**ABORIGINAL AND TORRES STRAIT ISLANDER**

**ELECTED BODY**

**(Reference: Estimates process 2018-2019)**

**Members:**

**MS KATRINA FANNING (Chairperson)**

**MS JOANNE CHIVERS (Deputy Chairperson)**

**MS PAULA McGRADY**

**MS CAROLINE HUGHES**

**MR MAURICE WALKER**

**MR FRED MONAGHAN**

**MR JACOB KEED**

**TRANSCRIPT OF EVIDENCE**

**CANBERRA**

**THURSDAY, 28 MARCH 2019**

**Committee contact officer:**

Ms Margaret Beattie

ATSIEB Secretariat

Office for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Affairs

Community Services Directorate

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## APPEARANCES

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

**Canberra Institute of Technology** **38**

**Community Services Directorate** **52**

**Environment, Planning and Sustainable Development Directorate** **87-113**

## The elected body met at 9.35 am.

Appearances:

Chief Minister, Treasury and Economic Development Directorate

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

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

Arthy, Ms Kareena, Deputy Director-General, Economic Development

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

Nicol, Mr David, Under Treasurer

Konti, Ms Bettina, Chief Digital Officer

Wright, Mr Robert, Executive Group Manager, Corporate

Andersen, Ms Josephine, Executive Branch Manager, Skills Canberra

Tyler, Ms Sam, Executive Branch Manager, artsACT

Kelley, Ms Rebecca, Executive Branch Manager, Sport and Recreation, Economic Development

Harrison, Mr Craig, Executive Branch Manager, Innovation, Industry and Investment, Economic Development

Strachan, Mr Shaun, Deputy Under Treasurer, Commercial Services and Infrastructure

**THE CHAIR**: In starting today, we are fortunate on the elected body to have two Ngunnawal people. I would like to ask Caroline to provide a welcome to Country for us today.

**MS HUGHES**: Thank you, Katrina. Yumma, everyone. That means hello in Ngunnawal. I am really honoured to be here today. I thank Uncle Fred for his permission to provide welcome to Country. Yumma Ngunnawal Yumalindi Ngunna Yerrabi Kooralili Mungangai. That means hello, and welcome to Ngunnawal Country. I am really proud, as a Ngunnawal woman and an elder sitting on the elected body, to be here with you all, sharing the next couple of days. In particular, I acknowledge the other elected body members and pay respect to your Elders and ancestors.

I also acknowledge Kathy and your team and the rest of the community that are in the room with us—in particular, Margaret, Nicki and Brianna. I am looking forward to the hearings and hearing more about what is going to be happening.

**THE CHAIR**: Thanks, Caroline. I really appreciate that. For the record, I am Katrina Fanning and I hold the privileged position of sitting on the elected body and at present being the chairperson. I would also like to pay my respects to the Ngunnawal people. It has been a privilege to live on their Country for the last couple of decades and enjoy meeting and working with them, doing a whole range of activities. I recognise their continuous connection to this place and the undertaking of both cultural and contemporary roles of leadership across the lands that we all leave our footprints on now.

In the room with us today, I have noticed Jon Stanhope. From an elected body perspective, we exist because of your leadership. I wanted to acknowledge that. Thank you for being here. I know you have other roles within our community now and that you are probably wearing different hats. In the last couple of days nationally there have been conversations about other jurisdictions where Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities do not have such structures. What has been set up here and put in place is very highly regarded by many of our people. I just wanted to acknowledge that.

Thank you, Kathy, for making the time today to meet with us and for bringing so many of your team with you. The last six months in particular have been a very busy time in our relationship, with respect to resetting the next agreement, the preparation for the joint council work, and, of course, preparing for events like the hearings today.

I want to mention a couple of things in starting the hearings process. I emphasise that, for us, in preparing these questions, we seek questions directly from the community. We also draw them from conversations that we have in both formal and informal settings. The reason for the flow of our questions is to make sure that the questions that have come from community members in particular have priority in that listing, to make sure that their voice is put through. It might not necessarily always flow in the way a directorate is structured, but it is important for us to reflect the things that we are responsible for, which, in particular, includes providing that voice.

There are questions on the table for you today. You will be able to note the flow of our questions. Some are generic questions. That is probably because there has been some movement regarding when we set the generic questions or that we wish to seek a little more clarity regarding the responses. I appreciate that some of those are very similar, but we will work through that as we go.

Kathy, do you want to make any opening remarks before we go to questions?

**Ms Leigh**: Just briefly, if I may. First of all, I too would like to acknowledge the Ngunnawal people. I would particularly like to acknowledge all of the guidance that we receive from the elected body. As Head of Service and head of CMTEDD, I particularly value all of the assistance that you provide to us, Katrina, both in our regular meetings and outside those meetings. I have personally found that to be very helpful.

I also always like, as Head of Service, to acknowledge the contribution that all of the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander members of our service make to the quality of our service, whether it is in providing services out to the community on behalf of our ministers or in giving advice to ministers. That is a point I always like to make on any occasion when I have the opportunity to speak.

I have been trying to learn a brief acknowledgement of Country in Ngunnawal. Katrina heard me the other day at an SES leadership event, but I will not embarrass myself with the elected body because I still have a lot of practice to do on that. That is something that I am keen to get better at doing.

I see CMTEDD as having two roles. There is the substantive role we have in supporting the government in the services that are provided to the community and the policies of the government in terms of our broader community, and there is the role we have in skilling the public service to be better able to deliver those services and policy advice and in how the government uses its resources.

On each of those categories, I expect you to measure us in terms of how we support the government and how we skill ourselves and use the government’s resources to pursue its objectives to improve outcomes for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people.

In terms of the substantive area, there is policy, cabinet and treasury, in terms of supporting the government on whole-of-government strategic matters; then there is our economic development area in particular, in terms of business employment, training for employment, arts and sport. Those latter categories also have potential business and employment aspects.

I thought it might be useful; that is how I see it overall. As Head of Service, I see myself very much as having a responsibility to walk the talk and set the standard for the service, in our own endeavours, to have a better cultural understanding regarding how we go about our role as public servants.

**THE CHAIR**: Before I ask the first set of questions, I do have one other acknowledgement that I want to make in our general opening. This is not the first elected body to recognise the work of the previous memberships that got us the platform that we have been able to work off over the last 12 months. I understand that some previous chair people will be in the room at different times. I want to formally recognise that we are building on the good work and goodwill that have occurred previously.

**Ms Leigh**: Apparently, with the way that the running sheet was set out with the morning tea break, our economic development colleagues misunderstood it. Often, at estimates, economic development is separate. They thought they were starting at 11.15, after morning tea, so they are on their way over now. That is the explanation; I am sorry.

**THE CHAIR**: That makes sense. That is probably more my responsibility than that of others. As we go through things, even in our first question you will see that there is a part that is probably for Ms Arthy, but we will come back to that once they are available.

One of the things that we as a group have decided to do with our first lot of questions is to note that we are very keen on the new agreement that has been signed off. I refer in particular to the first lot of action plans. We want to say to each of the directorates that, for us, there are a few key things in your action plans on which we want to make sure that progress starts now. There are some big things to achieve even in 18 months, let alone in the 10 years of the agreement.

The first one that we want to ask about relates to Boomanulla. I appreciate that that is probably in Ms Arthy’s remit, so we will come back to that when she is here. The second one around those priorities is to get a sense, over the next 100 days, of what activities will be undertaken in implementing a new Indigenous procurement policy.

**Ms Leigh**: I am pleased in that I feel we are finally getting some runs on the board on this. I think that we got off to a much slower start than any of us would have liked, but I am pleased that we are now making progress on that. I will ask Shaun Strachan to come to the table. He has responsibility for this.

**Mr Strachan**: Chair, as you would be aware, we have spent an inordinate amount of time over probably the last six to eight months looking at the characteristics of what would make a more successful, progressive procurement policy in relation to the procurement policy generally.

The key measures that we have been concentrating on are focused on issues such as the number of businesses competing for work, those that are engaged to deliver work and the value of work. As you may remember, the formative measure was really just an indication of our one per cent target. We have been able to engage very progressively over the last six to eight months. We started in around October and November last year, in terms of direct consultations with peak bodies.

**THE CHAIR**: Mr Strachan, just in the interests of time, the elected body is briefed on the activity up to now. What I am particularly looking at is this: in the next 100 days, what can we see in the procurement policy area?

**Mr Strachan**: Over the next couple of months we will be moving the policy work into, essentially, a cabinet submission. We will be moving that through cabinet and having the new policy in place by 1 July.

**THE CHAIR**: Excellent. I know that in initial conversations we have probably not spelled this out clearly. In that extensive approach to broadening this out, could you confirm that, at least as it stands at the moment, the intent is not just for our local businesses but also includes procurement for the service organisations?

**Mr Strachan**: Yes, I can.

**THE CHAIR**: In the generic questions, there were some responses about outcomes of procurement over the last 12 months or so. Could you clarify this for me: I understood there was an outcome of about 1½ to two per cent in the procurement targets. It seemed that that included Indigenous and diversity suppliers. Are you able to separate those out?

**Mr Strachan**: From my understanding, it is Indigenous suppliers.

**THE CHAIR**: Not for the procurement policy, sorry; the outcomes that were provided in the generic response. There was a number provided for outcomes up to now, in moving forward. It was unclear to me whether that 1½ per cent related particularly to Indigenous outcomes or across the diversity range. I want to understand whether we are talking about a broader cohort or Indigenous specific.

**Mr Nicol**: We will take that on notice and try to get an answer today and confirm that today, chair.

**THE CHAIR**: The second of the things from the agreement we want to see some action on very quickly is that we want to understand what work is being undertaken over the next hundred days by the central agency of ACT government to develop the processes and mechanisms to embed the cultural integrity commitments of government.

**Ms** **Leigh**: I might ask Ms Whitten to respond to that.

**Ms Whitten**: Our area has a responsibility across the service for a number of programs. By June we are looking particularly at implementing some of the budget initiatives that were part of the 2018-19 budget. That includes some mentor training with a specific cultural focus for both Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people and non-Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people. We are anticipating undertaking that work in May of 2019. That will involve 50 people across the service.

In May we will also be undertaking an Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander career development and attention program that will involve up to 40 Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander staff. Twenty will be at the administrative service officer level and 20 will be at the senior officer level.

In June 2019 we will be rolling out a leadership program for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people that will involve 20 Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander employees at the senior officer level and also into the executive level. They are the programs that have been funded through the budget. In addition, we have commenced conversations with other providers within the ACT about other programs. We have just commenced those conversations, so I cannot define whether that will be delivered within the next hundred days or a bit later.

