocational education and training environment is very regulated in terms of the mandated qualifications a teacher has to have in order to get in front of a class, certain competencies have to be adhered to and selected for. Of course, there are the more general non-teaching staff criteria. It depends on whether it is a teaching position or a general staff position. If it is a general staff position that has a focus on youth work or support work or a particular type of link with schools or with community, that would also influence the selection of those staff members.

**THE CHAIR**: My reading of the questions almost comes down to: does CIT cope with the raging success, at times, of the Yurauna centre and it not being the same for those students transitioning into the rest of the service? Does it impact on students staying on, if they only do Yurauna-focused training, or do they feel the same level of support and engagement when they are out in your mainstream courses?

**Ms Cover**: We do not specifically survey for that particular question. But, having said that, I know the satisfaction rate of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students in the Yurauna centre and across the institute is very high. That seems to be comparable; it seems to be very similar within the Yurauna centre and across the institute.

**THE CHAIR**: So they are transitioning into those roles okay?

**Ms Cover**: Yes. Certainly student satisfaction is one strong indicator that there is that safe and inclusive environment that is beyond just the Yurauna centre.

**THE CHAIR**: How does the CIT ensure that the curriculum, cultural activities and any wraparound support you provide have respect for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students from all over the country? How do you provide that support when we come from such diverse places?

**Ms Smith**: Sure. With our curriculum development, Caroline and the other teachers, all Indigenous teachers, are heavily involved in ensuring that it is culturally safe not just for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people but for all students at CIT. In terms of the wraparound support—I think this also answers the previous question—my role is to support all students, not just the Yurauna centre students, of which we have around 97. Across CIT we have over 200 Indigenous students, and my role is to contact each and every one of them to ensure that their fees are paid and they are attending classes. But my main concern is to see how they are going. Not being from Ngunnawal country but being from northern New South Wales and having lived all over, I am pretty respectful of different mobs and different backgrounds as well. So it is about sharing my experience and the know-how of our other team members to be inclusive and welcoming, and that practice of being kind to and respectful of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people.

**THE CHAIR**: How do you keep abreast of the whole of community’s wants and needs in regard to educational programs and the delivery method of those?

**Ms Cover**: Obviously the Yurauna centre has a critical role as a touch point for community. It is where community often go as a first touch point for the institute, if there are courses that are required within community. Beyond that, the institute has really strong links to the Chief Minister’s directorate in terms of where there are resources to be talking to industry all the time around growing skill gaps or demands, and emerging industries as well. There is quite a lot of structure around the way we collate and collect that advice from both the government but also industry.

The Yurauna centre has an advisory committee as well, and that is another great way of getting direct advice from community around those demands. We can respond quickly to some of those, whether it is training, support, connections to school, referrals or connections to employers for jobs as well.

**THE CHAIR**: I take that on board. But, outside of those formal governance structures, are there any other processes that you undertake to ask the community how they want their training to be delivered and what they want training on?

**Ms Cover**: I would re-emphasise the importance of the advisory committee in that space in providing us that direct advice.

**Ms Smith**: We also have weekly catch-ups with the students, just to touch base on how things are going. We encourage complaints and suggestions because that is how we improve our service delivery. At the end of every semester and term our teachers provide the students with our surveys. They are completely confidential and we evaluate those.

**THE CHAIR**: It is good that you do that work for the people who are engaged. I am interested in hearing from the people who have not engaged yet and trying to understand what it is that would make coming to the CIT attractive to them. Is it the training that is offered? Is it the way it is offered? What is the thing that is stopping them coming through the doors? Is there any work that you undertake to understand that from the people who are not connecting to you yet?

**Ms Cover**: I do not think so in a formal sense, but certainly, through the contacts the staff within the Yurauna centre more broadly have every day, I am pretty confident we are getting a good flow of that information into the institute and back out to community.

**Ms Smith**: For those students who have not re-engaged or have not engaged in a while, we make follow-up phone calls and send them little postcards, especially if they have gone through sorry business or things like that. We genuinely care about them as well. That it is not really a formal thing but just something that we do.

**THE CHAIR**: With the Yurauna centre’s focus on delivering programs within the community and the alcohol and other drugs sector, how does the CIT measure the success of these programs and does the CIT know if the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students completing these courses gain successful employment? Where are they now?

**Ms Cover**: I will comment about the satisfaction of students, which is very high. In terms of tracking students into jobs, a national survey is done but it is not done specifically for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students or employers of those students.

**THE CHAIR**: Is it hard to just aggregate that?

**Ms Cover**: I would have to take that on notice, to be honest. I am not sure whether that is the right mechanism for that detail. I do not know that the Yurauna centre tracks specific—

**Ms Smith**: Not formally; just through students calling to say they have got a job or things like that. But we have a new staff member on board who will be specifically looking after that and at career opportunities and helping with that. Hopefully, we will be able to use her skills to track where our students are going.

**Ms Cover**: I did not touch on this before, but the other resource the institute has which is very connected to the Yurauna centre is our CIT Student Association. That is a really active body of student representatives. They have support for any Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander student who might be on the council. It is another mechanism that I did not mention earlier that assists with the flow of information and student need as well. They often keep in contact informally with students beyond them being placed into jobs as well.

**THE CHAIR**: The final question I have is around how the Yurauna centre is preparing Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students for current and future information technology advancements happening the in the workplace.

**Ms Cover**: It is a challenge for all students in that space, but it is a particular challenge, potentially, for our Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students. The training packages the institute delivers are defined by industry. There are bodies and mechanisms for input into those training packages, in what might be called the curriculum in a school setting. The curriculum content is determined by industry.

The IT, the technology and the skills around problem-solving, team-building and decision‑making are encompassed within the actual training packages because industry recognise that those broader skills are changing very rapidly across all the industries and need to be embedded in the training packages being delivered.

**Ms Smith**: A lot of our students are computer illiterate, and just by being at the Yurauna centre they are developing those skills. It is not the high-tech IT skills that I think that question is asking for, but they are developing. They are using the computers. They are using iPads and things like that, so they are increasing their skills. On Friday we have tutorial support sessions where some of our older students who have never used a computer in their lives are using those skills and increasing that knowledge as well.

**THE CHAIR**: That is the last of the formal questions I have. Do my colleagues have any follow-up questions?

**MR KEED**: I want to ask about the scholarships and the financial assistance for the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students. What does the process look like when helping them apply for scholarships?

**Ms Smith**: They have a number of ways to apply: they can come in directly to the Yurauna centre. Staff are well trained in how to apply, encouraging them to fill out applications themselves. I am also based at Bruce campus and Fyshwick campus to directly give assistance to those students. Like I said before, we are about empowering our students, so we are not going to physically write it down, but we do give them prompts and suggestions of what to write. That is just for the Yurauna centre scholarship.

We also follow up. If there are any outstanding fees, we give them options and we work closely with other CIT staff members, such as student services and student support and CITSA, as well to talk about fee payment plans and fee assistance. There is plenty of support. We have regular emails that go out as well, just to remind students, but staff are well trained in that.

**MR KEED**: The Yurauna staff or all CIT staff?

**Ms Smith**: Yurauna and student services staff.

**THE CHAIR**: I thank officers from the CIT and also, in wrapping up, from the directorate. Kathy and your team, thank you for appearing today and for those answers. We will follow up with the series of questions on notice that we have. Thank you.

## Hearing suspended from 12.38 to 1.00 pm.

Appearances:

Community Services Directorate

De’Ath, Mr Michael, Director-General

Mitcherson, Mrs Bernadette, Deputy Director-General

Collis, Dr Mark, Executive Director, Children, Youth and Families

Gilding, Ms Louise, Executive Director, Housing

Pappas, Ms Helen, Senior Director, Practice and Performance, Children, Youth and Families

Evans, Ms Jacinta, Executive Director, Inclusion and Participation

Sabellico, Ms Anne-Maree, Executive Director, Strategic Policy

Murray, Ms Christine, Director, People Management, Corporate Services

**THE CHAIR**: I thank officers from the Community Services Directorate for joining us today. The member who has the portfolio responsibility for your directorate is not with us today due to sorry business. Our usual practice would be for that member to ask the questions. You are lucky; it has defaulted to me. I will ask the initial questions, which we develop together, anyway. We give priority to questions that have come through from the community, even where some of those topics are covered in the generic questions. It is important for us to be very transparent with the community. If they have asked us to raise something, we do that wherever possible.

Given the role of CSD with the elders council over time, we will take a moment to pay our respects to the elder that passed away in the last couple of days and to recognise her wonderful contribution to this community for a very long period of time.

Given the limited time we have today, if you could keep your opening comments to four or five minutes, that would be fantastic.

We have collectively a great deal of pride in being able to represent the community here today and to ask questions that we think are important to them and that are important to us. A common area of focus across our questions, and something that really came out to us post reading generic responses, is that we really focused our questions on wanting to hear about the actual outcomes and impact that things are having, rather than the information you have already provided about much of the activity. You will see through some of our questions that that is what we are trying to target. If we can keep focused on that wherever possible, while understanding that context is needed in some areas, we would really appreciate that. Michael, could I ask you to make your opening comments?

**Mr De’Ath:** I acknowledge the privilege statement. I would like to acknowledge the traditional custodians of the land that we are meeting on today and celebrate their ongoing culture and contribution to the ACT. I would also like to acknowledge and thank Katrina and the other elected body members for their hard work representing the needs and priorities of the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community.

I want to take this opportunity, a serious opportunity, to recognise and value the contribution that you make and the time you dedicate to the important role that you have been elected to fulfil. The advice that elected body members have given the ACT government and the Community Services Directorate so far has been invaluable. I thank you for that.

At the Community Services Directorate, we understand that we have a significant role in developing better ways of working to respond to the issues that impact Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children and families, individuals and community more broadly. We all know that one of the significant issues we need to address, both nationally and within the ACT, is the over-representation of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children in out of home care. It is a national problem.

The Community Services Directorate is particularly concerned about the over‑representation of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children in the statutory child protection system. We need to look at how to respond differently to drive change in this area. That has been a strong focus.

We have established an Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander-led review into the circumstances of each Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander child and young person involved in the child protection system, including those in out of home care. The Our Booris, Our Way review will focus on the systemic improvements needed to address disproportionality in the ACT. This is a significant project for us, as we move to really focus on Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders having the accountability to drive the design of responses for their children and families involved in the child protection system. The recommendations from the review will inform the future services models and improved practices that are required to address the current over‑representation in our system.

We have also progressed other significant work in our child and youth protection services that will continue to improve how we work with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander families. I refer to the establishment of a family group conferencing pilot program by child and youth protection services, the rollout of a cultural development program for child and youth protection services staff, introducing services that are dedicated to providing support to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander families and our A step up for our kids strategy.

In the reporting period the ACT government continued to demonstrate its commitment towards achieving equitable outcomes and opportunities and build an empowered, resilient and sustainable future for all Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people in the ACT.

I would like to take this opportunity to confirm that we now have two female and two male Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander young people who have applied to be on the 2018-20 ACT Youth Advisory Council, a substantial increase from previous years, and encouraging in relation to supporting the development of solutions for young people that can be influenced by future Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander leaders.

The Community Services Directorate has a number of programs, policies and initiatives in place to support this work, aligned with the aims of the ACT Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander agreement 2015‑18, which is a foundational document that affirms the ACT government’s commitment to reconciliation between Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Australians and non‑Indigenous Australians.

This agreement, as you will be aware, is due to finish in 2018, with planning already underway for a new agreement. The Office for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Affairs will shortly commence a dialogue with the community about their priorities for the next five years. Having a five‑year agreement allows for the development of a solid evidence base and provides the opportunity to demonstrate the effectiveness of agreed initiatives. Further, the new agreement will form the basis of the action plan under the commonwealth’s closing the gap agenda. Alongside this plan we are very pleased to have in place the outcomes framework, which will also be refreshed.

The Office for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Affairs is also working closely with colleagues in CMTEDD to prepare for the territory to celebrate its first Reconciliation Day public holiday on Monday, 28 May. The newly announced public holiday is significant, as we are the first Australian jurisdiction to gazette such a meaningful and contemporary initiative, and this is to be celebrated.

To support this initiative we ran a community grants program that is due to close this week. I look forward to the announcement of the grant recipients and, indeed, the program of events designed to engage all Canberrans and commemorating the message of reconciliation.

The Community Services Directorate has progressed, in our Housing ACT portfolio, with undertaking a feasibility study and design study for a second public housing complex for older Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people, building on the Mura Gunya development in Kambah. Again the Community Services Directorate established innovative engagement strategies to understand the design requirements needed to support older people in the new facility.

I am pleased to share that the ACT government recently committed $1.527 million over two years to improve the integration of early intervention services. This project has cross‑government commitment. This will ensure that the community services system is more cohesive and achieves better focused early intervention and prevention capacity.

This work has a particular focus on Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander families and children, and particular focus will be given to establishing culturally appropriate mechanisms to engage with the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community leaders so that, again, we can develop Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander‑led early intervention responses. We are planning on engaging with the elected body over the coming weeks and months so that we can work together to develop this approach. This is a very significant piece of work.

The Community Services Directorate has considered the direct and indirect implications of the Moss review for the Bimberi Youth Justice Centre. Bimberi engaged with officials from the Alexander Maconochie Centre to establish a process of information sharing under section 136 of the Crimes Act 2005. This process will provide the Alexander Maconochie Centre with new justice information when assessing accommodation options for new adult detainees. An MOU to formalise this process is being developed. The inspectorate of custodial services will include ACT youth justice centres in the inspectorate model.

In conclusion, striving to develop quality outcomes for the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community is a key focus of the work we undertake across the Community Services Directorate. I look forward to going into more detail about this work, following your questions today. We are very proud to have the Office for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Affairs in our directorate and all of the other responsibilities and accountabilities that we hold.

**THE CHAIR**: Thank you, Michael. We might move straight into questions. The first question is: what Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander events has the minister with responsibility for this directorate attended in the past three years?

**Mr De’Ath**: We are going to share this around, because there are many. Any events that the minister has attended?

**THE CHAIR**: Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community events.

**Mr De’Ath**: Yes, in the last three years. Reconciliation Day probably would be—

**Ms Gilding**: Certainly, there were a series of events around the opening of Mura Gunya. There was the smoking ceremony, which was absolutely significant. We stood there in the rain that day as we poured the cement on that beautiful outdoor area. There was also the opening. That is the last 12 months, having regard to my recollection in terms of housing.

**Ms Evans**: With the National Multicultural Festival, the minister attended the Indigenous showcase event, in the festival that has just been held. That is the extent of my historical knowledge.

**THE CHAIR**: I understand Jake will probably have a little more detail, given the role that OATSIA plays. Rather than asking people to go through their collective memories, could we have, on notice, particularly the NAIDOC events, the reconciliation events, the events at Winnunga and Gugan, the events that our community hosts, that your ministers have attended?

**Mr De’Ath**: We would be very happy to provide a list. For example, my institutional knowledge goes back only as far as Minister Stephen-Smith, as the portfolio holder, but there will be more than that. I know that her engagement with the community, and community events, particularly through NAIDOC Week, is pretty extensive, and there are many more things. In order to give a more coherent response to the elected body, we will take that on notice and give a comprehensive account of what has taken place.

**THE CHAIR**: That would be good.

**Mr De’Ath**: We are very happy to do that.

**THE CHAIR**: Michael, perhaps you could tell me the events that you have attended, as the director‑general.

**Mr De’Ath**: I went to about five events across NAIDOC Week, such as the bridge walk and so on. I cannot recall them all. I certainly met with Winnunga and have been to meetings in relation to the particular review work we have underway. There have been a number of meetings with the elected body representative. I have been out to the cultural centre, to a particular event held out there. I cannot remember what it was. Cultural training—

**Ms Evans**: Yes, the executive cultural training.

**Mr De’Ath**: Yes, and the list goes on. I cannot recall all of them. I would be very happy to provide a list. There have been quite a number, I think.

**THE CHAIR**: Thank you. Could you or one of the officers describe how the directorate provides support services, including financial support, to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander individuals and families that have disabilities?