**THE CHAIR**: A big part of the equation is growing senior Indigenous leadership in the ACT government, so I am very happy to hear about those programs. The other side of the equation, though, is how the system changes within the ACT government—whether it is through policies or system structures that address systemic racism—and how we measure whether we are better able to provide culturally appropriate services. Is any work being done around how we hold people accountable to these concepts?

Having more Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people at the decision-making table is a very good start, but part of the problem to fix is not the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people; it is the other part of the system. In the next hundred days or as part of the action plan—I see this as an across-government approach—how does the service intend to apply the standards and hold itself accountable to improving its cultural integrity?

**Ms Whitten**: I do not have a—

**THE CHAIR**: That is probably very wide for you.

**Ms Whitten**: It is, and there are two aspects to that. At a whole-of-service level it is something we still need to undertake and develop. Individually within directorates I anticipate that some of those issues might be discussed during the development or refreshment of reconciliation action plans. At a whole-of-service level we have still got work to do on it.

**Mr Wright**: One of the initiatives being undertaken in policy and cabinet is the recruitment of a new identified position so that we can further ensure Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander perspectives are represented in policy advice to chief minister and cabinet. Whilst I understand that that is one individual, the influence on broader policy decision-making is a good start.

**THE CHAIR**: Certainly. In conversations with Mr Nicol and other people in CMTEDD we have been talking about the fact that new budget proposals that come forward do not have to be Indigenous-specific in order to test whether there will be outcomes for our community and opportunities for our services organisations. They are the types of things we are looking for—so that we are not just in a silo off to the side but that it is business as usual within the structure itself. So that is a good start.

**Ms Whitten**: One of the other areas we are looking at exploring is unconscious bias training. Once again, it is very much at the beginning of conversations on what that might look like.

**THE CHAIR**: We have some training questions later, but is there an expectation across the service for that that type of training to become compulsory, rather than opt‑in? The issue for me with the opt-in is that we are potentially only training the people who are not the issue.

**Ms Leigh**: If I could respond to that indirectly, at the moment we have not made it mandatory but I think that is certainly something we should consider. At the moment we measure how many people we ensure attend those training sessions. As we have explained, we have different types of training sessions.

I think the other way we do it is by walking the talk at the senior level. I have made sure I have attended our CMTEDD cultural awareness training and I have made it clear that I have done that. That is an indication of my own expectation of everyone.

At our CMTEDD senior executive leadership planning day in December we had a significant segment which Ros Brown helped us with on Ngunnawal language. We had Doug Marmion helping us to understand some of the background to Ngunnawal language, and that is where I began to learn a short acknowledgement in Ngunnawal.

The other thing we are currently planning is a session for all directors-general and deputy directors-general to have a day on cultural awareness and competency. Again, it is my view that if we ensure all directors-general and deputy directors-general think it is sufficiently important to take a day out together to do that training then that sends a really important signal to the whole service.

I agree with you about looking at whether we make it compulsory and who we get to those sessions and that managers are conscious about who in their staff is attending those sessions. I also think showing the standards in our own behaviour is a powerful way to get that message across.

**Ms Whitten**: An additional area is our respect, equity and diversity training that has been in place for some time. Cultural awareness is part of that training and it is mandatory for all staff to attend.

**THE CHAIR**: The point of our questions on these is that it is a good base, a start, but it is embedding that into systems and policies that will get us a more sustainable approach.

A priority for us was getting the action plans under the agreement sorted so that we did not just have an agreement but we had things ready to start. The elected body has seen the upgrades and the turf laid at Boomanulla, but it would be no surprise to you that our next level of interest is around the level of community control for the oval. Can you give us an indication of any activity the community might expect in the process for transitioning the oval back to community control?

**Ms Arthy**: As you know, our priority at the moment has been on getting the oval working and ready to go. We have been putting a lot of effort into that. I know you will be talking to TCCS about the detail of what is happening there. In terms of the broader issues around governance, it is the government’s commitment to make sure that it is returned. As you and I have spoken about on a number of occasions, the process by which we undertake those discussions will be important. I believe Ministers Berry and Stephen-Smith wrote to the elected body seeking advice about the best way to consult.

In the meantime, in the background I am just starting to do some preparation around what some possible governance models could look like from a very high-level point of view so that as soon as we get the advice back about the most appropriate way to consult we can then come together and work out how we shape a process that will get an answer to achieve an outcome for the long-term transfer back into the community. That is in very broad terms. As I said, I would appreciate any advice you might have. I am happy to talk to you separately about how we do this so that we make it a very positive experience.

**THE CHAIR**: Absolutely. The elected body has had involvement across the different directorates for the different levels of activity that have been happening. The reason for the question is twofold: firstly, the commitment around community control for the oval has been public and, secondly, one of the issues in the recent past has been around clarity of expectations in those processes. The intention is for there to be a new 99-year lease rather than just the remainder of the last arrangement, if that makes sense. You might not be able to answer that today, but that is asked of us quite a lot. That will help to determine community approaches to governance based on how long a term the lease might be available for.

**Ms Arthy**: As you rightly identified, I cannot answer that here and now, but when we sit down and talk this through, that should be on the table. Whatever proposal it is, I can take it to government for consideration. For me, it is about how we co-design this. It will only work if it works for the community and for government. I am not proposing having a pre-prepared model or anything like that; it is about sitting down and working this through. We need to ensure everything is done properly so that this will endure. That is the main thing I would like to see come out of this.

**THE CHAIR**: Certainly the first step is making sure that whatever governance arrangements take on the oval they are not inheriting something that needs work done. This is a priority for us and it is also one of the issues we are asked about or contacted about very regularly. So, while we are working on it, the governance discussion needs to be a priority over the next one hundred days.

**Ms Arthy**: Absolutely. If you are getting questions from the community feel free to put them through to me and I can at least try to provide you with some answers if there is information you do not already know.

**THE CHAIR**: It is more about the transition arrangements, but thank you.

We will move to our second lot of questions. This goes back to Ms Whitten’s area perhaps: how many Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people have been part of selection panels for the directorate in the past 12 months?

**Ms Leigh**: Ms Whitten has whole-of-service workforce issues and Mr Wright has CMTEDD workforce issues.

**Mr Wright**: I can probably answer both those questions. At the moment our current recruitment system does not record that information; it is just not sophisticated enough. We are in the process of purchasing a new HRIMS that will allow for the recording of that type of information, but we do not have that information at this time. That is across all the diversity work, so it is not just Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander work.

**THE CHAIR**: I understand that is a commitment in your RAP. So what mechanisms do you have to at least seek to have Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people on panels as they come up? You might not have the numbers, but is there a process built where you have a bank of current employees that potentially do this? Is there is a process that helps to facilitate this at least?

**Mr Wright**: Of our 40 Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander staff, 21 are in identified positions as of December. When we have an identified position we try and ensure there is an Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander staff member on the panels. That is one of the things we do in that space.

We are also engaged with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander employment providers. One example is Shine People Solutions. For the policy and cabinet role which I spoke about earlier, we were looking for, and we got support for finding, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander candidates through that recruitment provider.

**THE CHAIR**: Mr Wright, I understand that Shine People are a Brisbane-based business. How do they have an understanding of the ACT context or community talent that might be available?

**Mr Wright**: In working with them, we have found them to be very good, to date, in terms of doing that. We have just completed three days of our RAP development workshop, commencing on Monday. We are using an Engoori process, working with Scott Gorringe of Murrimatters in doing that. One of the things that we talked about in developing the new RAP is how we engage more effectively with community and looking at reverse marketing some of those positions rather than doing it in the old‑fashioned way where we put out a job ad and then hope that Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander applicants apply for it, because we know it is a competitive market out there. Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander staff are sought after, particularly through our entry-level program schemes, and we need more effective mechanisms for that.

**THE CHAIR**: The next question I have goes to one of the key areas of the agreement: trying to address systemic racism within, in this case, government systems but more broadly as an issue for our community. How many incidents of racism are generally reported within the directorate each year, and how might they be reported?

**Mr Wright**: In the last 12 months we have not had any incidents of racism brought to HR. In terms of how they would be reported, we have a number of different recording systems there. We have RiskMan. We have our REDCO scheme and our RED executive sponsor who gets out there and talks about not just racism but also broader discrimination matters.

**THE CHAIR**: Are they all internal systems, or are they for citizens to be able to raise an issue?

**Mr Wright**: They are all internal systems, the ones that I have referred to. Matters of discrimination follow the path that we would go through for bullying and harassment complaints. We do a preliminary assessment if those matters come up and then we follow through the requirements of the enterprise agreement in section 9 and the code of conduct and the like. Those matters have been taken very seriously.

**THE CHAIR**: For us, one of the issues potentially is that this issue of racism is not even seen as having a clear pathway for how we might raise that—perhaps how for a single mum with four kids who has had a contact within CMTEDD it might be obvious how to raise that. If that is not part of the normal directorate practice now, I appreciate that, but it would be something of interest to us into the future. I do not want to guess how many incidents may or may not have occurred, but to have confidence that the community and staff understand that there is a process that includes being able to talk about racism would be of interest to us.

The next question for us is: could the directorate please provide an overview of what additional resources, if any, have been allocated to recruit for and support the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander employee target of 407 for the ACT public service, noting the leadership type programs that you have already mentioned—if there is anything additional to that.

**Ms Whitten**: At a whole-of-service level? The 470 is across the entire service.

**THE CHAIR**: Yes. I was not expecting to black out CMTEDD.

**Ms Whitten**: In the budget for 2018-19, the government funded 0.6 of an ASO5 position and 0.6 of a senior officer C position in terms of the employment programs that we have talked about. That is some investment. But I expect that each directorate would also contribute to that answer in terms of the 407 across the service.

**THE CHAIR**: So it is a decentralised approach to that?

**Ms Whitten**: Yes, exactly.

**Ms Leigh**: On that decentralisation, every director-general has in their performance agreement a specific requirement to meet these targets. There are not very many specific requirements in performance agreements, so that is an indication of how seriously it is taken. I understand that at the moment we are 10 off. This is a target for the end of June and I understand we are 10 off, so the race is on.

**THE CHAIR**: That must be painfully close for you. We will certainly ask each of the directorates some questions about their individual approaches, because we appreciate that the management of staff is done outside your remit. It was more about if there was a whole-of-government approach specifically, particularly for entry-level programs or how, potentially, some of the apprenticeship programs that you are involved in might be connecting into public sector employment.

**Ms Whitten**: We have a range of programs, which I think we have included in some of our generic answers.

**THE CHAIR**: Yes, you have. It was more about if there was anything above and beyond that.

**Ms Whitten**: Only the programs that have been funded this year, which we have been planning and doing.

**Ms Leigh**: We could, if you like, give some more specific information about CMTEDD’s part of that. Robert could help you with that if you would like that.

**THE CHAIR**: If you have it, yes.

**Mr Wright**: One of the questions you had down here, chair, was regarding the pathway program. I think it is at question—

**THE CHAIR**: I have some traineeship questions at about 17.

**Ms Whitten**: Question 16 is the pathways.

**THE CHAIR**: It is 16, yes.

**Mr Wright**: Yes, 16 is the one. It is not a volunteer program. They are paid.

**THE CHAIR**: Just for clarity for other people at the table who might not be as nerdy as me, these are the 10 positions that were doing work out at the stadium?

**Mr Wright**: Correct. We originally went out with 10. It quickly moved to nine. The nine were employed at GIO Stadium and doing bump-in days for the Brumbies and the Canberra Raiders and then the bump-out at the end of that. We had four students who we got out of ACT high schools and colleges and also five long-term people who we got from various recruitment agencies through the commonwealth government’s Jobactive scheme. We have employed them over the past 12 months. You have asked a question here about how many of those got into ongoing roles. Three of those have already got into ongoing roles and we are hoping there will be a fourth very soon.

We also went back and had a talk to those participants about what could make this better and how we could work with them better. They received training before they went into that. They got white card training, they got first aid training and all those kinds of things that make someone job ready and more employable, not just within that particular job but also in other jobs both within ACT government and elsewhere. But one of the things they said was, “Where’s the pathway that you go to beyond that particular role?” So one of the things we have been looking at in our RAP development workshop for our next RAP, which will be a stretch RAP, is about how that pathway connects. One of the things we have been thinking about is the interaction with Australian Aboriginal school-based apprenticeships and that potentially being a good pathway which also provides a qualification at the end of it.

**THE CHAIR**: Excellent. Sorry for my misunderstanding. Just so that we are clear, those positions are paid casual positions?

**Mr Wright**: They are paid casual positions.

**THE CHAIR**: And there is the conversation rate of almost four out of nine?

**Mr Wright**: Almost four, yes.

**THE CHAIR**: Excellent.

**Ms Leigh**: This was a new idea, an attempt at trialling something different. I said to Robert when he came into this role, “We have got to do better. We’re doing all these things. What else could we do that we haven’t thought of before?” And he said, “How about we give this a try?” I would just like to acknowledge that.

**THE CHAIR**: That it ends up with certification that is easily transferrable to other roles, trying casual employment before both parties are locked in. Apologies for misunderstanding about the casual nature of that employment; that there is a focus on the pathway part was what I was particularly interested in.

**Mr Wright**: Absolutely, yes. That is our next step. We had a day when we got what we refer to as the GIO Stadium mob together. We got some employers in the room. We got some educators from TAFEs and the like to have a bit of a talk to them about how they could make the progression into different careers and what opportunities were available. That was a really good day. We have increased our Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander staffing numbers over the 2018 year by 13, but we can do better and we will continue to do better.

**THE CHAIR**: The next question I have relates to government capital works projects. Is there an ability to tell us how many Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander businesses and employment outcomes might have been achieved through the capital works program for people in our community?

**Mr Strachan**: Chair, I will be able answer the question in part. In terms of the financial year 2018-19, or from 1 July to 27 March 2019, we have had 14 contracts with eight Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander businesses, worth about $14 million. That is including both goods and services and capital. Of that, the majority of the contracts have been in the construction industry, for about $12.5 million to date.

**THE CHAIR**: Is that the total value of the contracts? Is there a way to know whether that was subcontracted away from those businesses?

**Mr Strachan**: Chair, I am happy to say that it is the total contract value. In relation to the profile, I can tell you who actually has participated to date: Adam Douglas Shipp, trading as Yurbay, Gulanga Group Pty Ltd, who you might be familiar with, and Curijo Pty Ltd.

**THE CHAIR**: I am actually asking about capital works programs.

**Mr Strachan**: In relation to the profile, I would have to come back to you and confirm the mix of that, but at the moment it is $12.5 million over 14 contracts.

**THE CHAIR**: Thank you. Again, we are jumping around. We are trying to give priority to questions and where they have come from. The next question is basically around the cultural centre. We are seeking some advice on the establishment of some new strategic objectives, if you like, from our point of view on how to maximise the use of the cultural centre for its intended purpose.

**Ms Arthy**: There are two elements to the cultural centre. There is the overall precinct, which is the responsibility of CSD. I imagine that you would have the same question for them this afternoon. The other part that we are working on is how we can use the cultural centre as a hub for Indigenous cultural tourism.

We have been talking with you as well as with a couple of Indigenous tourism operators, Tyronne Bell and Adam Shipp, for a number of months now, working out what can we do together to make Yarramundi a real focal point for cultural tourism and to really showcase the offering. We know that internationally tourists want to see local Indigenous culture, yet we do not have an offering for local Indigenous tourism.

We have amazing national stories at the museum and elsewhere, but we do not have a local one. So we worked together to put a proposal to the commonwealth government under their building better regions fund. Unfortunately, we were told early last week that we were not successful. We met with Mr Bell last week to try to talk through what now. If we do not have the commonwealth money, what can we do?

While we try and find sources of money—the money was to do a proper business case that would involve consultation with the community, looking at the feasibility of what could happen there from a tourism point of view—we are looking at where we can source alternative funding for that work, but in the meantime we are figuring out whether there are any baby steps that we can take now.

The thing that we are working on with Mr Bell is whether there are ways that within the current footprint that we can have it as an attractive meeting point for the Indigenous tours that are run by Dharwra. Is there a way that we can provide some form of visitor desk so that people who are on those tours can actually get information on tourism? We are looking at the feasibility of whether we can locate Thunderstone and the Dharwra tours at Yarramundi at the moment while we sort out the longer term thing.

**THE CHAIR**: The intention, longer term, is for that to be open to a diverse range of operators?

**Ms Arthy**: Yes, from a tourism point of view. I can only talk about the tourism side of it.

**THE CHAIR**: Yes.

**Ms Arthy**: Definitely. The focus at the moment is on working with the Ngunnawal people to work out that as a cultural hub there.

**THE CHAIR**: That is right and proper, yes.

**Ms Arthy**: We are relying on advice from Mr Bell about when we bring in other people for the discussion. I know that he has started talking to other members of the families. I believe that in the near future he is going to start introducing them to me as well so that we can at least start talking about what the possibilities are. As I say, while we try and source the funding that we need to do the bigger work, we are looking at what we can do to actually make something happen to get things moving.

**MR WALKER**: Are there any plans to liaise with the United Ngunnawal Elders Council on the tourism aspect? I understand that Tyronne is a pretty good source. He has been doing a lot of good things out in the community, but there are more Ngunnawal Elders and people that need to be engaged in that conversation.

**Ms Arthy**: Yes. I am relying on guidance about at what point we go and talk to other people. If I think about it in two ways, we have the formal process that we are trying to get the funding for. I think, as part of that, that we would be identifying who we need to talk to. Right now, it is at a very informal stage, which is just us talking with Tyronne and a couple of others about what is possible.

If there is a desire from the community to come into that, I am more than happy to go and talk to them at this very informal stage. But definitely once we get to a formal process, I would say yes. I am taking an approach of respecting how fast we go with this, along with how the people that we are dealing with want to take it. There is no reason why we cannot; I am just taking it a bit slowly to make sure we engage at the right time, under the right circumstances. I am very happy to talk to anyone about this because it is a great idea and we really want to make this happen.

**MR WALKER**: And it is more about our still being at concept and design stage; there is no locked in monopoly or—

**Ms Arthy**: That is right. No, we are just really at the what-if stage, at the “what is possible?” stage.

**THE CHAIR**: The next question is on the Centre for Data Excellence. Can you explain to us what the strategy is and how it is communicated or how the centre collects data that we could use as business intelligence around outcomes and opportunities for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people? Some of the evidence already today is that we do what we can but we do not have a good picture. I was wondering whether the Centre for Data Excellence has taken it on board or has had the opportunity to improve our business intelligence in that way.

**Ms Konti**: Absolutely; the Centre for Data Excellence and the Data Analytics Centre are also part of our Office of the Chief Digital Officer group. As you are probably aware, the government made the decision to invest in a data lake and the Data Analytics Centre in order to support better outcomes for the community. To do that, it is really about being able to glean insights about the effectiveness of our policies and programs, and the outcomes.

You might have heard Mr Wright mention before that one of the issues that we have is the amount of data that we actually collect in our day-to-day business systems. We did not have data about the number of—I cannot remember what it was, but I am referring to the conversation before. The data lake is not exactly a lake; it is more like a series of little ponds. So there is security and data protection around the collections that come into there. The data that we make available that comes into the Centre for Data Excellence is data that we have across ACT government at the moment.

There are a number of opportunities to glean a range of insights and business intelligence in a way that is, I guess, safer and more secure than it might be otherwise. I can give an example of a project that we work with the Community Services Directorate on. It is about family safety and identifying risks of recurrence of domestic violence incidents by being able to better and faster understand the information that, frankly, is already shared between police, community safety and some of the domestic violence service provider organisations.

By making that information available and automated into the data lake, we are able to have our staff spending more time on identifying and managing the risks than they are on keying information into spreadsheets. That is kind of the strategy. The data lake and my CDO team are really working in partnership with the directorates. In respect of the governance arrangements, there is a data steering committee that makes decisions on what are the priority projects that we are going to work on in any three‑month period. Then it is a case of working with the particular directorate to ensure that they can get access to the data, bring it into the data lake and actually glean those insights.

We are also, as part of this strategy, working with all of the directorates to create a whole-of-government data governance and management framework. This will not only help us manage and govern the data that is in the data lake and be able to be open and transparent with the community about the work that government is doing there, but in addition we will be able to ensure that we have consistent ways to collect information from the community, consistent ways of being able to understand how we store and use that data in the day-to-day business systems, not just in the data lake. I might stop there and see where you would like to take—

**THE CHAIR**: For me that is a good overview of how the lake works and the data itself. What I am particularly interested in is this: of those priorities that the steering committee sets, is there anything that relates to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people? In looking at the integrity of data, has that identified question been addressed so that we can have a consistency of collection that is quite often problematic for us in understanding our community’s interaction with government?