**Ms Evans**: Are we going to me?

**Mr De’Ath**: Yes, I think we will, Jacinta.

**Ms Evans**: As the committee would be aware, over the past few years we have transitioned increasingly to the NDIS to provide individual support for people. It has been a significant change for our whole community, particularly for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people who may not have engaged previously with such an enormous scheme. The work that is being done was very much facilitated through the partnership with Gugan Gulwan to work with our Aboriginal Torres Strait Islander families and to support them in their transition across to the NDIS.

In terms of individual supports for people with disability, most of the funded supports would be through the NDIS as of now. Approximately 250-260 Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people who are receiving an individual funding package are members of the scheme within the ACT. I would suggest that the other area that might be of interest would be around the early intervention space, which Mr Collis may speak to.

**THE CHAIR**: To follow up on that, I understand that there are 250 to 260 packages. My area of concern is that for many of those packages not a dollar has been spent. Do we have any information on that?

**Ms Evans**: I can speak to changes that are happening. Certainly the Office for Disability within the Community Services Directorate is working very closely with the NDIA, acknowledging that this transition has resulted in people, as I said, who have not previously experienced this kind of self‑management of their packages or who have not engaged with someone to case manage their package. We have been working really closely with the NDIA to make some changes in that space.

We have been really advocating strongly for increased area coordinators who would help people to find the right services and to engage with those services and also to suggest to the NDIA that they should be thinking, at the beginning of a package being developed, about which families may actually benefit from having a funded support worker to help them get those things in place, because that is part of the challenge. We have had this enormous increase in services available, but if people do not know what they are or what they need, that can be very difficult for them.

**THE CHAIR**: Thank you, and that is a good explanation of the process. How do we find out how many people are actually taking advantage of the packages that have been allocated?

**Ms Evans**: I would have to go back to the NDIS, which I do, to determine which packages have been drawn on of those 250-260. My understanding would be that for any that have not been drawn on in a previous year, the efforts have been increased around making sure people do pick that up because it does not really meet their milestones if people are not drawing on their packages.

**THE CHAIR**: Can we get some information on this since the establishment of the NDIS?

**Ms Evans**: Yes, happy to do that.

**THE CHAIR**: And what improvement there has been in the strike rate?

**Ms Evans**: Yes.

**THE CHAIR**: That would be great. Mark, is there anything you want to add?

**Dr Collis**: The child development service, which is pre‑NDIS—it is zero to six—provides significant support to families of children in the zero‑six range for whom there are developmental difficulties or delays that do not go on necessarily to get an NDIS package. There has been significant work in that field, including collocation at Winnunga with that service. Last year, 130 Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children received that brief intervention service that led to early intervention.

So far in the first two quarters of this reporting year we are looking at approximately 120—it could be 121—Aboriginal and Torres Strait Island children who are utilising that service. That is a significant uplift from where Therapy ACT was, in fact. It is a bit of a success. I thank Winnunga for their ability to collocate and provide some connections into the community. Louise might have a comment as well.

**Ms Gilding**: Yes. If we look at the number of housing tenancies that Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander folk have within our portfolio, that is just under 1,000. We know that it is about 25 per cent of those who have told us, in terms of the data that we have, that we are supporting them with a disability; so that might be a—

**THE CHAIR**: I am not great at maths; so apologies for this. Is that 1,000 tenancies or 1,000 people in tenancies?

**Ms Gilding**: There are 1,000 tenancies but nearly—I think it is—2,046 people.

**THE CHAIR**: Thank you. I wanted to get that right.

**Ms Gilding**: The component within that is that we know we have about 450 folk who have some form of disability, whether that is intellectual or physical. We build a lot of class C adaptable buildings, as you know, to support those people. But in terms of the actual breakdown of the disability, I would have to take that on notice.

**THE CHAIR**: That is okay. I am covering a portfolio, but I am confident that there will be questions in housing specifically relating to disabilities. How is the directorate working with individuals and families with disabilities to ensure that those families have culturally safe in-home support, including for those families that are also carers?

**Mr De’Ath**: We will pass that to Jacinta, other than to say that the territory has had to assume an interesting role from that which was anticipated in relation to the creation of the NDIA and the insurance scheme and a much stronger role in terms of monitoring and advocacy than was ever anticipated. However, Jacinta can explain what is happening in that space.

**Ms Evans**: Yes, I think that you are highlighting what could be one of our early transitional gaps. That is in making sure that culturally appropriate supports are available. As I said, there has been an enormous increase in services, but we actually do not have any Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander-run disability services in the ACT.

**THE CHAIR**: That is where I am going.

**Ms Evans**: That is where you were headed, yes. It is not for want of trying to make funding available through the models that the NDIS has been using. There has been funding out there to sort of increase capacity, but we just have not managed to find an organisation, or an organisation has not yet found that it has the capability or capacity to take that work on. I think there is still work to be done there.

In the meantime, ACTCOSS have the Gulunga program. I think that is where we have to increasingly look for support from organisations that want to provide culturally appropriate support. The bottom line is that I do not think we are quite there yet, to be honest.

**THE CHAIR**: Do we have a plan on how to get there?

**Ms Evans**: I think the plan is that we continue to work with organisations who are already established in the ACT and we continue to try to attract organisations, but that work, I have to say, is through the commonwealth. In terms of the funding that is available to build businesses and engage businesses, that has been through the NDIS.

**THE CHAIR**: The reason I am asking the directorate this is that I understood there was a budget initiative about developing Indigenous organisations and that this was potentially one of those areas.

**Ms Sabellico**: We have a new grants program that is being established and will roll out over the next four years. It is the new and emerging organisation grants; $100,000 over four years will go a great way to actually assisting us to look at establishing a program of work to support new and emerging organisations. We are particularly interested in looking at how we establish those that are working in the human services area—disability, housing, out of home care, child and family services.

As part of that as well, we have the grants program. We are due to go out on that fairly soon. We are making some final arrangements about the actual grants guidelines and trying to finalise the definitions around what would be available for those packages and how they could be used.

As well as that, we are doing a fair bit of work around looking at developing a bit of a policy position to actually support our growth around developing capability and capacity in Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander organisations more broadly. As part of that, we are looking to see what we can do to actually wrap around some other support packages that align with the new and emerging organisation grants to assist in making far more sustainable organisations in the longer term.

We are working with and having some discussions with some of the corporate organisations and other government departments about what else we can bring to actually wrap around support packages to also assist in that.

**THE CHAIR**: Do you think that will assist? The problem I see, perhaps from establishing an organisation 15 years ago where you would have got block funding to get established, is that so many of these organisations now need to compete in a fee‑for‑service market. Is that what going to that broader sector is about?

**Ms Sabellico**: Yes.

**THE CHAIR**: To help with that model?

**Ms Sabellico**: Yes.

**THE CHAIR**: Because it is really a business model; it is not just a—

**Ms Sabellico**: That is right. There is not just the governance anymore; it is actually looking at what is the business model you need, depending on where your particular sector is at. Under the disability services with the NDIS, it is a very particular model that needs to be implemented to actually support a sustainable and functioning organisation, which is—

**THE CHAIR**: Traditional organisations seem to be struggling with that fee‑for‑service transition, just as a business thing.

**Ms Sabellico**: Yes.

**THE CHAIR**: So it is making sure that if we are setting something up for that, that you are building around that commercial nous.

**Ms Sabellico**: Yes, to actually set up for that commercial business acumen that is required in order to support that.

**Mr De’Ath**: I have a very general comment on that. We have an acute interest in the establishment of and the support of strong, viable Aboriginal-controlled community organisations across the board. I think we would probably collectively agree that across the territory there is more work to do in this space. So we will continue to look into that and advocate and work with ministers around that work.

**THE CHAIR**: Thank you. The next question is in the cultural awareness training section. It has a few parts to it. We are not really too much after the detail of the package; it is more around some of the outcomes, as I was talking about before.

What is the directorate strategy to ensure that staff working with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander individuals and families have completed cultural awareness training and/or cultural safety training? What we are particularly interested in is how many staff have been trained. And how have you measured that this training changed attitudes and improved cultural sensitivity? Does the cultural awareness training have traditional owner or specific Ngunnawal content, and is it delivered by a local person? And have all your senior staff completed that training?

**Mr De’Ath**: Thank you; those are very good questions. I will just start off, then I might turn to Mark to focus particularly on the child protection/youth protection area. But we will move across the board on this.

At the executive level, which is my responsibility to ensure that senior executives are appropriately culturally aware, we did have a session out at the cultural centre. It was an all‑day session, if I recall, about 12 months ago. It was something that I particularly wanted to see happen to ensure that all executives had relevant background and their own cultural supports around the work as they carried it out. I just wanted to let you know that.

As for the measurements around it, all I can really talk about is my ongoing observations about how executives operate in the space and what sorts of things they take seriously in terms of the work around supporting Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people. Some of the initiatives that have come out of the directorate in that time would be part of my measurement that demonstrate that executives have this very front and centre.

I also took the opportunity to speak to our entire staff at a town hall type meeting last year about this being the major priority for the directorate and that everybody was to take it as a special consideration in making a difference in the space. I will hand over to Mark, who will work through.

**Dr Collis**: Thank you for the question. Within child and youth protection services, in particular, we have developed a cultural development program. We see this as one of the constellations of changing culture in terms of our growing capability and the outcomes of how we interact and engage with Aboriginal people in the community. This is just one aspect. Other aspects are in employment. We are attempting to increase our employment and support of Aboriginal staff in this space, as well as knowing what we cannot do, and engaging with organisations which have the cultural knowledge and cultural capability, such as the Our Booris, Our Way review.

In terms of the cultural development program, over the last 18 months we have engaged in a fairly comprehensive program. It is a six‑month program, which includes a day on country with a Ngunnawal ranger. And we go to country for our staff. It includes a focus conversation element on an ongoing basis with our cultural services team and others. It includes going into community and talking with people in Aboriginal organisations to investigate and explore issues that have come out of those conversations. There is also an online component to this, which is the AIATSIS—

**THE CHAIR**: The core training?

**Dr Collis**: The core training, which is part of that component as well. It is a three to six‑month envelope that we want everyone to go through. Currently 117 of our front‑line staff have completed that training, and we are just about to enter into a new cycle of training, imminently; I think next week we start. We would—

**THE CHAIR**: You sort of have a couple who will go through the six months and then another couple?

**Dr Collis**: Yes.

**THE CHAIR**: What does 117 represent of your staff?

**Dr Collis**: Of our front-line staff, we would be looking at about 160 who would be our front-line staff, so it would be a substantial proportion of those. We do have turnover, of course. We want to include more people than just our front-line staff into that, and we are prioritising that.

I cannot stress enough that how we measure the outcome of this is testing us as much as anyone else. What I can say is that this is built into a comprehensive individual performance agreement structure and supervision structure that seek feedback and knowledge from this.

Ultimately, I think we will see outcomes. The outcomes we want to see out of these programs are actually service outcomes. The kinds of outcomes I would want to see improving would be things like the extent of converting referrals into the family group conferencing trial or into actual family group conferences.

We know that engagement with Aboriginal families in the conversation about other ways of doing business requires cultural knowledge and cultural sensitivity. It is not something that we have necessarily been good at in the past, because it requires a whole bunch of skills that are dependent on the cultural knowledge and cultural development of our staff. We would hope to see improvements in those engagement elements. For families to come into our early intervention programs at an earlier phase would be one of the things that would be a proxy marker for whether this works as a cultural change.

**THE CHAIR**: Thanks. Given the number of parts of your directorate, that sounds like a good program, but can I just get the answers particularly around the numbers trained. It would be interesting to know if you benchmarked people before they started and then looked at where their knowledge was at post the training and maybe 12 months later. Is there an evaluation at least built in somewhere to see what difference it has made for individuals? It is going to take us the whole two hours we have got if I get that same answer for each.

**Dr Collis**: What might be a bit more efficient is if we ask Christine, as HR director, to give a bit of an overview. Christine can give a bit of an overview, and if there is further detail from there, we can supply it out of session.

**THE CHAIR**: Thank you.

**Ms Murray**: That is right. I will not go over the same ground that Dr Collis has covered—

**THE CHAIR**: It is more about the outcomes.

**Ms Murray**: Yes.

**THE CHAIR**: I am happy for us to review the content at another point in time, but for today it is just about numbers, what is the impact you are trying to have and how you are measuring it.

**Ms Murray**: I would just note that we have worked very closely with AIATSIS in terms of taking on core training, and, usefully, it is considered a core competency within CSD. That means that when people come on board we assign them a set of competencies that they must complete, and that is monitored through the performance agreement process.

**THE CHAIR**: And this is one of those?

**Ms Murray**: This is one of those. That is the 10‑module component.

You specifically asked about the Ngunnawal content in that space. It does not include that at this stage. However, we are in conversations with AIATSIS in relation to the development of that as an overlay, so we are looking forward to that. We are only at the conversational level about that end.

In terms of the numbers, in addition to the numbers quoted by Dr Collis, we have had 40 people who have undertaken the induction. We rolled this out this year. For module 1, it is 26; module 2, 10; and module 3, 12. Another six have completed the full suite of modules. Again, we expect this to run over a six‑month period.

In addition to that, we have the overlay of the introduction to cultural proficiency, which has around 100 people who have completed that as a subset. Then there are a number of face‑to‑face courses that we do specifically for staff who are working in depth in that relationship with the client, working with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people, and the cultural competence foundation course which AIATSIS has been really instrumental in developing. So in terms of the breadth of training, there is quite a lot.

In addition to that, we have some really good pockets of individualised area training, as Dr Collis has outlined, and also particular work through our CFCs, who have a really strong client—

**THE CHAIR**: Is that the children and family centres?

**Ms Murray**: The child and family centres. Thank you; I apologise. Today, in fact, there is a yarning up on trauma out at our west Belconnen child and family centre. Ms Shona Chapman has been really involved in building that and bringing the learnings from the SNAICC conference into that particular workplace. I will not be able to remember what SNAICC stands for, I am sorry.

**THE CHAIR**: We can get that.

**Ms Murray**: In terms of the evaluation component, as you would understand, in this space it is very difficult to actually assess the behavioural change in individuals. We have been talking about evaluation with AIATSIS in terms of what lessons they can bring forward to us. It is certainly on the agenda, but I would say that if we look at a maturity model, we are probably in the early stages of stepping into the evaluation, what is the change. As we have really just rolled out the core and we are partway through, we thought we might have some time to work on the evaluation components, but obviously we would be keen for any advice.

**THE CHAIR**: I can appreciate that. Perhaps in the interests of time you could take on notice that those numbers sound good for things that have happened in the last three months, but I would like to know over a bit longer period of time what the uptake and ratio of staff that have undergone this level of training have been.

**Ms Murray**: Absolutely. We can provide that.

**THE CHAIR**: Thank you.

**Mr De’Ath**: If I could just make one more comment on that, I think there is a very important message that has been given here in the directorate, and certainly it is a message that has been provided through the subcommittee of the strategic board. It is one that is harder to measure, but it is a really important one. It is that, without in any way undervaluing all the range of programs, cultural training and experiences and so on we provide, the message to people is: “What initiative are you taking to make yourself culturally aware and to operate with culturally appropriate practices?”

**THE CHAIR**: And to continue learning.

**Mr De’Ath**: Absolutely. I think that is a very important message that we need to continue to give so that it is ingrained within the individual and they have a strong sense of obligation to make themselves aware of it as part of their job.

**THE CHAIR**: Thank you. In relation to engagement with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander families—this is more about families with disabilities but also around support for the mental health and wellbeing of carers—does someone look after the carers in this space?

**Ms Sabellico**: Late last year we ran a deliberative democracy process with approximately 50 carers in which there would have been representatives of carers in the disability, mental health and aged-care areas. We tried to get the whole cross‑section of carers on board. That provided us with the opportunity to deliver a carers voice report, which identified for them the significant areas that need to be addressed going forward in providing the extra support required, as well as a carers strategy, which is a bit of a strategic document that looks at what government needs to do in addressing the carers’ voice issues.

We are now going through a process of developing the action plan, which will see how government will address each of those areas. We are again looking at getting a group of about 30 to 35 people involved, of which five will be from the carers’ voice panel, to make sure that the actions are true to the intent of what they have actually identified. We will be looking then at developing that action plan and it being put in place across all of the ACT government.

**THE CHAIR**: Just to clarify, is that a more mainstream group, or is that Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander specific? If it is not specific, do we have representation on it?

**Ms Sabellico**: It is not specific. There would have been representation. I can get for you the exact detail of who—

**THE CHAIR**: Thank you.

**Mr De’Ath**: By way of example, I attended the closing part of that deliberative process and, at the conclusion of that, heard people talking and spoke to a number of people. At the end I think two of those people who identified as Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander talked about it being a really inclusive process. They were very surprised at what the process actually meant for them, as opposed to what they were expecting, in a really positive sense. So there was certainly a strong component of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander involvement in that and put into the ongoing strategy.

**THE CHAIR**: That was not a criticism. I think it needs to be done so that it is embedded in the systemic way things are done. It was just to clarify whether it was standalone or part of an embedded process. The next question is around how the directorate is supporting the ongoing professional development of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander employees.

**Ms Murray**: We commenced a conversation last year with a number of our staff. We had a grand idea that we would create a CSD‑specific network, so we went out to staff and asked, “What would you like from that network?” We were told resoundingly, “We want more than a network.” So the work that we are doing specifically with our staff is actually having those conversations. In fact, we had one scheduled this morning that we had to reschedule. It is about what individuals need. We do not have, unfortunately, hundreds of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander staff, which provides us an opportunity to provide bespoke support. We are really focusing on networking, mentoring and meeting people where they are at. We want to, in the truest form of co‑design, work with our staff on what they need to achieve that.

I could point to the number of trainings that we have provided to a number of people in terms of increasing their leadership skills and increasing skills around mentoring. However, our focus has shifted from, “I know, I am going to supply a solution,” to seeking advice from our staff about what they want. Those conversations are scheduled for, I think, the next month or so. We will build from there a more bespoke package for staff. For example, at the child and family centre we had one staff member who wanted an opportunity to mentor and one staff member who wanted to be mentored by a culturally appropriate mentor, so we were able to assign the two and support the two in that progress.

We will not be running a specific badged program, but we will co‑design what we are referring to at the moment as “more than a network” for our staff so that we can individually support them on their journey.

**THE CHAIR**: I am not sure how that is different to how you do a development plan for any staff member.

**Ms Murray**: We have had conversations with a number of employment firms, for example, around the types of mentoring that might be a bit broader than what is required. If you are a young person leaving country, leaving family and coming to the ACT on a traineeship, graduate program et cetera, you might not need someone to sit down with you and focus purely on, “How do I show up to work?” and “What training do I need to do my job?” You might need to take a step back and say, “How do we connect you with the right culture group? How do we help you to budget? How do we help you to find appropriate accommodation?”—step it back in terms of looking at the whole person rather than looking from just a workplace perspective in achieving success for that individual in the long term. Is that wrong?

**THE CHAIR**: No, it is not wrong. Can you describe strategies for succession planning across the directorate to encourage Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander staff internally and across the ACT government to access acting opportunities?

**Ms Murray**: We advertise all CSD positions over a period of four weeks internally first. Then we advertise all positions through expression of interest through the jobs website if it is under six months, and more broadly if it is permanent. The thinking is to provide initially an opportunity for people internally to have a go at particular opportunities. We have worked very hard particularly with our younger Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander staff on conversations to identify opportunities as they come up, once again on a case‑by‑case basis.

**THE CHAIR**: In the last six months how many opportunities have been provided?

**Ms Murray**: Of the ones that I have been involved in personally, I have assisted two to have that opportunity in the last six months. That is in addition—

**THE CHAIR**: For what sort of period of time is that?

**Ms Murray**: This is off the top of my head, so I am happy to take it on notice.

**THE CHAIR**: Perhaps take it on notice. I just want to get a sense of what the scale of this is and at what level.

**Ms Murray**: Absolutely.

**Mr De’Ath**: I also had a meeting with Andrew Tongue, head of PM&C. The purpose of that meeting was to discuss secondment opportunities between the commonwealth and the territory public service for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people, opportunities for the commonwealth people to see a view from the ground and more opportunity for some of our people to see a view from there. That is something we want to develop more. There has been no further activity on that at the moment, but the meeting has been had. We also discussed how we could leverage off the greater resource that the commonwealth has in terms of professional development and learning for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander public servants. Those are conversations that will progress as well. That is a really positive development, should we be able to pull it all off.

**THE CHAIR**: The next question is around retention of staff. It may fit into a bit of what we have already discussed. Christine, does your directorate identify talented Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander staff across the ACT public service as an opportunity for temporary transfers to both identified and non‑identified positions?

**Ms Murray**: In terms of a strategy to bring people in and talent identification, we tend to stick within our own environments. It is ad hoc in terms of any additional opportunities for people to come in, but we certainly do have a relatively small network, particularly our staff in Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander affairs, creating a link.

**THE CHAIR**: But, given that they have a whole-of-government responsibility, that is why the question of—

**Ms Murray**: Yes—of what we are specifically doing.

**THE CHAIR**: How do you tap people in and out, given that that role is to connect with the other directorates as well?

**Ms Murray**: One of our greater focuses has been on ensuring that positions outside direct client‑facing roles have been identified as Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander. For example, we have positions in the finance space and positions in the HR space that are identified. We utilise that as an opportunity because, once again, the bit of feedback that we received was, “Actually, I don’t necessarily want a client‑facing role; I want to be a good HR practitioner.”

**THE CHAIR**: How many of those roles are identified?

**Ms Murray**: There are 18 positions across the directorate that are identified.

**THE CHAIR**: Are they all filled at the moment?

**Ms Murray**: I would have to take that on notice.

**THE CHAIR**: Thank you. Other than the elected body, how does the directorate ensure inclusive consultation and seek feedback to improve its services and programs for the local community?

**Mr De’Ath**: We have kind of put it out there to demonstrate that government wishes to work in a new way, acknowledging that some past methods have clearly not been as effective as we would like and certainly looking to adhere to some principles around self‑determination.

One example at the moment is the review into young people in the statutory system, where we have clearly put forward the proposition that this would be Aboriginal led, so the steering committee comprises entirely Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander representatives. We were absolutely true to the fact that we would not do the classic public service thing where we would put up even draft terms of reference. We wanted that to really come from community. Those terms of reference have just been finalised by that group of people.

We really look forward to their work, going forward. They will provide advice to the directorate and through to the minister about system improvements. We will also respond to that advice along the way, rather than waiting for final reports, which is also a bit different to how things have been done in the past. That reflects the critical nature of the work and how serious we are about wanting to make a difference in this space. That is one example.

**Dr Collis**: I will add a couple of perspectives here. In our child and family centres there is a growing healthy families program, for example. The basis of that is in fact an engagement community building program. The strategies that have been utilised there and developed out of that are, I suppose, less formalised. They include events where there are celebrations for children, to get people in and then to utilise those events to seek opinions about where the program should go. I recall an example of that in Tuggeranong, where a barbecue was held. The consensus was that the community did not have access to a learn to swim program. We had never thought of learn to swim as an option, but it turned out to be precisely the next way of engaging with that community. Growing healthy families, since its inception, has engaged with 176 families, with over 400 children, in that way.

The other strategy we deploy is a very targeted strategy looking at accessing capability in the Aboriginal community, bringing that in to lead some of the projects. I would put the family group conferencing trial in there, where we have Curijo, and the steering group around that, on which the elected body has a member. That has essentially been designed and led by the capability that was in that Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander run business. Attempting to make use of opportunities that exist and bring those in and to commission specific capabilities is another way we have engaged, fully cognisant that it is not a community engagement but that it is a way of understanding how our initiatives might best be received in the community‑led—

**THE CHAIR**: Thank you.

**Mr De’Ath**: Good housing examples, I think, would be good to share.

**THE CHAIR**: Okay.

**Ms Gilding**: I can speak to four different ways in which we engage. The first is how we are progressing with the elders units. As you know, we regularly meet with the elected body and I am very much guided by you in how that project connects. That is one level of engagement. A second is what we did last year around the housing strategy consultation. There was a series of focus groups, plus the summit itself. We held two specific focus groups. We engaged with the elected body and specifically also with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander service providers to hear their input on that. It is about specifically making contact so that we are led by you on how you want us to engage. That is, again, a larger strategy. We have our ongoing engagement, obviously, with our CSD rep, and then there are the ongoing relationships that the senior staff have across community.

**Mr De’Ath**: There are further examples, but I think the message from us today is that we are absolutely committed to trying to do this differently. That means we have to step back from traditional processes and be advised and led by the community. That is a discipline, and actually I think it is a discipline all round.

**THE CHAIR**: The next question does follow on from what your colleagues said this morning. Maybe you can thank them for this if it does not belong with you, but I think there is a bet each way with this. It is around a strategy for new premises or an upgrade at Gugan Gulwan. Is there anything in that that you can update us on and, particularly, has the CEO at Gugan Gulwan been involved in any of that?

**Mr De’Ath**: Anne-Maree will do this one.

**Ms Sabellico**: I will respond to this one. I have now met with Kim and Amanda on two occasions to have some broad‑ranging discussions about early intervention, child and family services and also their premises. Post the first discussion, we then had an interim discussion at CSD. I have identified that the deputy director‑general will actually be the champion for working across government for identifying new premises for Gugan. I did, in fact, inform Kim and Amanda at my last meeting that we have done that. We will undertake to do that, one point of contact into government, and then we will navigate and negotiate what needs to happen across the—

**THE CHAIR**: That moves us away from the need to make contact with Gugan when there is a facility empty and they take it or not; this is actually about something that is going to meet their needs?

**Ms Sabellico**: Yes.

**Mr De’Ath**: Yes, a complete shift.

**Mrs Mitcherson**: We will lead. Obviously other parts of government need to be engaged in this, but we will take the lead and push that through. It might be a comprehensive look at what you need going forward. We do not want to go through “this property, that property” again. I know there have been a series of those over the last years. Let us actually look at what they need. It might even be about what we can do in the current one going up. Then you might have to get some work done with structural engineers, whatever it is, but it will be led by Gugan in terms of the fit‑out, what you need currently and going forward. You want a new building to have a long economic life as well, not just for a couple of years.

**THE CHAIR**: In the relocation of several of our organisations they have always landed in places that they just fit in when they land. It would be very good if it is built for what the community looks for.

**Mrs Mitcherson**: We have decided to take the lead on this. It is a part of our plan going forward for the rest of this year.

**THE CHAIR**: Given, especially, the youth nature of our demographic?

**Mrs Mitcherson**: Yes.

**Mr De’Ath**: And that Gugan is an incredibly important organisation to us in the territory. And it is very, very important to us all that they are a strong, viable organisation, and fit‑for‑purpose accommodation with a futuristic view is something we want to work towards.

**THE CHAIR**: The next question is quite specific. I am not sure if you need someone else at the table for it. It is about the e‑learning course for professionals and practitioners working with families from pre‑birth to eight years. The question is just: does it have any Ngunnawal or traditional custodian content?

**Mr De’Ath**: We will take it on notice.

**Ms Murray**: We might take that on notice, if that is okay.

**THE CHAIR**: That will help me get through this list that I have. Obviously all the questions are important but, if it is one that is simple like that, we can do that.

At the previous hearings and the 2015 hearings, members raised issues of lowering the age for concession cards, like seniors cards, for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people. We were advised in 2017 by Transport Canberra and City Services that that was actually not for them but that was a policy matter for CSD. Can you provide any update on this matter and on what progress has been made?

**Ms Evans**: I can provide the update that, as far as I am aware, that has not been progressed. To be honest, if that is in the portfolio area of seniors, overlapping with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Affairs, I think that Anne-Maree and I would need to have a conversation and see what we can do to progress it. I apologise that I was not aware that that conversation had taken place.

**Mr De’Ath**: We will undertake to follow that up.

**THE CHAIR**: The next one is: can you tell me which recommendations from the *We* *don’t shoot our wounded* report have been implemented by the directorate?

**Ms Gilding**: That is me too, I think.

**Mr De’Ath**: I think we would have to take that on notice and do some investigation into those recommendations and exactly what we have done.

**THE CHAIR**: And it is likely to be one where there are bits that cross over. We appreciate that.

**Mr De’Ath**: There would be other work to do on that, I think, yes.

**THE CHAIR**: Please outline what strategies are implemented to heal individuals and families who experience family violence.

**Mr De’Ath**: We do not have Jo with us today, but I think that again is a fairly comprehensive response in terms of the work that has been completed in the family safety package work. I know there has been extensive consultation there and engagement with the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community. We will get back to you on notice on the suite of things that have taken place there.

**THE CHAIR**: The next question is in that similar area. What has the impact been in relation to the cuts to the crisis accommodation sector, in particular for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander clients?

**Ms Gilding**: That would be my area, and I am assuming you are talking about the funding cuts flowing through from the commonwealth in around 2012‑13.

**THE CHAIR**: Yes.

**Ms Gilding**: Specifically I think you would probably be talking about Beryl and Toora.

**THE CHAIR**: It is probably what happened with Inanna as well, I would imagine.

**Ms Gilding**: Yes. Just out today is the ABS census data, which shows that the ACT is actually bucking the trend in that crisis service provision, that specialist homelessness. Where we have seen an increase across Australia in terms of homelessness, we have actually seen a decrease in our own sector, and that is credit to the sector. It is a credit to the sector in terms of the way they repositioned themselves following on from those cuts. They did a co‑design process which meant they could intervene early.

**THE CHAIR**: Is that ABS data specifically for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people?

**Ms Gilding**: There are stats in that and specifically for the ACT. At that one point in time on the census night 2016, we know that we had 97 people.

**THE CHAIR**: I am just wondering: is that the trend for us as well?

**Ms Gilding**: In terms of increasing? No. What we have seen in the ACT, because of the way the sector has worked and repositioned itself, and is decreasing rates overall and in the prevalence of homelessness. What I am saying is: credit to the sector. Even in the face of those cuts, they have actually delivered.

**THE CHAIR**: But I am not talking just about the homelessness; this is crisis. We are talking about, particularly in the family violence area, crisis accommodation.

**Ms Gilding**: Which is part of that service system. Specifically, the service areas that were hit hardest were Beryl, Doris and Toora. We have continued to top up their funding for the last three years and are looking to lock that in as part of the negotiations that we are currently undertaking with the commonwealth on the new housing and homelessness agreement.

**THE CHAIR**: When is that expected to be finalised?

**Ms Gilding**: I am hoping by 1 July or beforehand.

**THE CHAIR**: As you would be aware, family is a very important factor in the placement of children in care. With the removal of children from families—we are talking specifically about Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children and families here—does the directorate explore all avenues for placement options for those children that come into care, which would include the nuclear and extended families and community?

**Mr De’Ath**: Extensively, and I will let Mark respond in more detail.

**Dr Collis**: Yes, is the answer. We do prioritise in times of emergency action, and other times, to move young people within their direct family or extended family as a priority. Our actual first priority is obviously to preserve the family and to restore the children to the family, should that be safe. Where that is not safe and children need to be in another family situation, the preference is for family. The recent data from AIHW shows we have about 60 per cent of all Aboriginal children in out of home care in a kinship placement, which is actually a higher rate than for other children in the system.

Have we had a priority? We have had a priority. Can I put my hand on my heart and say that we have got the best outcomes that we could have there? The answer is: I think we can do better. We have invested very much, and we are investing now, for example, in an officer to look at better understanding families, family finding, early in the process.

The family group conferencing trial has really shifted our thinking in this regard, in terms of trying to engage earlier and not get into a court process or court order process at all. We have four families into that trial now, and that is looking really positive. It is really hard work. I would like to thank our workers who have been trained and are working in that area, but our evidence to now is that extended families, where we put that effort in, have all been able to come up with a solution, whether that solution is a kinship placement or whether it is support for the child back into the original home, and they have been able to form that agreement independent of government. That is where we are heading. In short, yes, our statistics show that we are doing well in that, but we could do better.

**THE CHAIR**: At what point does the cultural services team become engaged when a report is submitted about an identified Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander child?