**Ms Konti**: Yes. That is the work that we are doing at the moment through the development of the whole-of-government data governance arrangements. We know that the ability to identify Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders really depends on the program or the business system and how that was created in the first place. This provides us with an opportunity to be consistent about that. That said, there are consent—

**THE CHAIR**: Yes, it will not fix self-identification issues and those sorts of things.

**Ms Konti**: Right.

**THE CHAIR**: But as long as the system, as it is being refreshed or—

**Ms Konti**: Is able to capture.

**THE CHAIR**: Is able to where—

**Ms Konti**: That is exactly right.

**THE CHAIR**: people want to provide it.

**Ms Konti**: That is exactly right. That is where we are trying to take this.

**THE CHAIR**: Excellent.

**MS McGRADY**: I have a question around the data in relation to family violence. Do you break that down to, say, sexual assaults as well as separating that from either domestic violence or family violence?

**Ms Konti**: I would have to take that question on notice and request that information from Community Services.

**MS McGRADY**: Thank you.

**THE CHAIR**: Our interest is, of course, the same as most of your consumers; it helps us to find hotspots and connections that we probably cannot get from the silos.

**Ms Konti**: Indeed.

**THE CHAIR**: Our next question is in the arts space, which you may or may not have an interest in, Ms Konti. I understand that fairly recently you have been able to fill the Indigenous arts officer position. In fact, I think we are lucky to have that person in the room. I would like to get a sense, for that role, of what is being defined as the measure of success for that officer to achieve? What can the community expect that role to be delivering?

**Ms Tyler**: Brenda Gifford is the officer, and she is with us today. She started on 7 January in artsACT. Her position is, in the first instance, looking at delivery of the action plan that was released following the consultation period that we had during 2017 and 2018. Part of that is around working with community across government and with our Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander arts network to deliver programs that are looking at supporting culture, connecting community and telling stories. There are also particular elements of those programs that are focused on Ngunnawal stories and making sure that there is connection to Elders in the Ngunnawal community.

The other programs that we are looking at are focusing on children and young people; a festival; the Elders program; and an accord that is looking at working with national institutions and local arts organisations around connecting Aboriginal artists to those institutions. We are also looking at one on creative businesses and how we can support those. Those programs are still in the draft phrase at this point. They are with the network for their feedback. Those ideas all came from that consultation with the network and were based on the communication that we had.

**THE CHAIR**: I am mindful that time is getting away from me, but could I draw us to the pointy end? All those activities sound reasonable and sound like things that our community are interested in being involved in. I am interested in the impact collectively. Is it about participation levels? Is it as an economic opportunity for us? What is the key impact that the program is trying to achieve?

**Ms Tyler**: We do not have any defined measures of success in that regard, but, yes, we are looking at connection to community; increased participation in the grants programs that we already have; increased participation within the arts organisations that we fund; opportunities for our Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander artists to work on their arts practice and their cultural practice to consider whether or not they would like to pursue their arts in a different way; and also economic development opportunities. It is all of those things.

**THE CHAIR**: Do they all fit nicely within the agreement and things that we want to be accountable for in the short and long term?

**Ms Tyler**: Yes, absolutely.

**THE CHAIR**: Part of the area in the agreement that talks about lifelong learning is absolutely for our community to be able to improve their education at any time of life. But the other key component of it is for the rest of the community to understand Ngunnawal history and culture particularly. Again, it comes back to: it is not just us; we are not the problem. Is there a focus in these programs on not just participation for us but opportunity for the broader community to get a better understanding of this place?

**Ms Tyler**: Yes.

**THE CHAIR**: Excellent. Thank you. In the same area, in arts—I do not know if it is you, Ms Tyler, or someone else—within the annual report and in the generic questions, there were some answers around the arts exchange pilot program with Wellington.

**Ms Tyler**: Yes.

**THE CHAIR**: In that same vein, around impact and what that role is trying to do—I understand there is a broader sister city relationship and things—for that opportunity, I am interested in knowing what there is so that we could go back to the community and say, “This is going achieve this for us.”

**Ms Tyler**: It does look at the sister city agreement around cultural exchange specifically but also at programs that support opportunities for Indigenous people from both countries. That is part of the sister city agreement. In terms of the outcomes for artists, it is around development of their artistic and cultural practice, insight into the cultural practices from each place, the connections that they make within those spaces, and a public outcome. For each of the artists that have been selected in the pilot, there will be opportunity to connect within the local arts sector and with the community more broadly.

**THE CHAIR**: Can I just double-check something? It is my lack of knowledge; it is not a criticism. When you say “each of the artists”, is there one Indigenous artist as part of a larger cohort or is there a group of Indigenous artists?

**Ms Tyler**: We ran an expression of interest process. There is one Aboriginal artist going to Wellington and there is one Maori artist coming to Canberra for the pilot.

**THE CHAIR**: Will there be an opportunity for the local artist when they come back to share that more broadly with people and also whilst hosting the Maori artist—a broader connection with the community?

**Ms Tyler**: We are working on the program now. That will be hosted by Gorman House Arts Centre. We are looking at that program in terms of a connection with the arts network, with local Aboriginal people and with the other institutions here. So absolutely.

**THE CHAIR**: Do we have a rough idea of when the exchange may take place?

**Ms Tyler**: They are coming at the end of May.

**THE CHAIR**: Perfect timing, really, with Reconciliation Week. I want to go to something very different: the women in trades programs.

**Ms Arthy**: That is me.

**THE CHAIR**: Again, with that impact lens in mind, the women in trades program is far broader than just for the Indigenous community. I am wondering if you could give us an understanding of not just the outcomes as they might stand now—I understand that with any new approach to this it can take a while for the numbers to be at the level that you want—but what is the approach of more Indigenous or Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women’s involvement in this trade program.

**Ms Arthy**: I will hand over to Ms Andersen, who might have more detail, but as an overarching comment, the process by which this program was set was to go out for expressions of interest from a whole range of people about different projects. We are doing rolling programs. We are always open to ideas about how we can improve it, particularly how we can better target programs to meet the needs of Indigenous women. In terms of the current projects, I will hand over to Ms Andersen, who will have more detail.

**Ms Andersen**: We have run one round of the women in trades program. At this point we do not have the reports from those programs, so I cannot report specifically on the participation of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women, but we do know that there have been some really impressive outcomes from the programs that have run. As to the other detail, I will have to take that on notice. We would hopefully get that to you shortly.

**THE CHAIR**: What might help as to the context and the reason for these questions is this. Going back to the procurement policy and other opportunities and things in action plans, it would seem to me that over the 10 years of the agreement, if you got to the end of the 10 years and had women who came through the women in trades program and then either had their own business or were working with businesses who were getting the opportunities through the procurement of government, that seems to be a better pathway of involvement. I am trying to put that on the radar for upskilling people for the opportunities that are coming over the next decade.

**Ms Andersen**: Absolutely.

**THE CHAIR**: Thank you. I do not think there are any more trade-specific programs, though I am not telling you to get off the table and relax. Next I am interested in graduate recruitment, the levels of that. We have had some background on how the graduate program works, but what are the outcomes for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people in that program? In particular, has there been any connection, given that in this town there is a larger public sector graduate program if we are not getting numbers through our own specific ACT government one, as to how we might leverage off a broader program?

**Ms Whitten**: This is the first workforce plan that we are undertaking across the service, the graduate one. We recognise that employing Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people as graduates has been challenging because it is a very competitive market, if I can put it in those terms. This plan is about working through our whole graduate program. We are hoping to talk with the elected body on 10 April to get an understanding of what we could do differently. At this point in time, the plan is being developed; it will not be complete until the end of June.

**THE CHAIR**: I appreciate that it is in its early stages, and I understand the competitive nature of the existing graduate marketplace, but to me that would seem to suggest an opportunity to work with education for the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander kids in years 10, 11 and 12 now, and pipelining them through. Is that part of the plan?

**Ms Whitten**: It is being developed, but, yes, that is one of the areas we need.

**THE CHAIR**: Without making you commit.

**Ms Whitten**: Yes. It is an area that we can look at as a pathway. We have talked about pathways once people are on board, but to attract people to us it is a great opportunity. Our vocational employment programs have some of that aspect to it, but it is the next level on as well.

**THE CHAIR**: This may fall in your area or in Mr Wright’s; I am not sure. I think you mentioned earlier the mentoring program. Again, I am talking about the impact and how many people are actually participating in that. What I am particularly interested in is: in relation to perhaps your existing Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander public servants who might be being asked to be the mentors, are things being put in place to support that as an additional workload for them? I am getting to the sustainability of these programs rather than, “We gave it a try over six months and then everyone was worn out.”

**Ms Whitten**: That is a very good question. This is a program for this year at this point in time. We are still developing that. In terms of supporting mentors and mentees, this would be part of that as well. It has not commenced yet. We are planning to launch it in May with about 50 people, both Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander and non‑Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander—but that support aspect.

**THE CHAIR**: But that is scaffolding off not just the people being mentored but the mentees as well. That has been considered?

**Ms Whitten**: Yes.

**Mr Wright**: I am happy to answer that at a CMTEDD level. At a CMTEDD level we have a mentoring group which is led by Scott Saddler, who is our SOG A at the Arboretum. That has been going now for, I think, at least 12 months, and that has been very successful. It is quite informal in nature. They get together. It is voluntary to participate but they usually have about eight go along and attend that. They take a walk through the Arboretum and you can ask questions and talk about future career paths.

We have got to that point where Scott could not take on additional numbers on what is currently in that group. At the workshop that we have been running this week some of the questions were: how do we provide additional support? Who are going to be the other people who take on those mentoring opportunities? Do they need to be or should they be Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders?

We have a broader mentoring program. We note that we did not get Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander staff put their hand up for that but I think they are the next questions in terms of what we have got to do. We are also looking at that mentoring group in terms of our staff network. For a number of years now—and I think we had this conversation—we have been trying to establish an Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander staff network within CMTEDD and we have not been very successful. We put the call out. We do not get a lot of response to that.

At the moment what we are looking to do is turn that mentoring group into a bit of a staff network and provide the corporate support behind that which we would supply to a staff network and leverage off other more established staff networks in other ACT directorates and also in the commonwealth.

**THE CHAIR**: In a similar vein, talking about the graduates and mentoring current people, in 2017 you had a reasonable intake of trainees. I am just wondering if the directorate is tracking how many of them have been retained within the service.