**Dr Collis**: The object is to have the cultural services team engaged as early as possible. The reality behind that is that it is not always the case. At the moment, dependent on the communication that happens, it can be some way down the track of involvement prior to the engagement of the cultural services team. Our object is to have that as close as possible to when a child concern report becomes a child protection report in that process, but I will refer to Helen for the details.

**Ms Pappas**: As Dr Collis was saying, the cultural services team really like to get involved as soon as the system knows an Aboriginal family has been reported to the system. Our new IT system will allow that to be an automatic function, so we have built that into the system. If a reporter is ringing us and talking to us about an Aboriginal family, the cultural services team will know that as soon as we know that. That will be a huge improvement and will allow this cultural services team to get involved as early as possible.

**THE CHAIR**: How long has that system‑enabling been turned on?

**Mrs Mitcherson**: We are very positive that it will be turned on 1 June.

**THE CHAIR**: I was getting a bit excited that it was happening now.

**Ms Pappas**: We are very excited that it is happening as well because I think it is going to really help to improve the responses to families. We are anticipating that it will happen midyear.

**THE CHAIR**: So what happens now?

**Ms Pappas**: At the moment it is a manual process. The intake service, when they hear that, they either walk down or call somebody in the cultural services team. Sometimes the cultural services team are already connected with that family through other programs and other interactions. The cultural services team work alongside the child protection front-line staff to develop a plan and a response. Sometimes that means, “Do this. I suggest you work like this,” and sometimes it means, “Let’s go out together,” and sometimes it means cultural services go out on their own. It is individualising, depending on the information we have before us, but we are really guided by the cultural services team.

**THE CHAIR**: Being manual at the moment, that obviously has some issues with it, which is understandable.

**Ms Pappas**: Yes.

**THE CHAIR**: But it is straight away and then depending on the circumstances that they are engaged.

**Ms Pappas**: Yes. Sometimes we do not know. The difficulty is we only know what we know. Sometimes reporters just do not know that families are Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander. Sometimes that is discovered through the process of an investigation or an appraisal. And when we know, the cultural services team are invited. They cannot do everything, I have to say. There are seven of them, and they do as much as they can and try to become involved in as much as possible.

Certainly the relationships are built and developed quite nicely through the cultural development program they run as well. People have established relationships with staff in the cultural services team, and that goes a long way to being open to thinking about how you might work differently when we are working with families.

**THE CHAIR**: This question again has come to me, so if these numbers are not correct I am happy for you to tell me what they are. It has been reported to us that up to nine children have been removed from Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander families in the past 12 months. Within this period the family group conferencing program commenced. What is the status of that family group conferencing program, and what are the two contracted family group conferencing workers doing if they are not providing family conferencing?

**Dr Collis**: The family group conferencing trial commenced in November last year, after an extensive period of training and setting up. As I mentioned before, there are four completed family group conferences currently that have impacted on the lives of 16 children. Of those 16 children, some of those were not in the child protection system at all; others were, but the circumstances around their care were tenuous. What we can say is that, on each of those four occasions, the family plans were put in place.

**THE CHAIR**: Just to clarify, when you were talking before about the four family conferences, that was for 16 children?

**Dr Collis**: Yes.

**THE CHAIR**: So four families but 16 children?

**Dr Collis**: The family conferences, of course, can be quite—

**THE CHAIR**: If they are anything like my family, I am sure you would have trouble finding a table to fit them at. Can I clarify the definition of “kinship care” as used in the ACT? The original question when we started talking about kinship care was around the nuclear and extended families and community. Can I have sort of some clarity about what is eligible as “kinship carer”?

**Dr Collis**: The eligibility we use is pretty similar to what is used nationally through the Australian Institute of Health and Welfare definition of “kinship care”, which includes in this circumstance Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander kin, non‑Aboriginal Torres Strait Islander kin, but it also includes—and this is a very small but very important component—people who do not fit into that category but are known to the child and have a relationship with the child prior to them going to live with them. It could be a step‑parent or it could be a friend of the family.

**THE CHAIR**: Someone known to the young person.

**Dr Collis**: The child knows them and considers them to be an attachment figure.

**THE CHAIR**: Of the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children and young people that are in kinship care, how many are with non‑Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people?

**Dr Collis**: About half.

**THE CHAIR**: Does the directorate consider placements into those kinship systems with families in New South Wales as an option?

**Dr Collis**: Yes, and further abroad, yes.

**THE CHAIR**: And wherever that may be.

**Dr Collis**: Western Australia, Queensland, wherever, yes.

**THE CHAIR**: The next question is about A step up for our kids and the out of home care strategy and specifically to some things on pages 8 and 11 of that. It refers to the engagement of independent cultural advisers to provide advice on placement decisions and cultural plans. Can you give us an update on how that has been utilised and how that works?

**Dr Collis**: I can say that it has not been successful. It was a process of learning for us. Originally there was a panel of five cultural advisers formed and trained, and policy was enacted around that. The advice quickly was from the cultural advisers that, first of all, the extent of the work was not what they thought it would be; they thought this would be a role in terms of a job opportunity that could be worked as employment replacement. They felt immediate engagement with them was not possible.

We had initially four resignations from this. Through the previous elected body we sought assistance to review that model and find out how we might improve it. The two members at the time, Di and Jo, worked with us on that basis. The advice at that particular point in time was that we needed to start with one cultural adviser and provide enough work to allow that to be a significant part of their work time. We in fact did that. The other issue that came to pass in that discussion was how can you have internal to CYPS an independent cultural adviser? What do we mean by “independent” in that context?

**THE CHAIR**: That would be my next question.

**Dr Collis**: That was our stumbling block. We tried to move to posting the person outside of the immediate directorate, but the negotiations did not pass around that. In the end, the incumbent in that position ended up winning a role as the head of the cultural services team within the CSD, and we have not been able to enact that independent adviser.

One of the issues around the review is that the independent cultural adviser was always meant to be a stepping stone to a level of self‑determination beyond advice. It was about how we might move to a more formalised and sustainable and community‑driven approach to providing responses to children in the child protection system.

**THE CHAIR**: In other jurisdictions, is that how the independent advice is gained: through standalone Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander organisations?

**Dr Collis**: Yes, standalone Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander organisations, but usually, though, it has not been at the advice level; it has been at the level of actual provision of a service.

**THE CHAIR**: So was this an attempt to bridge a service gap?

**Dr Collis**: It was an attempt to bridge a service gap, and you cannot go halfway.

**THE CHAIR**: You cannot be half pregnant, or half independent.

**Dr Collis**: That is right. So that is where we are. I think the development of the thinking around this has been supercharged by the Our Booris, Our Way review. Another learning is that independence means independence; it does not mean driven from inside child protection. The solution has to arrive from outside. That is where we are now and that is really the link between that, a policy and where we go in the future.

**THE CHAIR**: Yes.

**Mr De’Ath**: So what does “independence” mean in the statutory space? That is always a challenging space. Probably one of the jurisdictions that has made good progress on this recently in terms of the overall system is Victoria.

**THE CHAIR**: With the Jackomos position?

**Mr De’Ath**: Yes, and with the role ACCA is now playing; it has gone from a pilot now to practice. We are watching that with great interest, but I think we have a little way to go yet.

**THE CHAIR**: There are a few steps in between.

**Mr De’Ath**: Correct.

**THE CHAIR**: Thank you. I understand that the next question is probably not a surprise. I think it is asked at most hearings. How many Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders in out of home care have cultural care plans in place? What is the method and frequency of monitoring these plans?

**Dr Collis**: The number is 87 per cent.

**THE CHAIR**: That have a plan or—

**Dr Collis**: That have a plan. Helen, would you like to take the process forward?

**Ms Pappas**: Again, the cultural services team play a critical role in holding the rest of us to account in terms of the quality and the frequency and how they are implemented by the caseworkers. The cultural services team either do the plans on behalf of the caseworkers or support the caseworkers to do the plans. Our preference is that they support, because that means we are extending people’s experience and their understanding of how to have those conversations.

We review them at least annually. The development of the IT system will assist us to integrate that information in their case plans. At the moment we have a standalone cultural plan and then a standalone care plan. The idea is that they need to be one and the same thing. Probably the cultural plan needs to take high priority over some of the other things in care plans.

The IT system will let us do that automatically. The cultural services team will be able to go on to a child’s care plan and say, “These are the things in terms of their culture that you need to focus on.” That automatically transitions into the care plan. Then the caseworker, along with the declared care teams that sit around those children, has access to that information. They can see the importance of it and can do something about it.

**THE CHAIR**: Based on my personal experience, in the last four years I do not recall having that conversation with anyone. How does that review process work for kids in longer term placements? Are the carers or the families part of developing that plan?

**Ms Pappas**: ACT Together are our community partners who deliver support and case management for children in long‑term care. They are responsible.

**THE CHAIR**: They play the role that the cultural services team play for you?

**Ms Pappas**: That is right.

**THE CHAIR**: They should be doing those for those longer term placements?

**Ms Pappas**: Yes, and the cultural services team have reach into that. Just because there are kids in out of home care and ACT Together have case management responsibility does not mean our cultural services team do not get involved. They do. But certainly ACT Together have their version of the cultural services team and are responsible for developing and implementing cultural plans for kids in long‑term care.

**THE CHAIR**: In your contract management with them, is there an assurance process that you run to hold them accountable to that?

**Ms Pappas**: Yes, they are certainly required to. It is the law. The legislation says there needs to be one in place. Again, that is a consortium that has been in place for two years now. I think the practice is developing, just as it took the child protection system a long time to understand the importance of cultural plans. I think it is really a case of developing a maturity process for ACT Together, as it continues to be for us.

**THE CHAIR**: Does that 87 per cent include the children that are through ACT Together or is it just the young people that are—

**Mr De’Ath**: My understanding is that it is the ones that we are responsible for.

**THE CHAIR**: Do we have a rate for the cultural plans for the kids that are through ACT Together?

**Ms Pappas**: I do not, but we can take that on notice.

**THE CHAIR**: Could you follow that up for me, please?

**Mr De’Ath**: Yes.

**THE CHAIR**: Especially, given that they are long‑term orders away from home, it would seem that that is a pretty important group. In the *Family Matters* report in 2017 it was reported that the ACT government will continue to work with the new and established community‑controlled organisations “to strengthen the delivery of culturally strong services” for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander young people. How is the government working with existing Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community organisations to strengthen the delivery? What funding is being provided to ensure that that is achieved?

**Mr De’Ath**: That would be lot of our work through A step up and beyond. Mark, do you want to take the first part of that?

**Dr Collis**: I think Gugan Gulwan have a sort of funding agreement. There is a contractual arrangement in terms of family support. There is a lot of combined work in regard to our child protection system and Gugan. That is a funded arrangement which continues. Of course, not all of Gugan’s work is statutory or involves children who are in the statutory system.

In regard to the work we do with Winnunga, our work there operates at a casework level. In terms of how we move to develop the capability within the sector to take child welfare functions in there, that is a work in progress. I need to reference a previous conversation about the review, which is: how do we get to an architecture within the ACT that we need to work towards?

I think there is a strong preference from government to start building the capability and capacity within the Aboriginal childcare organisation sector, given there are only two at the moment—within those two organisations—as well as, I assume, to look at other potential developments within that as we move forward.

**THE CHAIR**: I am assuming that that question is along the lines that we need new organisations. But that architecture you describe should not forget about the things that exist, the good work and how to transition that and have some clear responsibilities on how that will work.

**Dr Collis**: Part of the answer is really uncomfortable for government. We are used to very much coming up with a solution to things and saying, “We want that solution.” This is about saying, “Tell us what that architecture should look like and how we should move towards that.” That goes to Michael’s reference earlier about how, right across government, we need to develop those capabilities. There are conversations all the time about how we can make small steps in this regard whilst that architecture is developing.

**Mr De’Ath**: We also recognise that that approach actually puts a lot of pressure back on the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community and key representatives like yourselves. I think we have to be a bit concerned. Yes, from feedback we have had, we acknowledge and agree with you that these are good approaches to take. But how much can any community cope with at any given point in time?

I think that for the foreseeable future there is a bit of a mix of both—of us having to do some groundwork and then taking it to the community, which is not our preferred operating style. I am talking on behalf of all of government here. Then we can take genuinely authentic approaches to saying, “Tell us how to do this.”

**THE CHAIR**: I agree that with Our Booris, Our Way, the individuals that you have leading that now, including the deputy of that group, who I think is with us today, are more than capable of working out the architecture and other things for us.

**Mr De’Ath**: Correct.

**THE CHAIR**: I am very hopeful about the work they are doing and what they are capable of.

**Mr De’Ath**: As are we.

**THE CHAIR**: The next question I have is another numbers one. Over the last five years, how many Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children in out of home care have been reunited with their birth families?

**Mr De’Ath**: To give you an accurate response, we will take it on notice.

**THE CHAIR**: How many Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children and young people have been removed from their families since the announcement of the review?

**Mr De’Ath**: Again, I would have to take that on notice to give an accurate response. Can I clarify that to make sure that I answer the question? There are two things there. One is the data. I try to monitor those children who move into the out of home care system and those who move out. Sometimes that data is collected as the difference between those children who stay in the out of home care sector versus just the number of how many came in. Are you asking for the number of how many came in?

**THE CHAIR**: How many came in since the announcement of the review?

**Mr De’Ath**: Since the announcement?

**THE CHAIR**: Yes. The directorate would be aware of the latest *Family Matters* report—I apologise; it seems like I have said that a few times—on child protection. In that report it is stated that the ACT government performed particularly poorly against all measures used in assessing the child protection policies and programs in the states and territories. What is the response of the directorate to the extremely poor report it received on the ACT’s child protection services in the *Family Matters* report?

**Dr Collis**: We have been in discussion with SNAICC. As you appreciate, we take advice from SNAICC on a number of ways forward. The significant issues that came out of that report are the investment in early intervention, the participation of community organisations, and decision-making by Aboriginal community‑controlled organisations within the system. It is a reflection of the previous conversation.

We are investing in early intervention. We are continuing to invest. We are confident that we will be able to be here next year describing really positive outcomes around that. The early outcomes are looking good. The issue of how we engage with community‑controlled organisations and share decision-making around this is a complex issue that we are seeking independent advice on through the Our Booris, Our Way review. We will look at that. For instance, I notice that in the report they footnote some things. We have also, post that report, commenced the family group conferencing trials. This time next year the loading on family‑based decision-making will be better. So we have a number of—

**THE CHAIR**: Actually, there is action happening on those key things.

**Dr Collis**: Yes, there is action happening now. We are not waiting for the review for things to happen. We will continue to announce new ways of working in that area with the community.

**Mr De’Ath**: There is more to this. It is a very important question that you have asked. The first thing I want to say is that these are appalling statistics. We know these are appalling statistics and everything we are doing and every action we are taking, and have been taking, is geared towards needing to change this—not trying to change it; needing to change it. But there are many parts of the puzzle and you will all understand that.

One of the levers that we are in control of is a degree of whole‑of‑government work, particularly over the human services cluster. I will ask Anne-Maree in a moment to talk more about the importance of that work, because that is really about fundamentally changing a system that is not working as well as it should, perhaps, for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander young people, and other people as well. That is a very important piece of work.

The components of A step up that you have acknowledged are underway, and the work that Uniting are doing et cetera are all critical sorts of preservation work, keeping people out of the statutory system, making sure that people do not end up in a place. But it is all about what we do with people at a point when we identify them into the system. CSD can only control, as you understand, so much of that.

Our cross‑government work is really important, where we can draw on and leverage off the other directorates’ work—Health, Education, Economic Development, Treasury, CMTEDD and so on. Can we give a little more detail on that, because I think it is quite important for people to understand what is happening in an intervention and prevention sense in some early but comprehensive work looking at the system?

**Ms Sabellico**: Yes, we are undertaking a project on behalf of the human services cluster that is called “early intervention by design”. As part of that work, we are engaging with the sector primarily, as well as the government directorates, in looking at what we need to do to embed early intervention as the way in which we do our work, to help then look at how we turn around the service system from being a crisis system to being an early intervention system.

In relation to that for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities, we are actually looking at establishing a very different engagement strategy there. We want Aboriginal‑designed responses to early intervention, rather than assuming that everybody knows what is required. We will be undertaking a rather significant co‑design framework that we are developing with Aboriginal community members in having a look at what is required from an Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander perspective—what is early intervention for family, how do we actually embed that right across the system to support diversion from the more intrusive actions of government.

**THE CHAIR**: Before going to the broader mainstream part of the sector, you are going to start with the co‑design with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people in the community?

**Ms Sabellico**: Yes, Aboriginal, and then—

**THE CHAIR**: Then others can come to the party; usually it is the other way around.

**Ms Sabellico**: Correct. Our position has always been Aboriginal service delivery first, because everybody will benefit from that, rather than it being a secondary view.

**THE CHAIR**: Rather than, “Here’s the program. How do you think you might think about it”?

**Ms Sabellico**: Yes.

**Mr De’Ath**: This is the policy work, and this is of vital importance. With the questions you have been asking us today, you could be back here in 10 years time asking the same questions. The question for us is: what is our legacy? How do we fundamentally change the system so that we stop pouring people into the tertiary end of the system? Until you actually take stock of that, understand what is there and look at how you design it to go forward, we will continue to face the same issues, I am sure.

I do not want our legacy to be one where we have been expert at going to government for demand funding and being successful in that. That is no legacy for us at all. The legacy will be from doing really sound policy work that helps us to fundamentally change and reorientate the system.

**THE CHAIR**: The next question is about whether the ACT government has adopted the Aboriginal child placement principles. Specifically, what steps has the directorate taken to address the shortcomings identified in the report? I am assuming that is the *Family Matters* report.

**Dr Collis**: First of all, on the eve of the state conference last year, which was held here, Minister Stephen-Smith signed up to the *Family Matters* commitment. There is now a government commitment to deliver on the elements of the placement principles. There are five placement principles. Whilst we have levers in some of those, the *Family Matters* document is a much more comprehensive—

**THE CHAIR**: Broader.

**Dr Collis**: and broader piece of thinking and piece of work than the statutory system, and I think much more aligned to the constructs that Anne-Maree was talking about in terms of early intervention. The other thing I would like to point out around the *Family Matters* document is that the perceived gold standard version of this at the moment is coming out of Queensland. There are a couple of really significant communities in central Queensland which have looked at how they are going to shift and deliver the placement principles over a period of time.

I do notice that, on the basis of the work of those communities, those communities have set generational goals—20‑year goals. When I first heard about it, I thought maybe it was just like kicking it off to the never‑never, but there are actually some really significant learnings about how we need to measure outcomes in a long‑term approach.

**THE CHAIR**: Perhaps closing the gap could learn from it.

**Dr Collis**: Yes. There are five elements. There is prevention, which goes to what we are talking about: how do we have a universal system that works for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people? How do we develop a service system whereby people can expect their agency to resolve the issues that are causing distress in their lives and prevent them from moving further into the system? One way we are doing that is the early intervention prevention cluster work that Michael and Anne-Maree were talking about.

In terms of the partnership dimension to this, I will not repeat the conversation, but it goes to the architecture for Aboriginal community‑controlled organisations and how we incorporate decision-making into this work about Aboriginal children. There is a placement principle within the placement principles, which is actually a placement hierarchy, which we already have in our legislation. I am a little confused about it. Our placement hierarchy appears to be the same as everyone else’s, but we are yet to communicate well enough to say that it is actually in there. But we do have a placement priority in there, and we measure ourselves against that. That is about restoring kids home but then seeking a hierarchy, including living with kin, as the priority. Prioritising Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander care is within that placement priority.

**THE CHAIR**: So that child placement priority or principle is something that is already legislated?

**Dr Collis**: It exists—

**THE CHAIR**: So it is a priority that you have signed up to?

**Dr Collis**: It exists within the Children and Young People Act, yes. It is called “placement priority” rather than “placement principle”. We will continue to measure ourselves against that.

The fourth one is participation. This is the area where we will see, in the interim, the biggest improvement against those benchmarks. Participation is about the extent to which decision-making families are brought into the decision-making about their children. We are biasing our family group conferencing to be Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander specific. We are not diluting that effort in any other sense. We are targeting that, in the development of family plans to keep kids out or keep kids stable and safe, in nurturing places. Over the course of this year we think that is where we will start to see some real shifts. That also goes to our practice more generally about how we hear the voice of Aboriginal kids in our system, and we have some projects underway on that as well.

The final principle is connection to community. We talked about cultural plans, but with cultural plans there are a whole lot of aspects to that. We are measuring those and we are going to report and evaluate against those. In our evaluation framework, for example, one of the things that is specific to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander young people is the extent to which they feel they are connected to their culture and their community. We will be evaluating that over the course of time.

There are so many things that fit around the connection. One of the areas that has heightened significance, as we have heard from the *Passing the message stick* report and so forth, is contact visits and how contact visits can be opportunities to develop culture or they can be really quite damaging. We have to work those out, but we are really keen to improve the outcome for cultural connection through contact as well.

**THE CHAIR**: With this next question, some of the previous answers have gone a little way towards answering it. Again, that *Family Matters* report talked about the ACT having the second highest rate of removal of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children in Australia but the second lowest level of support to Aboriginal families at risk of becoming involved in the care and protection system. The question is about what the directorate is doing about that disparity. You talked previously about a couple of programs, but are there other things that you want to add to that?

**Mr De’Ath**: As we talked about, that is a little bit outdated.

**THE CHAIR**: Okay.

**Mr De’Ath**: I think you have heard about that.

**THE CHAIR**: I think so.

**Mr De’Ath**: I do not know whether there was anything to add, actually.

**THE CHAIR**: How many Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children taken into care and protection in the last five years have come in touch with the criminal justice system after being taken into care and protection?

**Ms Sabellico**: Was that how many?

**THE CHAIR**: Yes.

**Ms Sabellico**: I do not have that information. We will have to take that on notice.

**Dr Collis**: We will have to take that specifically on notice. I probably need to define whether we are talking about young people who experience a supervision order, and at what point we will cover this off. We do monitor crossover statistics—those who are on community‑based supervision and detention who also have a child protection order. That would probably be data that we would be able to provide.

**THE CHAIR**: Let us start with that, and I can go back to the people who have asked those questions. If there are further things we need, we can clarify it. You mentioned *Passing the message stick* a moment ago, the joint report by the ACT Children and Young People Commissioner and the ACT Human Rights and Discrimination Commissioner. They recommended a culturally appropriate service that offers in‑home support by trained staff 24/7 for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander families who are at risk of the removal of children and young people. Can you let us know if that was implemented and, if not, why?

**Dr Collis**: Yes, it was implemented. The Uniting children and families program is the program that was commissioned as a consequence of strong feedback, not only from *Message stick* but from everyone else, that we should be investing early. We have biased referrals into that for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander families. The child and families program until recently was run by the clinical lead, who was a highly skilled and experienced Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander clinician, but Uniting have had a policy of keeping their staffing at between 20 and 30 per cent Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander. We have been tracking that and they have been doing that; they have been achieving those outcomes. Absolutely, the *Message stick* recommendation was amongst the really powerful messages that we took from the community and we have worked on that in the step up design.

**Mr De’Ath**: We are really pleased with what that program is achieving. Again I make the point that unless we do further work back here we will continue having people who could go into that program.

**THE CHAIR**: Absolutely.

**Mr De’Ath**: It is the continuum that we need here, and that is what we are working towards.

**THE CHAIR**: Without canvassing this specifically, but knowing each of the people on this side of the room, I do not think there is anyone here that would say, “We don’t want to reduce the numbers that are even at the start line of that tertiary stuff.”

**Mr De’Ath**: Of course.

**THE CHAIR**: We are more than happy to hear of any of that work. Can someone provide me with an update on the youth drug and alcohol court outlined in the youth justice blueprint?

**Dr Collis**: The youth drug and alcohol court trial was evaluated. It did not continue. I believe that was in 2013 or 2014.

**THE CHAIR**: That was based on an evaluation?

**Dr Collis**: That was based on an evaluation. There were in the order of five referrals. Only two came through that were accepted into that trial. Both of those cases were reviewed extensively and it was determined that there were other aspects of it, including that the application of a drug and alcohol assessment team to youth in the court system was a better way of moving forward.

**THE CHAIR**: The next few questions are around housing. Can you tell me how many Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander staff liaise directly with clients in the community?

**Ms Gilding**: I will try and keep it short.

**THE CHAIR**: I am sure your colleagues would appreciate that, given that we are nearly at the finish point.

**Ms Gilding**: Yes. Most of our staff have some sort of interaction because we are a front-line delivery service. Overall we have nine folk whom we know of who have identified as Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander staff. Approximately five of those are housing managers in that space as well.

**THE CHAIR**: Could you tell us the number of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people that are on housing waiting lists?

**Ms Gilding**: I think I have that.

**Dr Collis**: Just while Louise is looking that up, can I add a little to the question before?

**THE CHAIR**: Yes, of course.

**Dr Collis**: We have a very, very significant third‑party contract through Spotless supporting the housing sector and our stock. That is a contract that has exceeded its targets for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander employees, which I think is a significant point. I cannot remember the exact number.

**THE CHAIR**: I was going to ask you: what are those targets?

**Ms Gilding**: The target is 10 and I think there are 20.

**Dr Collis**: Into the 20s, yes.

**Ms Gilding**: Yes. On the actual waiting list at the moment I have 166 households on the housing register where at least one member of the household is identified as Indigenous.

**THE CHAIR**: How many properties are allocated to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people with a disability?

**Ms Gilding**: I think we talked before about the overall number. I think, within that, we have got about 25 per cent, which is about 460. Can I take that on notice?

**THE CHAIR**: Just to confirm, yes. I think there is a small typo here. We have been working very closely with the Chief Police Officer and ACT Policing. One of the questions we have been asking them regularly is about the number of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people to whom they offer diversionary options. One of the responses we have been getting is, “We would like to divert more people but we don’t have places to divert them.” The question is, more broadly: what work is the directorate doing to assist in that regard?

**Mrs Mitcherson**: Could we just clarify? Do you mean diversion from the justice system or from being charged or finding accommodation or—

**THE CHAIR**: It could be any of those things. Most of the issues have been about accommodation options, rehab and detox placements. Are there potentially other types of services and programs that would help them with being bailed, not being charged—for the range of things? How can they divert more Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people as far from that hard end of the justice system as they can? They need a suite of programs for that to happen and I am not sure, from your directorate, what those programs look like.

**Mrs Mitcherson**: I might hand over to Mark. We started to review the youth justice blueprint. We are at the halfway mark. That is about what we have done in the last five years and what we are doing, going forward, for young people, which does include some diversionary work. I guess from an adult point of view there is work across directorates in terms of placements—men, generally—coming out of the jail system and that kind of stuff, those with public housing placements or those in supported accommodation. That might be EveryMan or somewhere like that. Just on the drug and alcohol aspect, it is probably more of a health issue in that we would not do referrals—

**THE CHAIR**: Every directorate is getting this question. We are just seeing what everyone is doing.

**Mrs Mitcherson**: We would not do referrals for that.

**Dr Collis**: Specifically, I think it was in 2015, we redesigned the operating model of Narrabundah House into a youth diversionary for Aboriginal young fellows aged 15 to 18. In fact, that is our target group. We have moved to slightly younger and slightly older. We had a young fellow who came in from interstate who was in his 20s and had offended as a youth and he stayed there until his family came for him. We are pretty flexible around that. The other thing is that if—

**THE CHAIR**: Just on Narrabundah House, what sort of utilisation rate has it had in that time?

**Dr Collis**: In the last year 19 young people were resident there at one time or another.

**THE CHAIR**: Given their length of stay, I am probably more interested in what that looks like as an occupancy rate. Is it half full, is it 80 per cent full? Do they stay a long time?

**Dr Collis**: I can give you utilisation rates. The decision about who is there is often made on the basis of risk and opportunity. In fact, we had one person at our house for three months last year but, in terms of diversion, there is a bed which is separate from the actual Narrabundah House component which is meant to be the absolute diversion, the prevention from going to Bimberi, for an overnight stay just to go to court the next day. We can get the young blokes there with regard to that.

We have an after‑hours crisis service which has incorporated the after‑hours bail support service, which is a bit of a misnomer because, when we did the review, probably the smallest part of the work was bail support; it was actually more to do with early intervention. But each night it communicates with the watch house. If young people are brought in and they are in the watch house, then we try to negotiate other options for them. It might, in fact, be Narrabundah, but—

**THE CHAIR**: But that might not be the best fit?

**Dr Collis**: But quite frequently it might be just an uncle and aunty, because at the moment one of the issues we are struggling with a bit is family violence being a trigger for getting remanded into custody and the discretion that is being exercised in that space. There are quite a lot of different views about how much discretion.

It would have been true four, five years ago that more discretion was shown in terms of being able to mediate with young people late at night, get them to a place of safety and then come back and visit the conflict in their home at a later point in time. We have had that. We have achieved some really good runs on the board in terms of diversion since the youth justice blueprint commenced. What I will say is that in the preceding six months we have had a spike in young people generally offending, which is less open to diversion; the offending is of a serious nature.

**THE CHAIR**: We understand that that is not open to everyone. It is more where it is. If the only reason is there is not a spot, let us work on that.

**Dr Collis**: Yes.

**THE CHAIR**: The next question is: what are the plans to develop an Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander specific housing policy for the ACT?

**Ms Gilding**: We spoke to the community last year as part of the housing—

**THE CHAIR**: The broader strategies development?

**Ms Gilding**: The broader strategy, and we clearly heard the message, “We would like a housing policy.” We also heard the message around a community organisation—that is, an Aboriginal‑controlled community organisation as well.

**THE CHAIR**: That is efficient. That is two questions in one go, and I got that.

**Ms Gilding**: I guess they are fundamentally connected. We are now in that process of gathering all that consultation and the comments, as government is wont to do, and putting that back in terms of seeing what is our next strategy and how we go about developing that. We are really keen to meet with Caroline—we have just had some scheduling issues—to have some further conversations about how to proceed.

**THE CHAIR**: Is there an opportunity for those discussions in the development of that plan to include the pipeline into home ownership?

**Ms Gilding**: I think absolutely, and particularly—

**THE CHAIR**: Rather than set and forget your role?

**Ms Gilding**: Yes. I guess there is lots happening in that affordable housing space. There is certainly what EPSDD do in terms of affordable housing. But we also have our own affordable programs within housing—the four of them there in terms of the shared equity, the sale to the tenant, the bond loans and those things as well. They would absolutely fit that.

**THE CHAIR**: As well as the specific programs that are available to us through IBA and those places.

**Ms Gilding**: That is right, and also in terms of just the general comments that we made around building capability: how do we bring those things into this space as well to actually bring it together?

**Mr De’Ath**: It absolutely has to deliver on that growth and development so that, where possible, the social housing is not just a destination but part of a journey and so on and all linked into the overall housing strategy, which is going to be amazing.

**THE CHAIR**: This is, I think, in the housing space again. How does the directorate plan to address the issues raised in the Australian Institute of Health and Welfare report relating to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander housing? I think there were some things in that like flushing toilet problems and the rates of those sorts of things.

**Ms Gilding**: That is the one at the end of last year?

**THE CHAIR**: Yes.

**Ms Gilding**: There are so many.

**THE CHAIR**: Yes, the one just before Christmas.

**Ms Gilding**: It was around maintenance and infrastructure?

**THE CHAIR**: Yes.

**Ms Gilding**: And it had specific recommendations in that report or was it just a general satisfaction issue?

**THE CHAIR**: It did not have recommendations. I think this question is around things like the rate of people living in a home that did not have a toilet that flushed.

**Ms Gilding**: I would be horrified if that was the case in the ACT.

**THE CHAIR**: Again, these are questions that have come to me, but I am confident that that question comes from that specific line item about the ACT and the rates of non‑flushing toilets for Aboriginal communities.