**Ms Whitten**: My understanding is that six of the eight in last year’s program got ongoing work. But I do not know.

**THE CHAIR**: When you say “ongoing”, you mean within the service? They may have gone on to other jobs but as far as retention as an investment for the public service is concerned, six out of eight?

**Ms Whitten**: Yes, at this point in time.

**Mr Wright**: At a CMTEDD level we had two trainees in 2017 and they are both with us.

**THE CHAIR**: There is also a commitment I have seen in a few of your corporate documents around pastoral care for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander employees and I am just wondering how that is structured. Is it broader than just the mentoring and trying to set up the networks? Is this something formal or is it—

**Ms Whitten**: That support is provided through our team and we provide pastoral care through Tina Brown. She has regular meetings, weekly or monthly, depending on what the need is.

**THE CHAIR**: I had not realised that was Ms Brown.

**Ms Whitten**: And she also provides advice and support to work areas as well.

**THE CHAIR**: Ms Whitten, this may be for you because it is an all-directorate question. It is about inclusion officers within directorates. Does each directorate have one? Is that part of the RED program or is it—

**Ms Whitten**: My understanding is that each directorate has them. I do not know specifically whether it is from the RED program. I will need to take that on notice.

**THE CHAIR**: One of the reasons for asking that question—and it might be something for you on notice—is that Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander staff might, like I do, cover a few diversity groups. Is that inclusion officer able to pick up on that role?

**Ms Whitten**: I will take that one notice unless Robert has—

**Ms Leigh**: Robert might give some more information in relation to CMTEDD.

**THE CHAIR**: From the CMTEDD perspective?

**Mr Wright**: I do not, but I will come back to you on that one.

**THE CHAIR**: I am not sure how much of it is an Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander specific role or whether it is broader and how that interacts. It would be good to understand that a little better. The next question is around the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander business development and entrepreneurship program. There was some information in the generic questions, with 20 workshops and a range of things. The answer was a lot about the activity. I was wondering if there is any measurement of impact. Has there been any sort of engagement back with those participants on whether that has led to them being able to get more work? That is the bottom line.

**Ms Arthy**: I will start off and then hand over to Mr Harrison, who will have the detail. You are right. We have a lot of metrics, as you know, about what goes through the programs. I believe that the latest program is currently being reviewed by University of Canberra.

**THE CHAIR**: That is right.

**Ms Arthy**: Hopefully, coming out of that we will have a better idea about impact because that would then help guide us to set up the next program, which we are hoping to do quite shortly. But with that I will hand over to Mr Harrison to see whether he has—

**THE CHAIR**: Just before we go there, I found it a little hard to know what next with it. There is an intention of something in this space, but will you wait for the review of what has happened so far to determine it?

**Ms Arthy**: That is the intention. At every turn we want to try and refine it and make it better. As we have been talking about women in trades, I am just now thinking whether we need to include a specific focus around that as well. I will hand over to Mr Harrison.

**Mr Harrison**: Just to follow on from Kareena, there is currently a review taking place. We will learn more in terms of the outcomes. We do have some hard measures in terms of outputs and I think we should emphasize that those outputs have actually been met and been overachieved.

**THE CHAIR**: Could I ask you on that, Mr Harrison: I am not sure the generic questions told me about the successful referrals to vocational training.

**Mr Harrison**: They were all achieved, apart from one, which was the internships and traineeships. Again, as part of the review that will be a key part. It is understandable why. We know that discussions have been taking place with CIT but also, further to that—apologies for reading this—there have been negotiations with Indigenous students in the Department of Human Services’ Technology Innovation Centre. Meetings have taken place about internships through that method as well—looking broader beyond what was originally thought.

In terms of outcomes, though, we do have some examples. In the last quarter of the first year that it has been taking place, one entrepreneur got her first $25,000 contract after establishing her business. Another female entrepreneur’s business turnover has grown from $500 per month to $5,000 per month since she has been working with the program. That is directly attributed to part of the program’s outputs and outcomes. We have further case studies and profiles of examples of what success has come out of this. Those are numbers which we can share further to this.

**THE CHAIR**: That is certainly for me what I want, what I am more interested in: not “Did 20 people come to it for a two-hour course?” but “Where did that go?” With regard to the one KPI that it does not look like you are meeting, are you in the ballpark? It could be that because it was the first time you have done it we were not at a stage for that. Or is it that we are close but we just have not quite got there?

**Mr Harrison**: The target was five and we have not secured any at the moment. But, as you say, this is definitely a work in progress. And the good news is that the rest of the targets we met, so we can focus on that one particular one.

**THE CHAIR**: Will the reporting of the program include some of that microdata, if you like, of participants, even if it is just as case studies, to be able to say there is a real difference rather than participation, I guess?

**Mr Harrison**: Yes, absolutely. We have got some data already anyway. It is collating that and actually then being able to report it more in terms of outcomes than outputs.

**Ms Arthy**: If I may, on the way through, I have just got some more information around women in the trades coming off that as well. As we mentioned, the reports are slowly coming through. Of the reports we have got so far there are about 30 participants. Of those, two have identified as Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander. That is voluntary. We do not know that exact number. As we get more information we can provide it through to you.

**THE CHAIR**: And given that it is first up for the program, the participation is excellent. Just keep in mind that it is those longer term commitments where the opportunities line up which is the reason for raising those questions.

**Mr Wright**: Could I very quickly come back to your inclusion officers question?

**THE CHAIR**: Yes, please.

**Mr Wright**: CMTEDD currently has two staff who are focused on inclusion and diversity. We have one in corporate and one in Shared Services. They are part of our diversity and inclusion strategy and action plan which was launched in 2019. Ms Arthy is our executive sponsor for that strategy.

**THE CHAIR**: I do not disagree that those roles are needed and are good. The thing for us is: when we ask about Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander participation or focus, when it is grouped like that, it is not to say it should not be. I am just trying to understand the impact, particularly for our community. It is right and proper perhaps to put those things together because it makes sense. But how are we able to unpack that to understand for our community what that means?

**Mr Wright**: I am happy to take that on board

**THE CHAIR**: The next question is on my favorite topic, coming back to sport. I am wanting an understanding of the number of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people with access to assistance through the Indigenous sport program. At last year’s hearings we had some information that included Jervis Bay and Wreck Bay, with the surfing program. I am trying to distinguish between them. It is not that they are not good programs but just so that I am clear about the ACT. The reason I do that is that the Wreck Bay Aboriginal community have a very strong community-elected voice and I do not want to overstep our responsibilities and disrespect their roles.

**Ms Arthy**: I will start and then hand over to Ms Kelley. We have quite a significant program around supporting Indigenous sport. We provide support for people who are registering for sports, and we know that since 2015 we have had over 650 people supported. Since the beginning of this financial year, there have been 138 people who have been supported, and we are expecting a significant uptick in that as we come into winter.

**THE CHAIR**: As winter sport registrations?

**Ms Arthy**: That is right. I will hand over to Ms Kelley, who has the detail.

**MS CHIVERS**: In relation to the numbers, are they individual participants or are they people who may have accessed that program more than once?

**Ms Kelley**: The total number is over the course of the three years that we have been running the program. We have not done the analysis as to whether there are people who have accessed the program year in, year out. The applications are for a single year. We are happy to provide that information to you; that is not difficult.

**MS CHIVERS**: I am just interested, because you are saying that it is 600 and something, but it could be 300 participants that have accessed it twice.

**THE CHAIR**: A measure of success is that people are sustaining sport; we just need to understand what it is actually telling us.

**Ms Kelley**: We have seen a change of approach to seeking applications from the first year, where we were doing it through the directorate and out through the various networks. In the first two years, we only saw 288 applications over the course of two years. By changing tack last year to work more closely with the sporting organisations, so that they were able to connect and work more closely with Indigenous members in their various clubs and the like, we saw an uptick in that, which we see in the growth, with 288 in the initial years and then the growth of the 368, with further anticipation for this year, for which we are yet to collate the numbers.

With the nine sports, we know that rugby league, basketball and netball are the primary leaders of application numbers. Rugby league leads by a long shot. Even within the 138 that we have had since 1 July, we know that 45 have been with rugby league, with the winter season yet to kick off. But we have had a further 20 just through those that were not part of those nine sports that we have taken through our own system within sport and rec. Interestingly, we have seen applications for dance, rock climbing and gymnastics. The diversity of applications has been fantastic.

**THE CHAIR**: Excellent. I am not going to take on rock climbing anytime soon, but I am sure that members of our community who want to do that would be happy. Could I just ask a process question with the program? Is it a reimbursement program or do you pay the fee up-front?

**Ms Kelley**: The applicant needs to work with the sporting organisation; then we reimburse the sporting organisation. The clubs, the SSOs or the sporting organisations cover the fee on the applicant’s behalf, and then the organisation is reimbursed.

**THE CHAIR**: The reason for that question is this, and perhaps it could be looked at when the program is reviewed. My understanding of the funding is that it is to help particularly people who might find those fees difficult to come up with. If it is a reimbursement program, that does not get rid of the problem, in a way.

**Ms Kelley**: Sorry, I should clarify. Within that, the applicant is not required to pay the club; the club will basically pay the team’s registration fees, if you like, and carry that on behalf of the applicant until the club is reimbursed.

**THE CHAIR**: How are you assured of that?

**Ms Kelley**: That is a good question. That is probably something we need to get back to you on, but certainly through the acquittal processes that we have with the SSOs who receive that funding, they are not unlike any other grant program that we run where we run those accountability measures back through. But I can definitely clarify that for you.

**THE CHAIR**: It is my understanding from some community members that they pay it up-front and are then reimbursed. It could be just a communication breakdown, but if there is some way of assuring that in the process that would be good. For myself, from what I have heard from members of the community, the concept is great but if in some of that delivery there are still some roadblocks, we want to make sure that we get them out of the way.

**Ms Kelley**: I can definitely find that out for you.

**THE CHAIR**: Could you come back to us on how than can be assured.

**MS CHIVERS**: I think it could even be the fact that sometimes the fee-paying process happens before the process to apply for the $200.

**Ms Kelley**: Sure; yes.

**MS CHIVERS**: I have another question in relation to that. I understand that the nine main sporting organisations you are talking about got a grant of $10,000.