**Mr De’Ath**: We will take that on notice.

**Ms Gilding**: Absolutely.

**Mr De’Ath**: We will look into it and come back.

**Ms Gilding**: Yes.

**Mrs Mitcherson**: But can we also put on notice to get particular advice?

**THE CHAIR**: Yes.

**Mrs Mitcherson**: We would all be horrified, I think. We all have things that do not work on occasion, but we have a process for them to get repaired.

**THE CHAIR**: And I am not sure if that report distinguishes between whether that is in public housing or not. I am not saying that is all public housing.

**Ms Gilding**: And there is a lot of the remote housing that comes into that, particularly in terms of the quality of stock across Australia.

**THE CHAIR**: I get that, but they did disaggregate the states and territories. The ACT’s rate on flushable toilets was embarrassing. We need to have a look and see what that actually means and then see if there is something that needs to happen about it.

**Ms Gilding**: I will take that on notice.

**THE CHAIR**: The next couple of questions relate specifically to the Office for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Affairs. Since the departure of the previous director for the Office for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Affairs, we understand that that position has not been filled by an Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander person. Can we get an indication of the time frame and process for recruitment to the director’s role?

**Ms Sabellico**: We are in the middle of looking at the sizing of the position. Since I started back in December and then the previous director left about mid‑January, I have taken the opportunity to really have a look at the Office for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Affairs and what we need in the role of a director, and have redrafted some areas of the position description to have it considered for resizing. I have been in discussions with a recruitment agency to support recruiting for that position. We will be ready to go, hopefully, for next week, once we have the sizing done, to advertise for that position. Respectfully I have asked for you, as chair of the elected body, to be on that recruitment panel. As soon as we have the dates, we will be able to progress that.

**Mr De’Ath**: I would really like to recognise the approach that Anne-Maree has taken here, because this is an absolutely critical position. I am sure you will agree with me on that. Anne-Maree has taken the time to look at the team’s work, to understand better, to seek to establish what the right level is for that position and then to go into a recruitment process, as opposed to arriving in the job recently and then just going straight into it. That has been very wise. We look forward to that process playing out.

**THE CHAIR**: We appreciate that the permanent filling of that position needed that approach. The other couple of questions we have feed into some of the earlier ones that Christine answered for us. They are around the acting opportunities that presented for both staff within your directorate and more broadly across the ACTPS, and why an Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander person was not given an opportunity to act in that role.

**Ms Sabellico**: That was a decision that I took in order for me, as a new executive director for strategic policy, having the Office for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Affairs sitting underneath my division, to really get in there and meet with all of the staff to understand all of their roles and functions, what they were doing and how that all then came together. I also, as part of that, directly supervised the two senior staff there. That has given me an opportunity to really understand their skill and ability and development needs so that I can continue to work on what the right succession planning is and the right development areas are for the whole of the team. I took the opportunity in order to be able to truly understand what was needed in that regard.

**THE CHAIR**: The next couple of questions I have are ones from earlier this morning that we were told were for CSD. The first one relates to the cultural centre at Yarramundi. I asked the arts area why there is no funding or operational dollars for cultural activities at the centre rather than it being a hall that we can book. I was referred to this directorate to help answer that.

**Ms Sabellico**: My understanding is that the Office for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Affairs is responsible for the bookings for the cultural centre. They undertook about 100 bookings for the cultural centre over 2016‑17. That ranged across community organisations, private bookings and government bookings. Specifically we are just responsible for the bookings for the community centre at this stage. Jacob might be able to give further information on that.

**THE CHAIR**: We understand about the bookings. What I am more worried about and what we are most interested about is that its title is the ACT Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Cultural Centre. Without opting either for someone else to run it and generate their own income or to fund cultural activities to be run there or some other hybrid of that, it is not actually delivering on its cultural centre purpose. Given that that site was announced at the same time as the Tuggeranong Arts Centre and it took 10 years after that place was opened and built before we even had a centre, that it now has no operating budget is a real concern for us. We think, particularly for our traditional custodians of this place and the rich history that Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people have had and bring to this place, that that cultural centre needs a greater life than a hall that we can book.

**Mr De’Ath**: I acknowledge the concerns that the elected body have raised.

**THE CHAIR**: We did get some answers about Reconciliation Day, a little bit about process from the Chief Minister’s directorate, but I understand that you have some responsibilities for that day and that event as well. Could you give us a bit of an update on that?

**Ms Sabellico**: We do have some responsibility for establishing Reconciliation Day and celebrating the inaugural Reconciliation Day this year. We have a $150,000 grant associated with support for the event and lead‑up events for Reconciliation Day, as well as $50,000 for a grants program. That will close this Friday, the 16th.

**THE CHAIR**: That is for not necessarily at the key event; that is for more general community things?

**Ms Sabellico**: Lead‑up events and the event on the day. We also have a community engagement strategy. OATSIA is leading on that in terms of what we need to do there to engage with the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community around the event and the importance of commemorating and celebrating culture. We are also working with CMTEDD around the engagement of an events coordinator. We will work with them jointly to have a look at the governance structure around that and how we can coordinate that jointly with them.

There is also a Reconciliation Day council that we are in the process of establishing. That council will have prominent Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander and non‑Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Canberrans on it. They will have a line of sight of all of the preparations and events leading up, so that their involvement as ambassadors can be linked into those events for appropriate speaking engagements and to encourage people’s attendance. Then we have an inter-directorate committee. That brings together all of the ACT government directorates to look at what in‑kind support can be provided for the lead‑up, as well as the event itself. Education, CMTEDD—

**THE CHAIR**: In schools—

**Ms Sabellico**: Yes, all of those sorts of things—so we can start to get a calendar of events together. We are working with them to be able to calendarise that. We have also been working with an alliance of about 30 non‑government organisations who have come together of their own accord to have a look at what they should be doing in support of Reconciliation Day and the lead‑up events as well.

**THE CHAIR**: We will move to follow-up questions.

**MR MONAGHAN**: There seems to be a great problem for the Indigenous detainees coming from the AMC. One of the big problems is accommodation. I am not certain whether JACS has had discussions with housing about it. There was always a plan to look at a halfway house or a form of accommodation for some of these males coming out of the prison, because a lot of those men are homeless and go back to the same environment and they finish up back in the system. Is there something in the pipeline about discussions around that?

**Mrs Mitcherson**: It is a really vexed area. I am not telling you anything you do not know, because you are very engaged in that. When people come out of custody—and women come out as well, but generally men—a whole lot of issues are raised in terms of their accommodation. Some of the accommodation is directly related to where they are approved to go by a parole board, and some of that is directly related to their offending. That complicates matters further. Then we know, and I am sure you know this if you have been briefed by JACS, that some of the current increase in relation to figures generally is around family violence. So it is about trying to work around when they are coming out, where they need to go or whether it is a stepped approach before they go back to the family. As we know, a lot of families want the violence to stop but they do not want the relationships to end, so it is about managing that. You know from your experience, and mine with you, that in coming out there are a whole lot of processes that you might need to go through.

The other complicating factor is that if someone is coming out at the end of a head sentence—so we know that they have got two years and are coming out—you can plan for that with that person. If someone has a parole period, you can plan when they are going to the parole board, but there is no guarantee that they are going to get that. We did establish, when I was there, housing coming in on a fortnightly basis at the time to look at those who are currently in public housing or need to prepare for it. The other issues are around what the particular individual circumstances are, depending on all those other little factors that I have raised. They may need to go through a stepped process before they go into public housing or a head lease something, or they might go straight out into a 24‑hour full‑time rehab and then we need to go from there—because sometimes their parole is straight into rehab. So it is complicated. I am not telling you anything you do not know.

We have also been working with JACS in relation to the drug court that has been earmarked for the end of the year. We are working on a policy around housing in relation to the cohort that might go towards the drug court.I am parking this figure now, but it is probably pretty right that at least 70 per cent of those in custody would have a significant drug and alcohol issue. Some of those would be eligible possibly for the drug court.

**Ms Gilding**: Bernie has done a pretty good summary. We try to connect early. We try to make sure that folk coming out from the AMC have the support they need to sustain the tenancy. I do not necessarily have that support within our housing manager cohort to do that. There are sometimes quite specialist and specific needs that people have when they are exiting. What we want to be able to do is make sure that people can successfully stay in their house. That is quite a big challenge for us.

The other challenge is that there are obviously pressures on our supply. There is far more demand for our housing stock than we can often meet. We try to get ahead of the game. One of the things we are looking at is that not everybody coming from the AMC is eligible necessarily for public housing. They might have other arrangements. They might be eligible for a bond loan, for example. What we are trying to do is make sure that we remove any of the administrative barriers from somebody being in the AMC to when they can actually sign up for those things. We try to make that as seamless as possible.

Another program that has had connections with the AMC is Room4Change, which is the behaviour program that DVCS have been running, where men go through a residential program and a 20‑week behavioural change program as well. Not everybody is going to be suitable for that program. So it is a problem. I also understand that on a national basis it is something that everybody has challenges with. Certainly it is a hot topic among the other chief executives of housing on a national basis.

**THE CHAIR**: I would like to thank all of the officers who have appeared today and all of the officers who do the heavy lifting on the preparation as well. We look forward to receiving those answers to questions on notice and to seeing the progress in the investment in the Indigenous‑led and partnership types of approaches that you have outlined today. We think that that is a really positive step.

## Hearing suspended from 3.12 to 3.29 pm.

Appearances:

Environment, Planning and Sustainable Development Directorate

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

Iglesias, Mr Daniel, Director, ACT Parks and Conservation Service

Reynolds, Mr Chris, Chief Operating Officer and Asbestos Coordinator-General

Mudford, Ms Mary, Manager, Healthy Country, ACT Parks and Conservation Service

Wong, Mr Tim, Manager, Natural Resource Management Programs

O’Connell, Ms Jennifer, Manager, ACT Heritage

**THE CHAIR**: As this is the first time I have met you all, I am Katrina Fanning, chairperson of the elected body. We work on the questions for the hearings together and those agreed questions are delivered by the lead for that portfolio. When we get through those we will ask follow‑up questions. We also give priority to any questions that have been forwarded to us from the community to ask.

We acknowledge that one of our members is not here today due to sorry business in their family, regarding one of the local Ngunnawal elders who passed away in the last day or so. That is why Member Hughes is not with us, and we want to acknowledge the role of that elder not only with the elders council but also in a range of activities for this community over many years.

Like I said, our questions are developed by us and with the community. We are particularly focused on the outcomes of things rather than the activity, notwithstanding that at times context is needed, rather than just a simple number or a short answer. I will hand over to Member Keed to commence with the questions after you have made some opening comments, if you want to.

**Dr Brady**: First of all, I acknowledge the traditional custodians of the land we are meeting on, the Ngunnawal people. I acknowledge and respect their continuing culture and the contribution they make to the life of this city and this region, and I extend our apologies for the sad passing that you just mentioned.

I have a couple of apologies: Ben Ponton, the director‑general, sends his apologies. He had a personal matter today that has made him unable to attend. I also apologise that I have my laptop here; it has information on it and I am not going to be doing any other work.

I would like to mention some of the important work the directorate has been doing over the last year. An important thing that I know the director‑general, Mr Ponton, highly values is the conversations and very useful feedback that Member Keed has provided us with. He is helping us to improve our engagement with the community. I know Ben, the director‑general, met with Member Keed and some of the elders over the last year and found that a very valuable experience. That is something we need to develop further and focus on.

I am sure we will touch on a number of specific matters as we progress through the afternoon, and you have questions. I will highlight some positive things around the directorate. We have a number of excellent Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander employees in our directorate. Some of the fantastic talent we have includes Mikaela Jade, who won the Veuve Clicquot New Generation Award just in the last week. We have people like Sally Moylan, who won the Rio Tinto Indigenous Land Management Award last year. They are just a couple of the great people that we have in our directorate. We are very conscious that we have some very good people and that we need to continue to work on developing those people and developing them through the organisation.

I will touch on a few things EPSDD has been doing. A major focus the directorate has—and this has been quite public—is that we have been looking at how we bring people back into the planning and development work that we do and looking at different ways of engagement, better ways of engagement with community, not just traditional consultation methods. That has been one of our focuses of being more citizen‑focused and outcomes‑focused and looking at new ways to collaborate with people across the community.

We have introduced some new pre‑DA community consultation guidelines. We have been doing a lot of work on affordable housing, which continues to be an issue throughout not just the ACT but Australia and internationally. We are looking at different ways we can provide affordable housing and access to affordable housing outside mainstream public housing.

We have been doing work on housing choices, so we have been looking at what we call the missing middle, where we tend to have either apartments or single dwellings. There is an area in the middle of different types of housing that we do not seem to have enough of for the community. That is what we are hearing. We have been doing a lot of work on that and we will progress that to look at what that means for policy work.

We have been looking at a design review panel. Some of the other issues that have arisen are around building and design quality, so we have been looking at ways to deal with that. One of them has been the design review panel that we are setting up, and we are working with the National Capital Authority, where we will have people with different expertise that will review developments.

Another thing we have running is the building regulatory reform program that was introduced over a year ago. That is looking at a number of matters in the building policy area and building and construction around quality.

Another big area of work we have is the healthy waterways program, where we are doing a lot of work to make sure we are caring for our rivers and waterways. We are part of the federal government healthy waterways program, and we have a lot of projects that are rolling out as part of that.

A new focus has been prevalent on our environmental assets, looking at micro‑parks in inner cities, looking at urban parks and how we integrate that and the broader environment. Trees are obviously a very important thing for Canberra, which is often called the bush capital, but our environment is a key piece of our work, as is heritage. We have a heritage group that has been looking at a lot of work in the region, and that includes Indigenous and cultural heritage as well.

We are working to make sure that locals and visitors alike have the ability to understand Canberra, the ACT and the history of the area and the natural and built environments.

I should not forget the sustainability measures we are looking at. There is an enormous raft of work that we have going on in the directorate. That is very important, very interesting and very challenging at times. We are quite busy, and we have a busy time ahead. Thank you for the opportunity to talk about our work and our interaction with the community.

**MR KEED**: What Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander events has your minister attended in the past three years?

**Dr Brady**: I might let Daniel answer that one.

**Mr Iglesias**: We are fortunate to have, in Minister Gentleman, someone who is very engaged in the environment space and specifically in the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander space. In around August or July the minister was invited to a joint parks and conservation service and community elder event that was held out at Uriarra. I think we called it the grass tree clean‑up. What we had out there was the site of these large grass trees, not far from Tidbinbilla. The community identified that as an opportunity to get together and learn about the site, learn a bit about the land management of the site, and an invitation was extended to community.

We had a really good turn‑up. From memory, there must have been around 30 or 40 people there. The minister made a point of getting out there. It is difficult to get to that spot. You have to wind your way through lots of dirt tracks, so he made a significant effort to get there. He addressed the group when he got there and met a few of our employees, as well as members of the community.

Every year we have something called the Tidbinbilla open day, and a large part of that day is the Aboriginal component. A lot of our staff who are Aboriginal have distinct programs that they roll out during the day. They are typically family event programs, but they are extremely well attended. In fact, it is probably one of the most popular parts of our open day, and the minister made a point of attending that and supporting our staff. That is two that come to mind. There might be others, but they are the two that come to mind, from my perspective.

**Dr Brady**: We could take that on notice, if you would like specific identification of events.

**MR KEED**: Yes, please. My next question is: does your cultural awareness training cover Ngunnawal and traditional custodian content and is it delivered by a local provider?

**Mr Iglesias**: The whole question around cultural heritage training is one that we have identified as a team that we want to invest more resources in, more thinking in. We want to go to our community and say, “Who might be a good provider; who might have good content?” For the first time, this year our health country manager, Mary Mudford, came to me and said, “Daniel, we can do better with our cultural heritage training. How about I get a local Ngunnawal elder to present?” In fact, we only had the session last month. We had a whole day, and the highlight of the day was Aunty Matilda visiting. She spoke to the group for a good hour and a half.

The presenter was not local, by the way; the presenter was from the Kimberley region, but he was very respectful in the way that he presented the content. He made it very clear that he was not from these parts and that he could not speak in that context. There was an appreciation by those at hand that there was that respect from another Aboriginal person to the local people of this area.