**Ms Kelley**: It varied from sport to sport.

**MS CHIVERS**: I know, for example, that the Basketball ACT one was $10,000, which equates to 50 kids. What happens with those sporting organisations if they have more than 50 kids that apply? Do they just not receive the assistance or is there a process that—

**Ms Kelley**: We have not received any advice from sports to date that they have exceeded their grant allowance, but if they had moved above the 50 individual mark, we would either direct those applicants back through sport and recreation or provide further assistance to the sporting organisation with the residual funds that we have for the program.

**MS CHIVERS**: Do you make it clear to those sporting organisations that that is not the cut‑off, that there is that other process?

**Ms Kelley**: Yes.

**Ms Arthy**: If you hear of any hardship that might be caused, if members of the community feel they are expected to pay the funds up-front, feel free to come to us and we can try and deal with it on a case-by-case basis.

**THE CHAIR**: I am sure that we would. The problem for me is that we will not hear from people; they just will not sign up. So how do we stop that as an issue? If there are individual cases, we certainly will flag them. Do you have a sense of how close we get to the allocation that we get particularly from the Indigenous advancement strategy money? I want to make sure we spend it.

**Ms Kelley**: Yes.

**THE CHAIR**: We have the participation assistance. Are there other things that that money goes towards or does that pretty much expend it, use it?

**Ms Kelley**: Yes, that is right. The residual funds from 2017-18 that we were able to roll into 2018-19 were partly expended on the three partnered programs that we had last year with Tennis ACT, Netball ACT and the AFL. They are programs that are yet to be acquitted, but that was $45,000. The residual that we had was in the order of $122,000. It was rolled into the individual grants programs. That was applied for 2018-19. Where sports had additional funds and we retained a bit, as I said, for those extraneous sports that were not part of the nine, that is sitting with sports. We are advised that they anticipate that most of that will be going through the current winter season, albeit softball may have a bit at the back end for the summer season.

**THE CHAIR**: This is the last question before a break for my colleagues. Is there any potential for this program to also have basketball, softball, rugby league and netball Indigenous-specific organisations? Is there anything, either within the Indigenous sports program or within what ACT sport is doing, to help them with their programs of activity? Whether they need help with governance and getting started or whether it is because they hold cultural and sports carnivals, is there scope for ACT sport to help in that capacity?

**Ms Kelley**: Yes. Annually we have our sport and recreation grants program. Any club or organisation is eligible to apply for that. For the types of things you are talking about, there is the community sport and recreation development program. We are happy to take applications. We see a lot come in for governance-related things, education and training. If it is seed funding around new events, through the partnering program we work quite closely with the Canberra netball tournament. We are trying to work with the organisers of that event to have legacy around education and training, not so much just funding the one-day event but looking at more sustainable measures. So absolutely there are ongoing funding opportunities.

**THE CHAIR**: You might need to take this on notice, but are you able to tell me both how many Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander specific organisations have applied and what success rate they have had with that mainstream program?

**Ms Kelley**: I will take it on notice, but over the last three years, the numbers through the broader sport and recreation grants program probably would have been smaller, noting that the partnered program, which was a bigger dedicated bucket, would have probably funded those applications over the SRGP.

**THE CHAIR**: If we are going to rely on that mainstream part, let us work out how well it is used now. If it is not, we can come up with strategies to get equity in that.

**Ms Kelley**: Absolutely.

**MS CHIVERS**: I have a question around the program where people can get reimbursed or get assistance with their registration fees. What advice do you give to those sporting organisations about where they ask for confirmation of descent? For example, Basketball ACT has had someone from Victoria who is now running that, who does not really know the ACT community particularly well. Their application form, and I have heard this from a couple of people, said that you had to provide descent from an Aboriginal land, like confirmation from an Aboriginal land council.

Obviously if you are in the ACT, especially if you are one of those people that might have been born here and are not from elsewhere, you have Winnunga, Gugan and the Canberra and District NAIDOC Aboriginal Corporation who do confirmation of descent. It is just my concern that potentially some people’s applications might not be accepted if it is not from the land council. I know that in the last couple of years, especially for kids, given how long it might take to get their confirmation locally, it has been accepted that if a parent has a confirmation, that is taken into account as well. I was wondering how you advise those sporting organisations or account for that if you hear that people have had difficulty.

**Ms Kelley**: We spoke to the sports people, saying that we have been following through our own registration in sport and recreation, and a certificate of Aboriginality needed to be provided, noting that that may come in a variety of forms. We are not aware of any issues that have been raised through that. We are absolutely open to feedback if you have further feedback as to how we might improve that. But certainly the process that has been undertaken to date is that that just needs to be provided with their registration form, the generic form that the club may otherwise have. That is the extent of the process. In terms of the administration with sports, we have not had any further detailed discussions with them around that. I am happy to take your feedback further if you think there is more that we need to do.

**MS CHIVERS**: Thank you.

**THE CHAIR**: Noting that this directorate is on after morning tea as well, so there are other opportunities to ask questions, we might take a break now.

## Short suspension.

**THE CHAIR**: In some of the public reporting there is a reference to training and employment opportunities that have been based on either elected body or Elders council advice. Are you able to tell us what programs they are?

**Mr Wright**: Where is that one coming from, chair?

**THE CHAIR**: I will need to double-check that. We will move on to the next question. It will be in one of our documents here, I think.

**Ms Andersen**: From my understanding, the advice provided to the elected body and the United Ngunnawal Elders Council was that training initiatives needed to continue to focus on and build equitable training outcomes for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples. As such, there have been a number of opportunities identified through our grants programs to target some support to enable Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people to meet their needs and aspirations. There are also particular loadings and training subsidies available for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander learners.

**THE CHAIR**: So that is what that references?

**Ms Andersen**: I think so.

**THE CHAIR**: That sounds right. We talked a bit about some of those earlier. In the generic questions it talks about the allowance per apprentice and some other things where there are loadings for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander participation. So that is that?

**Ms Andersen**: That is what I understand, yes.

**THE CHAIR**: Excellent. I would like some information about the attainment and completion levels for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people where that funding was provided, particularly under the apprenticeship and skilled capital program sorts of schemes.

**Ms Andersen**: The completion retention rates are similar to or better than all Australian apprentices and/or students enrolled in skilled capital courses. I have a bit of data here. In terms of total Australian apprenticeship retention in 2016, for all Australian apprentices that was 54 per cent; for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander learners it is 55 per cent. In 2017 it was 60 per cent overall, and for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander learners 61 per cent. Overall in 2018 it was 80 per cent, and for our Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander learners 79 per cent.

In relation to the breakdown of qualifications, at certificate II level for all learners it was 89 per cent and the retention rate for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander learners was 94 per cent. For cert III it was 76 per cent versus 75 per cent; for certificate IV, 85 per cent versus 83 per cent; and for diploma and high-level qualifications, 87 per cent versus 81 per cent. In relation to the skilled capital enrolments, I think our stats are looking even better. In 2016—

**THE CHAIR**: The last ones were pretty good.

**Ms Andersen**: They were pretty good, yes. In 2016 for our learners enrolled in courses funded through the skilled capital program our retention rate overall was 56 per cent; retention for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander learners was 69 per cent. In 2017 we have 73 per cent overall and 52 per cent for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander learners. That is a bit of an anomaly. In 2018 the overall was 85 per cent but for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander learners it was 92 per cent.

I can give you some more information, significantly, in terms of the qualifications studied. For skill set qualifications, for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander learners the retention rate was 100 per cent, and for diploma and high-level qualifications the retention rate was also 100 per cent.

**THE CHAIR**: That is excellent, thank you. That is a very good answer with impact, especially when it is that kind of impact.

**Ms Andersen**: Short, sharp and shiny.

**THE CHAIR**: I understand the source of this question is a RAP commitment—I could be wrong on that—around some involvement of the United Ngunnawal Elders Council in tender processes. I am wondering what tender processes they may or may not have been involved in and in what way.

**Mr Nicol**: Perhaps before I get to that I can go back to the earlier question about the target spend on the generic answers we gave. That did include Indigenous companies and community companies. Of the five we had in the six months to December 18, four were Indigenous and one was a community Koomarri contract. That is a historical—

**THE CHAIR**: I appreciate that.

**Mr Nicol**: From 1 July, with the new policy we hope to introduce, we will be separating that out in the future.

**THE CHAIR**: Excellent. But four-fifths is pretty good in that space.

**Mr Nicol**: On the Elders council question, I think it is fair to say we are still in the early phases of designing exactly how this will work. We are learning from the process we went through for the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander procurement policy in terms of consultation with the community. We do not collect that information again as to which tenderers across government actually go out and engage with different groups in terms of tender design.

**THE CHAIR**: Is that because your area sets the framework and process in which tenders operate but each directorate has some responsibility for their own tender processes?

**Mr Nicol**: That is essentially correct. Some are more centralised and others are devolved. We are having a look at our procurement systems in toto to see how much we centralise in terms of information collection and rule setting, versus how much we give control of to directorates. We were focused, particularly in the last 12 months, on the Aboriginal and Torres Strait procurement policy. Our next step then is how we engage in the earlier development of tenders with the community. That is our next major project in this space.That probably covers your next question as well.

**THE CHAIR**: Is the cultural liaison officer a role that is expected or is filled?

**Mr Nicol**: It is filled currently. Some of our directorates that are involved much more in Indigenous services will involve their cultural liaison officers much more in terms of the design of their procurements. But, again, we do not collect that information centrally. That is something we will be looking at to try to formalise it more.

**THE CHAIR**: This may not be specifically for you, but in the area of construction there is a commitment about smoking ceremonies, water blessings and those sorts of things. If it is not captured, is there a standard, a policy or a process that people should be following for that?

**Mr Nicol**: That is outside my area of expertise. I am happy to take that on notice and get you the details, but we do not collect information about the processes. I am aware of several where I have been personally to projects, like the ACT courts facility, for example. So they do happen but it is ad hoc at the moment, I think. We are looking at how we make it more formal and how we collect the information. Does it need to be made formal? Do there need to be rules about this, or is it more about guidelines and processes and engagement with the community? They are the questions we are thinking about and need answering. We will be engaging with the community on helping us answer those questions.

**THE CHAIR**: So where new construction is to be undertaken is there a process for an audit by Ngunnawal people around sites of significance that might relate to that area?

**Mr Peffer**: Part of our team provides the front of house for planning-related matters, which includes the development assessment process as that applies to greenfield developments, so not established areas. For greenfield developments on the fringe of the city there is a process in place. It is covered as part of a cultural heritage assessment which looks at a broad range of issues, not just Aboriginal related‑issues. An assessment is undertaken on each proposal to identify whether there are areas of significance that may require appropriate preservation, care or maintenance depending on the nature of the development to occur.

There are a number of steps in that process: the first is the assessment itself. Then it goes through further investigation which often includes site inspections with those with knowledge or an understanding or an appreciation of the particular heritage elements. There is further analysis and consultation on a proposed course of action, whatever that might be. Then we move into the development assessment process where the teams involved will seek the view of the Heritage Council. One of the council’s members is an Aboriginal person appointed for that very purpose.

**THE CHAIR**: Is that an Aboriginal position or a Ngunnawal position? The reason I ask that is, given it is heritage and land based, it is very important that has Ngunnawal input. It would be as inappropriate for me to make that decision as it would be for you because I am not a Ngunnawal person either.

**Mr Peffer**: I understand. The member appointed is Mr Gary Shipp, but I need to take on notice that specific question.

**THE CHAIR**: Yes, and whether it is the Elders council. I think under the Heritage Act there is room for registered Aboriginal organisations, but how that is used for that determination is important.

The next couple of questions relate to some commitments in the current RAP. One of the commitments was around a myth-busting video to explain cultural differences. Has that been produced?

**Mr Wright**: That was a video which we discussed a draft plan for at both the RAP working group and the mentoring group. It was determined in those groups that it was not culturally sensitive and we chose not to progress with that. The video we ended up producing in house was the one on the possum skin cloak, which was played to members of the Ngunnawal Elders at the Yurauna Centre. That was produced by a young Aboriginal woman, Ashlee Spencer, and is very well done. But it was determined not to do the actual myth‑busting component.

**THE CHAIR**: Based on Aboriginal and Torres Strait staff advice?

**Mr Wright**: The feedback from the mentoring group and the RAP working group, including the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander members of that group.

**THE CHAIR**: Besides the training commitments, are there other cultural awareness resources available to staff?

**Mr Wright**: Yes. One of the actions coming out of our RAP was to put an acknowledgement to Country poster displayed in all CMTEDD meeting rooms, and that has happened. The art for that comes from the making of the possum skin cloak, and that is fantastic.

We also have a CMTEDD signature block, which you have probably seen on the bottom of my emails, chair. That also reflects the making of the possum skin cloak. As I understand it, that was done in conjunction with advice from the United Ngunnawal Elders Council.

**THE CHAIR**: Is that something that staff opt in to use or is that locked in to signature blocks?

**Mr Wright**: No, it is an opt in, but we have had pretty good take-up on that one. We have a number of different signature blocks that staff choose to use. Some of those are LGBTIQ and the like.

**THE CHAIR**: Of course.

**Mr Wright**: But that is definitely one of the signature blocks that staff can use. We also have a CMTEDD reconciliation plan and video. There is a video of the making of the possum skin cloak on our reconciliation action page. At the moment on our banner page for our CMTEDD intranet we have a link to the agreement that runs across the top of the CMTEDD intranet. We also have a guide from CSD on organising welcome to Country and the protocols for engaging with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples.

**THE CHAIR**: That is the protocol document the previous elected body helped put together, I presume?

**Mr Wright**: That is correct. Then we have links to NAIDOC and Reconciliation Week activities. We have our RAP working group minutes that are up on that reconciliation page, and that gets updated regularly. The latest thing we put up on there is the work being undertaken in terms of our new RAP.

**THE CHAIR**: Your RAP is due to expire?

**Mr Wright**: It is coming up to expire in April. We are working on that at the moment. As I said, that workshop was fantastic. It was a really engaging process. We had members of our SES and we had Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander staff there. We wanted to do more than just a series of actions; we wanted something that was deep, lasting and had a journey process to it and we think it achieved that.

**THE CHAIR**: This question is around the review of HR policies to make sure there are no barriers specifically in this area for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander staff to participate in NAIDOC Week activities.

**Mr Wright**: One of the things we did as part of our RAP was to review a couple of our HR policies. We worked with the Yurauna Centre in ensuring they were culturally safe. One of the two policies we put through for review was our flexible work policy. We received feedback on that and we put that into place in terms of the fact sheet that went along with it. That was about how staff could undertake those provisions about attending cultural events, kinship structures and how that would work in terms of leave provisions and additional leave provisions that are available to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people under annex D of the agreement. That is also to attend Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander meetings and the like.

**THE CHAIR**: My question was quite narrow around NAIDOC Week. But is your answer that this actually provides flexibility all year round for our community members who are your staff members to participate more broadly?

**Mr Wright**: That is correct. I am happy to provide to you with the feedback we got.

**THE CHAIR**: That is a much better outcome than just NAIDOC Week.

**Mr Wright**: I think so too. This is an entitlement under our agreement. I might throw to Meredith at that point.

**THE CHAIR**: That was going to be my next question: how does the whole of the government do this?

**Ms Whitten**: Thank you, chair. The enterprise agreements have been negotiated and some are through to the Fair Work Commission at this point. In relation to the enterprise agreements, there is one single day of paid leave available for NAIDOC Week over the entire week.

The other aspect of the agreement is in relation to adding an additional definition in terms of immediate family. The addition to the definition of “immediate family” includes a person related to the employee by Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander kinship structures. It has been an existing definition and then there has been an addition to the agreement as well.

**THE CHAIR**: Excellent. That is more reflective of our circumstance, if you like.

**Ms Whitten**: The other aspect of the agreement, which goes a little bit beyond your question, is that the agreement has also been changed to allow non-Indigenous staff to attend NAIDOC Week events as well.

**THE CHAIR**: Excellent. So it goes towards the lifelong journey.

**Ms Whitten**: Yes.

**THE CHAIR**: I am going to assume you do not have this yet, but when we are in this place next time I will ask how many people have applied for that leave and what has been their success rate in having that approved? That is the next step, right?

**Ms Whitten**: Yes.

**THE CHAIR**: It is good we have that in there, but are people realistically able to access it? How are managers taking on board that relationship?

**Ms Whitten**: And also how we promote that fact around NAIDOC Week.

**THE CHAIR**: That is right. I understand that the directorate did sponsor an ACT NAIDOC award, which I was not as aware of when I did this. This goes to the figure of the procurement policy and the economic business growth for our community. I was not sure if the local NAIDOC business award was sponsored or if that process was done in the last NAIDOC Week.

**Ms Arthy**: That is correct. It was not done last year. We converted our sponsorship from a business award to the sports award. Part of the reason for that is that in the previous years we got very low numbers of businesses nominating. After talking to, I think, the NAIDOC committee about that, we just decided that we would probably get bigger impact by sponsoring the sport award. The committee has not come and talked to us yet about sponsorship for this award. If they wanted to bring the business award back in, we would work with them and perhaps the elected body about how we can increase the number of applicants to make it a good award. But at this point we are scheduling in terms of our forward commitments, if the business award does not go ahead, to continue sponsorship around the sport award.

**THE CHAIR**: For me the heart of the question is about some skin in the game for the NAIDOC Awards, given that there are a small number of local Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander businesses, as long as there is a commitment to the local awards. That is more where that was coming from.

**Ms Arthy**: At the moment our sponsorship is directed to the sport award. But if there is to be a specific business award, we would want to work with the committee to make sure that it is a good application process and a good award.

**THE CHAIR**: Another RAP commitment—and it potentially is covered off by some of the enterprise agreement and other answers you just gave—is to, I think in September each year, review generally HR policies. It goes back to some of my statements earlier this morning about how we change systems and structures, not just the specific Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander leave arrangements but also what in HR recruitment practice has been looked at so that we get more people applying for jobs and looking for careers in the ACT public service.

**Mr Wright**: As part of our RAP commitment we went through, in particular, our recruitment and employment strategy style policies. With our RAP working group we took them to what we currently do and what we think we can do going forward. Some of the questions that came out of that and some of the feedback that we got were in relation to inclusion statements being in advertising and the feedback that there could be more of that used. So that is something we have been looking at. Commitment to our trainee programs and—

**THE CHAIR**: With that advertising, that inclusion statement is not just tied to identified positions; is it generally part of the advertising process for any of the jobs that the directorate might be seeking a candidate for? Is that inclusion statement only put towards specific Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander focused jobs, or is it used more generally?

**Mr Wright**: At the moment it is mostly specific Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander jobs. But the feedback asks if we can look to put that in more generally, and that is something we are looking at. We are looking to make it potentially one of our commitments in our new RAP going forward. That was one of the pieces of feedback we got in that review.

**THE CHAIR**: I would suggest that you do not have enough identified jobs to meet your target, if that is the only place you put it.

**Mr Wright**: I agree. We have, as I said, about 40 Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander staff. More than 50 per cent of those are in identified jobs. So obviously it is a key strategy in how we go about our recruitment practices but it is too narrow.

We also looked at our commitment to our entry-level programs and some of the issues we have in terms of attraction and how we might go about that in future; how we engage with employment providers and how they might go about getting us a better field; and thinking about that reverse marketing bit and how we might do those things differently by going to the community. That is probably a conversation I would be very interested in having with not only our Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander staff but also the broader ACT Aboriginal community.

**THE CHAIR**: This question is in the artsACT space. Potentially we went some way towards it earlier. How many Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people are successful in gaining artsACT funding? Has that increased over the last few years in any way?

**Ms Tyler**: In 2018 we had four successful grant applicants in our arts activities funding who were Aboriginals and Torres Strait Islanders.

**THE CHAIR**: What was the total number of grants? Four out of what?

**Ms Tyler**: I do not have the total number.

**THE CHAIR**: Is it 10? Is it hundreds?

**Ms Tyler**: No, it is under 100. I think it is about 40. I can provide that detail to you.

**THE CHAIR**: I am just making sure. Four out of 1,000 and four out of 40 are a bit different; that is all.

**Ms Tyler**: Yes. That is the most we have ever had in a year through—

**THE CHAIR**: That is the most successful Aboriginal grants?

**Ms Tyler**: In one year, yes.We have also implemented having Aboriginal people on our peer panels who assess the grants, to try to make sure that those applications are assessed in an appropriate way through that peer panel. And we are looking at different ways to promote the grants that are specific to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander artists, rather than our general information sessions.

**THE CHAIR**: That is a continual process?

**Ms Tyler**: Absolutely.

**THE CHAIR**: And I assume that now, with the quality of arts officer you have been able to attract, she will be able to help influence that a bit.

**Ms Tyler**: I hope so.

**THE CHAIR**: Are those four grants for individual development opportunities, or are they broader community participation type activities?