That is something we can do subsequently, if we can find local providers that can provide that sort of content. I am sure they are there; we might have used them in the past. But the nature of the content was very useful for our staff, to open some eyes and to understand a little bit more about Aboriginal culture.

**MR KEED**: What measurements were taken before you actually consulted with the WA consultant? Was there much research into local providers?

**Mr Iglesias**: I could not be specific about what we actually did to suss out who the provider would be. I would have to take that on notice. I am happy to do that.

**MR KEED**: I am just wondering what steps are taken before you even think of someone that is not from the ACT. That is all I am asking about. Were other local providers approached to do the cultural awareness?

**Mr Iglesias**: I would have to double‑check that for you. I cannot speak positively about whether they were or not. I am happy to take that on notice.

**MR KEED**: Thank you.

**Mr Reynolds**: I could add a little bit more clarity to the question you asked there—your question about training, and the learning and development, and particularly the cultural aspects related to the learnings of Ngunnawal. I want, firstly, to acknowledge the conversations that you have had with my director of people and capability. Out of those discussions I also want to report that the directorate has invested quite significantly in a centralised stream, the stream that I head up. There are a number of resources focused on learning and training needs within the directorate.

In fact, on Friday we are scheduled to launch a centralised electronic learning and management system. That is a really important system for our directorate with regard to learning, development and training for our entire workforce. That provides an important central platform for all managers to have visibility around training that is directly related to activities they might undertake—for example, firefighting, or the operation of chainsaws and high‑risk equipment and the work health and safety aspects. Also, as you pointed out to my director, there is a great opportunity to readily incorporate cultural awareness training into that system. At a centralised level the executive can have visibility straight into which parts of our workforce have had what elements of cultural training. That is something that will be launched on Friday. My team is looking at some of the suggestions that you put forward there. I see it as something that can be very readily implemented in that new system.

**MR KEED**: What are the future plans to develop EPSDD’s next reconciliation action plan?

**Dr Brady**: I know that we acknowledge that, with our reconciliation action plan, the group in the last year did not have as active a participation as we would like. We have recently put a new executive sponsor in, with the focus that we need to get that group broadened out and focused on particular activities and tasks. That is something that we are focusing on at the moment. Brett Phillips is the new executive sponsor, and that is the task that we have set. The group so far have been predominantly Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders, and one of the things that we are trying to do is to get diversity in the group. We understand that, for example, TCCS has had a much more successful experience, so we are looking at what are some of the lessons that we can learn from other places. I am not sure if either of my colleagues want to add more on that.

**Mr Reynolds**: The “reflect” reconciliation action plan is the current plan that has been in place for some time now. With the next phase of that, picking up the points that Erin was raising, in recognising some of the opportunities for improved delivery and engagement, we are titling that as the “innovate” reconciliation action plan. There is a clear commitment by the directorate there, with the new executive champion, and we are already working towards that next iteration, if you like, of the plan.

It has been a big year over the last 18 months for the directorate, with significant growth, particularly with the on‑boarding and integration of the parks and conservation service. A lot of our effort has been focused on integrating the new arrangements that came in place with that, but there is a clear commitment now with the “innovate” reconciliation action plan.

**MR KEED**: What are the priorities of the ACT Aboriginal natural resource management program when involving Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples and traditional owners in current and future projects?

**Dr Brady**: I might ask Daniel to answer that.

**Mr Iglesias**: I might get Tim to come up as well. He might be able to add some detail to what I say. We would like to see an improvement in the way we engage with our Aboriginal community. We have recently got together as a team in the natural resource management space. We have identified the need to engage meaningfully with community as one of our top priorities.

In fact, we are quite mindful that at times the community can be under‑engaged and at times over-engaged. We want to put a bit of effort into coming up with a pretty clear outline as to what we are about in relation to engagement. We might try and limit ourselves to just a few words that say, “How are we going to engage with the community? How are we going to support our Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander staff and what do we want to achieve?”

Looking forward into the next 12 months, there are lots of things that are on the horizon that will see a reason for us to engage with the community, from the issue of Aboriginal trainees in the parks service through to engaging Aboriginal elders in the field on issues such as cultural burning and other issues in relation to interpretation of assets. Tim might want to say a few words about his side of the business, which focuses on what we call natural resource management.

**Mr Wong**: I manage a section in the environment division called ACT NRM. We are a program delivery area. We deliver programs on behalf of the commonwealth as well as on behalf of ACT government. We have two programs. One of them is kickstart your career and the other one is the Aboriginal natural resource management facilitator. Some of you will be familiar with the work of the Aboriginal facilitator, who has been funded over the last five years in my team, and the work in the jail and another current initiative that is developing a fire forum.

In terms of looking forward, if that is the emphasis of the question, we are essentially looking at re‑funding the Aboriginal natural resource management facilitator position. We are looking at doing that primarily through commonwealth funding, but we do have a backup plan, if you will, to make sure that we maintain that capacity. We as a natural resource management body have a role on behalf of the commonwealth and the ACT in helping to engage the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community in natural resource management.

Our strategy moving forward—this is what we have applied for funding for—is that the Aboriginal facilitator position will oversee the development of a healthy country plan. I am sure many of you will be familiar with these plans. They have been developed in other areas across Australia. Darren Chong, in his position over the last five years, has been doing a lot of consultation directly with the community. Across government as well there is broad support for taking this more strategic approach. It is an idea at the moment, but we have started to shape some of the main areas that could appear in a healthy country plan.

We have identified four priority areas. Again, this is a starting point, a straw man, if you will, that we can start consultation on. This is around, firstly, protecting country. This is around protecting significant sites and land management practices. The second priority area is connecting with country and culture. This is about engaging community with cultural heritage activities. The third priority area is around supporting cultural tourism. This is focusing on economic development. The fourth priority area is pathways to employment. This is about supporting and developing career pathways.

That is our plan moving forward. Substantive work on that will start from the start of next financial year. It is funded to continue over the following five years. That is the indicative time frame for a healthy country plan.

**MR KEED**: Is there anything else that you want to add to that?

**Dr Brady**: The only thing I would add is that, in general, engagement is a big thing for the government but in particular for EPSDD. Director-General Ponton has been quite open about us trying, as a directorate, different ways of engaging with people and with the community. We have probably done a lot of traditional consultation, meetings and those sorts of things. We realise that, across a range of the work that we do, it does not necessarily give us the most fruitful input. Generally, as a directorate, we are very focused on looking at the best way to connect with the community, and that is the cross‑section of community including the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community. We are open to working out what is the best way to do that.

We have done different forms of engagement over the last year. We have had to acknowledge that some things have not worked, but it is actually quite positive for us to give things a go and then think, “Okay, that didn’t go so well, so maybe we don’t do that again or we do it differently.” As a directorate we are very open. We do a lot of work where engagement is fundamental to the work we do. It is a genuinely important part of the work that we do. We are very open to suggestions and different forms of engagement.

**MR KEED**: What is the current status of the Aboriginal waterways assessment and what is the next step, moving forward, with the traditional owners, the Ngunnawal people?

**Mr Iglesias**: I might ask Mary Mudford, the healthy country manager, to come to the table. She can answer that particular question.

**Ms Mudford**: Could you repeat the question for me?

**MR KEED**: The question was: what is the current status of the Aboriginal waterways assessment and what is the next step, moving forward, with the traditional owners?

**Ms Mudford**: The next step, moving forward, with the Aboriginal waterways assessment is that we would like to have another community meeting with those members of the community who undertook the water assessments, as well as any others who would like to be involved, to go through the assessments that have already been done to identify some objectives and actions that the community would like us, in partnership with community, to undertake.

**MR KEED**: The current status was that there was one meeting; now there is another one.

**Ms Mudford**: Yes.

**MR KEED**: What is the process of actually getting the word out to the traditional custodians?

**Ms Mudford**: I and other staff email the invitations out. Also, we send invitations out to those who are not on email. We try to provide as much information as possible about the meeting that we are having. That is our current process. I follow up with phone calls. For the meeting that we have just had for water, for the aquatic strategy and the Fisheries Act, I followed up with phone calls with community members to see who would be coming to that meeting.

**Dr Brady**: One thing that we have learnt from our discussions with you, Jacob, as well is that, for some of those consultations, we need to let you know so that you can also help us to make contact with elders and other groups. That means we are not just relying on traditional email and phone call types of connections. That is something we are probably learning to do a bit better.

**Ms Mudford**: I point out that I also sent it out to OATSIA. Any meeting invitations that my unit are involved with also go to OATSIA and to UNEC.

**MR KEED**: My next question is in regard to the kickstart program.

**Dr Brady**: We will ask Tim to help us with that response.

**MR KEED**: The question is: what is the current status of the kickstart program and how is EPSDD going to input Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community feedback into continual improvement of the program?

**Mr Wong**: The current status of the program is that it is midway through now. It started in October 2016 and it concludes in 2020. We have gone through about 18 months of the program. This has been predominantly trials that have been school based. I am happy to go into detail if you want.

We have an Aboriginal staff member who is running that program. She is working in EPSDD but spends a proportion of her time over at the Education Directorate and then a larger proportion of her time actually out in schools or on programs themselves.

The emphasis of your question, I hear, is really around how we can solve it and get community input into the program.

**MR KEED**: Yes, to be continuing the improvement of it to make it better and make sure that Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people in the community have their feedback heard.

**Dr Brady**: If I can just jump in for a moment, I know from a recent discussion with the person out in the field that one of the lessons that she talked about was that they felt that they were being stretched a bit and the number of students engaged was perhaps too demanding. I think they have been reviewing the number of facilitators, for want of a better word, to students and looking at it to understand whether, if it is a smaller group, they have more impact than trying to spread themselves too thin. I know that is some feedback that I have heard.

**Mr Wong**: Where we started was really designing a program. We got together a group of folks, I guess cross‑government, from different directorates, to design the program with really, again, an idea about setting up some trials.

The initial consultation we have done with the community has predominantly been through parents, the students themselves and then the broader school community. Students are actually referred to the program, but they come on a voluntary basis. That is very much fed into the continual improvement of the program. We have trialled some things such as involving families in some of these programs and that was actually feedback from the community themselves. We trialled that. We found out some of the barriers to the success of those programs.

We have engaged a researcher at the University of Canberra to actually do an overall evaluation. With these sorts of programs you can often get caught up in measuring what your outputs are—how many students have gone through these programs, who did what. We have designed that and started to collect data, but there will be an evaluation done at the end which really looks at the effectiveness of this program in terms of the outcomes for the target students and comparing this against other programs as well. Part of that approach will be looking at best practice elsewhere to see if we are actually incorporating best practice and trialling it into our programs as well. That is what we have done so far.

We are moving into a bit of a new phase now. We have worked with a range of youth, predominantly in schools but also in Bimberi. Certainly they were at risk of disengaging from school. But there is a cohort that we have not worked with as much which are termed very high‑risk youth. These are youth that are either attending school but will likely drop out very soon or are not attending school at all and might be in out of home care or elsewhere.

Again, moving into that space our plan is to continue to consult through targeting agencies that work with this target group, such as Gugan Gulwan, Winnunga, Marymead, Narrabundah House, and continuing to engage with the other relevant directorates such as Community Services, JACS, Education and Health and then targeting key people. Carly Freeman, who is the program coordinator, has been talking to a lot of parents and family members of target students, that is to say targeting grandparents of students or other family members to get an idea about what their expectations are and about what might be effective in a program to actually bring about a better outcome for that young person.

We also are looking at other options. We certainly would be willing to do something like a community workshop or forum if we thought it would be useful. Again, walking into that space, we have done some consultation already and also have a longer term evaluation framework in place to make sure that we are learning as we go.

**MR KEED**: The next question is in regard to the cultural awareness training, the numbers of staff in the directorate. What are the numbers of staff who have completed cultural awareness training in the directorate and which classifications are they?

**Dr Brady**: If we cannot answer that we will take it on notice, but I will let Chris go to that.

**Mr Reynolds**: The exact numbers I would prefer to take on notice so that I can ensure that they are accurate and reliable. As I mentioned earlier, we are in the early phases of implementing a learning and management system, and cultural awareness will be embedded within that. That will make sure we have greater visibility and transparency. If I could take that on notice, I will get back to you with a greater reliability. I would hate to just guess the answer.

**MR KEED**: The next question is: how are EPSDD’s directors, at director levels, engaging with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities within the ACT region?

**Dr Brady**: It probably varies across the different groups, but I might let Daniel kick off at least.

**Mr Iglesias**: I have an unfair advantage because I am the director of the parks and conservation service. We have a number of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander employees. I think at last count it was nine or 10 of the 193 FTEs that we have. It is still not a huge number, but it is a start. I remember when I was a ranger in the late 1990s working at Tidbinbilla and I could not name one Aboriginal ranger that was working with me, and when we had the task of interpreting Aboriginal heritage our visitors would hear that from a non‑Aboriginal person. We have turned that around, which is a great start. When I was a ranger back then, I went for the first time to Matilda House. I came to understand the passion and, quite frankly, the value‑adding that is available from people in the community—the huge amount of knowledge that is in people’s lived experiences.

In the last month I have met with both Aunty Matilda and Aunty Roslyn Brown. Both of them have made it clear to me that they expect it to be an ongoing meeting. Roslyn suggested that I have a standing agenda at UNEC. I will be addressing the UNEC group once every quarter. Similarly with Aunty Matilda, she has asked if we could have regular meetings. That gives me, as a director of a group of people that are working on country, direct access to only two—there are a lot more elders out there—elders. I have had reason to come across Member Monaghan’s and Member Walker’s desk before. They might not remember it but I remember it. I suppose in my space I have a lot more capacity to do that.

**MR KEED**: And do the other directors share that same amount of interaction with the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community? I am just curious. Do they have the same amount of interaction?

**Dr Brady**: I think it is probably fair to say not the same amount of interaction because it is, I think, a slightly different context. In the consultation and engagement we do around planning proposals or strategic planning, master plans, those sorts of things, perhaps that is an area that we need to address, the same as we have been looking at a range of things to make sure that we get the right cross‑section of the community. Perhaps that is an area that we need to look at, to see that we are using the appropriate measures and approaches for engagement, and maybe we can learn something from our environment colleagues on how we do that, given that we are in the same directorate and there are obviously very good connections and experiences there. Perhaps it is something that we need to look at rolling out a bit more broadly.

**MR KEED**: My next question is: what strategies is EPSDD carrying out to maintain the employment and retention of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander staff within the directorate?

**Mr Reynolds**: Firstly, there are multiple approaches that we are taking. I guess at first glance it is not specifically targeted just for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people in our employment. The reconciliation action plan that we spoke about earlier is a key part of that and how we also roll out cultural awareness and training.

The executive has introduced a series of reporting that is prepared quarterly now and is reviewed. What we have in there, as a specific metric, is that we are actually monitoring the number of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders who obviously declare—we are aware of that—who are in our employ. That is a key metric now that, from director level through the executive directors, the deputies and the director‑general, we have that visibility. That is quarterly and is something that we look at, along with a lot of other metrics around our workforce, including training and work health and safety and so forth. I think having that metric being actively monitored is important—actively monitored, for example, against what target has been set for the directorate. I think what we aim to see is, through that, greater awareness by the executives and the directors.

The other point to make is that we do have 22 people who identify as Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders that have self‑declared. What we do recognise is that, whilst that is on target, if you like, when we have analysed the make‑up of those staff, they are at lower levels, if you like, in terms of representation across the workforce. The director‑general in particular is very aware of that, as we all are. We are keen to make sure that we do whatever we can to make sure that there is not only the total representation target being achieved but that there is a greater representation across the full spectrum of positions in the directorate—more senior representation in the workforce.

**Mr Iglesias**: I might just add to that. We have initiated the Murrumbung Yurung Murra network of employees. This was something that our employees came to us with and said, “You know what, there’re a few of us Aboriginal people working for this directorate. We’d like to organise into a group for self‑help purposes.” It has been very successful in getting that group together. That is not just within this directorate; there are also members from other directorates as well, as you know.

The whole purpose of that is to support our Aboriginal staff and to maybe also get them access to their elders within the workplace which they would never have had before—not within the workplace. That has proven an integral part of our strategy to make our Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people feel that they are supported, and that came as an initiative from the staff themselves.

We are also looking within the parks service to identify two trainee ranger positions that we will look to fill before the end of this year. That is something that includes a two‑year process, where they are given a certificate IV as well as a lot of on‑the‑job stuff that will give them the skills to be a manager and give them the confidence to talk about country.

**MR KEED**: The next few questions are in regard to the Namadgi joint management agreement. That is what we are going to talk about.

**Mr Iglesias**: I might get Mary up to do it.

**MR KEED**: My next question is: how is EPSDD going in progressing the Namadgi joint management agreement?

**Mr Iglesias**: Maybe I can start. The Namadgi joint agreement was a document that was produced back in 2001 and, a little while after, it lapsed. The agreement itself did not lapse but the activity of the group did. About two years ago, as a directorate we said, “What we’re missing is engagement with the Aboriginal community in areas to do with park management. We have got some staff now into the system but those staff do not have ready access to their elders. Wouldn’t it be great if we could explore the development of what we were calling, at that point, an Aboriginal elders parks advisory group?” Our thoughts were—and we tested this with our Aboriginal staff—to have a representative group of elders that could advise our Aboriginal and non‑Aboriginal staff about all things cultural in relation to all our protected areas, not just Namadgi.

What we did was: we went and got some advice from Chrissy Grant, the commissioner Chrissy Grant, to go out into the community and say, “We’ve got this idea. What do you guys think?” What we were hearing was, “Why are you looking to set up a new group when you’ve got a Namadgi group and it hasn’t been used for a while?”

What we are in the process of doing now is understanding what the legal stature of that Namadgi agreement is and what the signatory families think about how it should go forward. That is where we are at. We are trying to understand what people think about it and what the legal situation is. The context—not to lose sight of this—is that we want to have the capacity to get advice from the local community.

**MR KEED**:Anything else on that question?

**Ms Mudford**: I would just like to add that I have started the engagement process with the signatories to that agreement. I had my first meeting Friday week ago in regard to the Namadgi agreement and will continue those conversations next week. I have started with the actual signatories to the document. Then I will take that out to the witnesses of the document. Then, once I have an understanding of how the signatories to that document would like to proceed, we will look at taking it out more broadly, the conversation.

**MR KEED**: And just to clarify, is that Namadgi agreement still current?

**Ms Mudford**: It is still.

**MR KEED**: Still alive?

**Ms Mudford**: Yes.

**MR KEED**: That segues into the next question. How often has the Namadgi joint management agreement board met?

**Mr Iglesias**: It has not met since 2005-06. It stopped meeting. It was a long time ago. I could not tell you firsthand why that is the case. I have heard conflicting reports, but the bottom line is that it stopped meeting. One of the tasks I know they had was to develop a Namadgi plan of management, which the group did do. Fred, you might have sat on the board at the time. I could be wrong but—

**MR MONAGHAN**: Yes. There was a sign‑off with the native title agreement but we went to the Namadgi interim board for a—we had engaged with the process happening out in Namadgi. That was the agreement. The whole idea was signing off on the native title, but they then decided to take it to an interim board for the Namadgi reserve. After a couple of years it just stopped. I am not certain what happened there.

**Mr Iglesias**: As far as we are concerned, we are open to exploring what the best way to engage is, whether that is a renewed version of the board or whether it is a broader group that advises not just on Namadgi but on other parts of the parks estate. That is one of the things Mary is taking up with the community.

**MR KEED**: What is the current membership of the Namadgi joint management agreement board?

**Ms Mudford**: There is not a board operating at the moment, so there really is not any membership. That is why I am contacting the signatories of the agreement to initiate the conversation. One of the steps I have taken in reviewing the agreement, where it is at and how the community would like to move forward with that agreement, is that I have emailed a copy to all of the signatories of that agreement so that they can have a look at that before I talk to them. I have also offered to assist them in going through that agreement so that they can fully understand that agreement and where it is at. The community have requested, through the Chrissy Grant review, that that board be reinstated, so work has now commenced to do that.

**MR KEED**: What is the status of the advisory committee to the Namadgi joint management agreement board?

**Mr Iglesias**: Which committee?

**MR KEED**: What is the committee that is looking after that now? You said Mary is part of that team.

**Mr Iglesias**: The team that is leading the re‑engagement is out of the environment division. It is me and Mary working closely together. It is something we have initiated.

**MR KEED**: That answers the first question. And the status is that you are just looking into re‑engagement?

**Mr Iglesias**: Yes.

**Ms Mudford**: It is really up to the community to inform us of how they would like to proceed with it and what they would like to see happen with that agreement.

**Mr Iglesias**: Because neither of us was around at the time when the agreement existed, we are getting to understand what it is, what its purpose is, what its legal standing is, what the options are and where we could take it: whether it is in everyone’s interest to pursue that advisory board again with the signatories, whether we need to broaden that to a bigger group or whether the community is interested in broadening its scope. It really is taking a step back and asking ourselves what we are trying to achieve by a group like this and what is the best outcome for the community.

**MR KEED**: The next question is with regard to the national carp control plan. Is EPSDD going to involve Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people and traditional owners in the national carp control plan? If so, how?

**Mr Iglesias**: The decision has not been made to release this particular virus that will give us amazing control of carp for the first time in recorded history. Environment ministers are meant to make that decision probably by the end of this year. Then it will be another 12 months before the virus is actually released. The commonwealth government is leading the engagement across the country, not just in the Murray‑Darling Basin but also in the other states and territories, with the exception of the NT. I do not think there are carp in the Northern Territory. What we are keen to do as part of our process is to engage with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people. In fact, we have had two public sessions to put forward the idea about what is proposed. One of those sessions Member Walker attended, I know, and you attended as well, from memory.

**MR KEED**: Yes.

**Mr Iglesias**: The idea there was to present the facts but also to challenge what the problems might be and what all members of the community might think about elements of the proposal. Some people may think: “Could the virus jump to humans?” There are people who are concerned about that. People have concerns about the impact on recreational fishing and the impact of how it is going to smell when all these things start dying. There are lots of community members and lots of different issues of concern, and the cultural issue is just as important. I know that the national coordinators have been speaking to the nations of the Murray‑Darling in relation to what they see as their issues. We are open to issues being brought to the table. It really is at the stage in the planning where we are asking for issues. If we were to let this thing go, what will be the issues of concern in the community?

**MR KEED**: My next question is with regard to the Hall bike path that is to be built. What is the time frame for the completion of the Hall bike path, and were registered Aboriginal organisations included in the preservation of heritage artefacts?

**Ms O’Connell**: For the Hall bike path there has been a statement of heritage effects completed as part of that process, which has been submitted to the Heritage Council. What the statement of heritage effects process does is to say, “This development may cause impacts to heritage sites. These are the ways we’re going to mitigate and these are the ways we’re going to look at reasonable and practical alternative options to mitigate impact.” That submission has come in, but it has gone back to TCCS requesting further information, particularly around looking at other options for placement of the bike path that will reduce impacts to the sites.

**MR KEED**: You say “reduce impacts”. What kinds of impacts does that entail?

**Ms O’Connell**: There are subsurface artefacts around that area, and areas of potential artefact deposits: places where excavation has not yet happened but where, from what we know about the area, there is likely to be high density of artefacts. It is about looking at what is in the area and where the scatters are and saying, “If you’re looking to do your bike path through here and that’s going to directly impact it, can you go round or can you even do it in a different area, not in that particular area?” We have requested some further information on other options to explore.

**MR KEED**: That is all the questions from me.

**THE CHAIR**: That is the formal questions. The final part of our process is to check, given the evidence that you have provided, if people have follow‑up questions. I certainly do, but I will check with others first.

**MR WALKER**: Just to give some context to that last question, the elected body have some correspondence in relation to their concerns about where they are building the bike path, and they are finding the same number of artefacts in the area where they are going to build it as they have in other parts of the creek. So I think the issue is around why you are still considering putting it there. Why not just remove it completely? That is the issue.

**Ms O’Connell**: And that is the advice that has gone back: to have a look at some further options, either in another area or, if we are going to go ahead in that area, to see how it can be redesigned to avoid those high density areas.

**MR WALKER**: I have another question, and I do not know if it is relevant to you guys, about Ngunnawal signage.

**Mr Iglesias**: Road signage?

**MR WALKER**: Well, yes.

**Mr Iglesias**: That is TCCS.

**MR WALKER**: Okay. I was just thinking about tourism and stuff like that.

**Dr Brady**: It could be relevant to the parks.

**MR WALKER**: Yes; I will just ask the question. Canberra Airport is now a bigger airport than it was. It is now an international airport—not that it ever was not. I just wondered if tourism would be working with TCCS around signage and/or artwork or stuff like that out at the airport. I know you have to work with the airport because they are a separate entity. Is there any work being done in that space? We do not have signage; we do not have visibility of the Ngunnawal community as people come and go from the city.

**Mr Iglesias**: As people arrive.

**MR WALKER**: And unless you are driving in and out—

**Mr Iglesias**: Are you talking about the airport lounge itself or the surrounds?

**MR WALKER**: Anywhere: up on the roof, on the ground, anywhere.

**Dr Brady**: It is probably not something that is relevant for our directorate. It might be appropriately directed to CMTEDD and tourism, Invest Canberra perhaps.

**MR WALKER**: Has CMTEDD got tourism as well?

**Mr Iglesias**: Yes.

**MR WALKER**: It has everything.

**Dr Brady**: It has everything, yes.

**THE CHAIR**: I am just conscious of time.

**MR WALKER**: Sorry.

**THE CHAIR**: Fred, do you have any other questions?

**MR MONAGHAN**: In relation to Mary and her discussions around having further consultation with the elders council, yes, I would be looking to engage with Mary in the near future. Yes, it is about finding more information around what changes are happening with the new approach, in terms of UNEC being involved with the discussions around Namadgi and management. It is about more engagement.

**THE CHAIR**: Paula? Jo?

**MS CHIVERS**: No.

**THE CHAIR**: Do you have another question?

**MR KEED**: I just have one more question in regard to the career development of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander staff within your directorate. I understand that all ACT government employees undergo performance training. That is correct?

**Mr Reynolds**: Yes.

**MR KEED**: I am just wondering: are the cultural values of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander staff people taken into account in the career development of their employment opportunities?

**Dr Brady**: I will let Chris respond to that one.

**Mr Reynolds**: In our directorate, like all other directorates, there is a whole‑of‑government system around performance and development plans. It is as much about performance as developing individuals. There is nothing to prohibit any supervisor considering relevant cultural development opportunities with the individuals that they are responsible for. There is every opportunity for that through the performance and development plan. The process, the plan—being the document—is literally sitting down with individuals, having discussions about their work needs, their priorities moving forward and their performance, but also it is an opportunity for individuals to raise cultural awareness or development opportunities and for managers to consider that. Our directorate has supported and will continue to support the traineeship program. Daniel provided a commitment there for two extra resources in the year ahead. We have supported and will continue to support that and be a participant in that program.

**Dr Brady**: Mr Keed, just to answer part of your question, if we have people within the directorate who have performance issues—as Chris said, there is the development side, which is equally as important if there are performance issues—across the board we try to understand what the context is for that person, and that includes cultural considerations if it is an Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander employee. Sometimes we recommend that perhaps they may want to talk to someone that we think it might be helpful for them to talk to, and that is across the board. We do not necessarily think that a manager is always the right person for people to talk to about performance and development.

**MR KEED**: Thank you.

**THE CHAIR**: In wrapping up, I have a few questions which, given the type of evidence that has been given today, I assume will be taken on notice. I cannot express in stronger language my disappointment at the status of and understanding around the Namadgi joint management agreement and that, for a decade, a board that has joint responsibility for managing a significant on‑country resource that the government has given to the traditional owners here has failed to meet and you cannot tell us who the membership should be. I am gobsmacked that that is the status of that. How is management of the Namadgi National Park happening if that board is not active and being utilised? It is a legally binding agreement.

**Mr Iglesias**: I can only reiterate the situation as it stands from our perspective. I can tell you that it has not convened since at least 2006, but I will have to check that. The reality is that we have come to the same conclusion: it is something that needs to be addressed. We are committed to—

**THE CHAIR**: I do not know how the management of the place is compliant without it.

**Dr Brady**: I think we need to acknowledge your concern, which you have made quite clear, and maybe that is something that we need to get back to you on with a bit more detail, in acknowledgement of that.

**THE CHAIR**: Thank you. From the small pieces of information you have provided around community engagement, can I ask two questions. First, what work has been done to engage with the broader community as consumers of your services? Secondly, do you have any types of engagement strategies in the directorate that could be utilised to better do that with the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community?

**Dr Brady**: I can start, and Daniel can add to it if he wants to. If I can just clarify, when you refer to the broader community, you mean the broader—

**THE CHAIR**: Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community. Do you have a strategy for the rest of the Canberrans?

**Dr Brady**: Yes, we do. We actually, as a directorate, have been doing a lot of work around engagement. We have been doing a lot of work with CMTEDD, which has been driving a lot of new engagement. We have been trialling social media, through traditional formats of social media. But we have moved more into engagement, where we are doing co‑design. We get focus groups of people; we try to get more of a cross‑section.

**THE CHAIR**: What has been the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander participation rate?

**Dr Brady**: I would have to check on that, if I could come back to you on that.

**THE CHAIR**: Yes.

**Dr Brady**: But we are trying to get a better cross-section. For example, we are looking at something that we want to roll out soon. We have been speaking with people who can help us make sure that we get a cross‑section of the Canberra community across age, gender, culture, income levels and those sorts of things, so that we get more of a representation. We have been moving more into looking at those sorts of methods, looking at co‑design, where we get particular—

**THE CHAIR**: I get the future‑looking stuff. What I am after is what has actually been achieved to date? I want to know how many Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people have participated in it, what you have heard from them and what you have done with it.

**Dr Brady**: Could I take some of that on notice, please? I would just say that mostly when we do our engagement, we do not obligate people to necessarily give us their details. We ask them for their details.

**THE CHAIR**: I get that self‑identification is an issue, but it is going to be pretty self‑evident when the suggestions that they are making are in regard to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander issues. I am just interested if any of those things have been raised by community members and what action has happened with them.

**Dr Brady**: Okay. I will take part of that on notice, please. We will come back to you.

**THE CHAIR**: Thank you. There was a comment made by Mr Wong, and maybe I misheard it, where he might want to check the record. It was a reference to children not attending school and partly that being caused by being in out of home care. If I have misunderstood that, I apologise, but I found the remark ill‑informed, at best. Perhaps I have misunderstood it, but if that has come out wrong, it might be something that you want to check the record to correct.

**Dr Brady**: Is that something that we can clarify now?

**Mr Wong**: Yes.

**THE CHAIR**: I get that what you were trying to say was that you were trying to talk with disengaged youth and with kids that were at risk of disengaging, particularly from the education system, which is why I am saying it in the sense that perhaps I have either misunderstood it or it has come out wrong. But I just want to clarify that it is not your position that kids are not attending school because they are in out of home care.

**Mr Wong**: Yes. I think you are correct; that came out wrong. I was not linking it.

**THE CHAIR**: Excellent, yes.

**Mr Wong**: I correct it for the record.

**THE CHAIR**: And, without hesitation, the programs that you have been running in that space, and the outcomes and the work in that space, are excellent. I did not want one sentence that may have not have come out how you meant it to impact on the actual good work that is happening in that space.

**Mr Wong**: I appreciate that.

**Dr Brady**: Thank you for the opportunity to clarify.

**THE CHAIR**: The other thing that I would seek clarification on is this. In developing the next level of the RAP, could I suggest, if you have not done so already, that that include employment targets, specific Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander strategies, including around engagement. Without that sort of strategy, expecting people to respond to random phone calls and emails—people who are already busy—it is going to be hard to get your issues, which are critically important for many people, to the top of the list of what people are being asked to do.

That being said, if there are no further questions, I thank your officers for their preparation around the generic questions and your appearance here today. I look forward to receiving the responses to the questions on notice.

## Hearing adjourned at 4.40 pm.