**Ms Tyler**: Those ones were through our arts activities grants funding rounds. That is for individuals and groups of artists who apply for funding. I can provide you with the details of what those grants were exactly; I do not have that in front of me right now. Generally those grants are for individuals to develop their artistic practice or deliver a particular project or exhibition. I can provide those details on exactly what those grants were for.

**THE CHAIR**: Thank you; I appreciate that. That goes to the earlier question around impact and what things we are trying to influence. I understand that for the arts centres in Canberra that receive government funding, part of the requirement is around activities and engagement for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander organisations and artists, as part of their contract arrangements. Can you tell me how you manage compliance with that and what those activities look like?

**Ms Tyler**: There is not a specific requirement currently in our deeds that they have to deliver on activities with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples. There is an acquittal question that we ask through those grants processes about how many activities there have been. In the 2017 data, which is the most up to date, 29 activities were reported through that process. But we have talked about looking at changing those requirements into the future, especially as we go through our funding review for organisational funding.

**THE CHAIR**: I cannot put my finger on the source of that question. I do not know if it is in your RAP or your annual reports, but there is a statement that says the funding that goes to those arts centres has a requirement. It might not be in the contracts that you let with those organisations but there is certainly a public commitment that that funding is to cover both engagement and activities that relate to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people.

**Ms Tyler**: I can look into that.

**THE CHAIR**: If you could follow that up for me, I would appreciate it, in this initial stage, to set where we are at with that. Then the next stage of questions from us would be a bit of an assessment of how good it looks and a strategy around where we think it might need improvement. It would be very helpful if you could provide that.

**Ms Arthy**: In a broader context, Minister Ramsay is leading a fairly significant review of funding models for all arts organisations. That is going to happen over the next 12 to 18 months. We will look up where that statement was made but we can certainly—

**THE CHAIR**: I think it is in the artsACT plan.

**Ms Arthy**: We can certainly put that into that. In terms of managing it, we will not be seeing it into any form of deed or offer for an organisation for probably at least two to three years.

**THE CHAIR**: You cannot retrospectively change contracts. I appreciate that.

**Ms Arthy**: This is going to be part of a bigger process.

**THE CHAIR**: Again, it comes back to changes in systems and structures that from the start set that that is the expectation for people: this is where we are at and how we got there, but we are putting a pretty clear line in the sand as to what we will expect going forward.

**Ms Tyler**: In addition to that, as part of that organisational funding review we will have a discussion paper. We are happy to look at including specific questions about that in the discussion paper in terms of how we can best address those things going forward into that funding program. I am more than happy to look at how we can include something in that discussion paper to ask questions about how to best address those issues in terms of ensuring that those organisations are working with the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities for arts programs.

**THE CHAIR**: Just to be clear, I do not want to prescribe to community service organisations, Aboriginal or not, specific things that they need to run. But I do expect that as part of the community they have something that (1) is accessible for our community and (2), in particular, reflects the culture and arts of this place through an Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander lens. That obviously has a Ngunnawal component to it but you have the visiting arrangements and things. It is just to make sure that that is not lost.

I understand that the history of that is more about how long it took to get our own cultural centre up, and that with Tuggeranong Arts Centre and Belconnen and those sorts of places it was a process intended, I think, to fill that gap. So we need to see where those contracted arrangements are at and where the longer term strategy for the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultural centre sits, so that it has an aligned process and the impact we want, not only so that our community can access that across the city but also so that all Canberrans can have a better experience with the diversity of our artistic expression.

**MR MONAGHAN**: I make a lot of visits over to the north side and I speak to a lot of the Elders over there. One of their main concerns is the services out there for Indigenous people. It is pretty lacking out there around some of the services and around cultural engagement with the Elders and the youth. I do not know whether this is something to bring up in this area, but there is a lack of culturally appropriate services out there for Indigenous people on the north side. That is something that I have spoken to a few of the Elders out there about and they have raised with me.

**THE CHAIR**: Member Monaghan, just to clarify, are you talking about all services being culturally appropriate or about arts and culture activities? They are in different directorates.

**MR MONAGHAN**: It does not matter whether it is art or any other processes; it is pretty much the lack of services. There are no real Indigenous programs for Elders and the youth out there at the moment.

**THE CHAIR**: The only reason I asked is that this directorate does not necessarily deliver those. But we will ask it across all of the directorates.

**MR MONAGHAN**: I just raise it in this forum to let directorates know that there is a lack of services out there at the moment for Indigenous people on the north side.

**Ms Leigh**: I am certainly happy to raise that with directors-general generally, because it seems to me that it covers every directorate. I am happy to take that on to draw their attention to. I suggest also that you might want to raise it at each hearing.

**THE CHAIR**: We might put it to the strategic board meetings as well.

**Ms Leigh**: When I said I will raise it, that is what I meant I would do.

**THE CHAIR**: We will move to CIT. Officers who are not involved with CIT through the directorate, thank you for your time. We appreciate your answers today.

Ms Leigh, there is one thing I want to put on the record that I mentioned to you offline. The reference earlier to Coolamon Advisors and contracts was that no contracts to that company have been let. There have been a couple of training spots but there have been no contracts let to Coolamon Advisors since I started on the elected body. I just want to clarify that there is a timing issue in that, just because of the conflict of interest for me. I want to make that very clear in that process. And there are certainly no capital works contracts.

**Ms Leigh**: Thank you, chair. We recognise that. I have spoken to Mr Strachan to clarify that as well.

## Short suspension.

Appearances:

Canberra Institute of Technology

Cover, Ms Leanne, Chief Executive Officer

Ryan, Mr Paul, Executive Director, Industry Engagement and Strategic Relations

**THE CHAIR**: Given that the CIT falls within my portfolio responsibilities at the elected body, at least the initial list of questions will come from me.

**Ms Cover**: Okay.

**THE CHAIR**: We obviously have one member with an identified conflict; so she will not ask questions today. It will save her and you. But it also means that she will not be able to answer on your behalf either. How the process works, as you probably remember from last time, is that, should there be any follow-up at each question, members will do that.

Something slightly different from last time is that you have in front of you a set of the questions we are about to ask. There may be some things from the last couple of hours that have popped up. They are more directorate wide, but we might want the CIT view on that as well. We recognise that whilst, under the technical governance arrangements we have, you fit within the CIT you do have quite a deal of autonomy in that process. We will come back to do that.

I will give you a chance in a moment, Ms Cover, to make any opening statement that you want. But some parts of the evidence this morning that were particularly pleasing were some of the apprenticeships and VET-types of outcomes that the skills area were able to provide. I assume that some of that fits within your area of responsibility. It was great to hear not just a list of activity but some impact. Also you should know that, if we do not ask you specific questions on that, it is not that we have not noticed or heard them.

**Ms Cover**: Okay.

**THE CHAIR**: Ms Cover, are there any opening remarks that you would like to make?

**Ms Cover**: On behalf of colleagues at the table this morning, I would like to acknowledge the Traditional Custodians of the land we gather on this morning and pay our respects to Elders past, present and future.

We really are pleased to have the opportunity, obviously, to work with you this morning and provide answers to your questions. But just picking up on your earlier comments, we are also really keen to see if there are other things we can contribute to your broader thinking, if there are other ways that we can support the other directorates that you are working with and, more broadly, the community. We are really keen to hear from you about that.

I would also like to acknowledge Caroline Hughes, the Director of our Yurauna Centre, and again acknowledge the leadership of Caroline within the community and the incredible impact of her leadership within the community of CIT but more broadly across the ACT government. I will just acknowledge that as well.

**THE CHAIR**: I think that is a nice way to start, in that in many of our questions we will not focus on the Yurauna Centre because we understand the extent of the impacts and outcomes that that specifically delivers. What we are going to try and get today is a broader perspective but on the assumption that, from the community and from the elected body’s point of view, we understand how well that, as a centre, operates.

**Ms Cover**: Great.

**THE CHAIR**: I want to double-check whether the witnesses have all the CMTEDD questions or just the CIT ones.

**Ms Cover**: Okay.

**THE CHAIR**: There are a couple that overlap that I want to come back to.

**Ms Cover**: Sure.

**THE CHAIR**: We might start with those. It is going to jump around a little for you.

**Ms Cover**: Sure.

**THE CHAIR**: I apologise for that, but I think it is really important to get to these. Some of the things we asked about this morning included employment targets. What I would like to understand is: what does employment at CIT look like, Yurauna Centre aside?

**Ms Cover**: I am really pleased to advise the committee that overall the CIT works for the national body of data collection. It is called the NCVER, and I can provide details around the acronym. That is a national data centre for collection for all vocational education and training registered training providers to provide input into those national sets of statistics. The CIT does exceptionally well, particularly in the number of outcomes for students having trained with CIT who have then gone on to better employment outcomes. Our current 2017 data on that—

**THE CHAIR**: We will get to that. I just want to know about direct employment by CIT.

**Ms Cover**: We do not have a mechanism in place for direct employment for CIT Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students; nor do we have that in place for broader—

**THE CHAIR**: No, not students, staff of CIT.

**Ms Cover**: My apologies. In terms of that, how many staff—

**THE CHAIR**: Although I will be excited to hear soon about how well our students progress, let us start with just your staff.

**Ms Cover**: My apologies. Obviously I misunderstood the question. We have 17 Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander identified staff within CIT and we have 10 Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander identified positions within CIT. Would you like to know how we are developing them in that broader context?

**THE CHAIR**: I would like to know, of those numbers, how many sit in Yurauna and how many sit in the rest of CIT?

**Ms Cover**: The identified positions are only in the Yurauna Centre. There are 17 positions, including those 10 positions, across the institute.

**THE CHAIR**: Ten in Yurauna and an additional seven.

**Ms Cover**: 18, I am sorry.

**THE CHAIR**: How many people are employed by CIT in general?

**Ms Cover**: At the moment we have got around 680.

**THE CHAIR**: Is that the full-time equivalent?

**Ms Cover**: They are full-time equivalents.

**THE CHAIR**: You have got a big base of casual teaching staff?

**Ms Cover**: Yes. We have just over 1,000 in total. Of course, they are not employed at the same time because it is seasonal, depending on which qualifications are being run when, but, yes.

**THE CHAIR**: But it equates to about 680 and, of that, it is 18?

**Ms Cover**: Yes; correct.

**THE CHAIR**: Similarly, you would be aware of the development, more broadly—I am hoping you are aware—of the Indigenous procurement policy for the ACT government. Are you able to give me an idea of how many Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander contractors or procurements CIT had over, say, the last year?

**Ms Cover**: I could take that on notice in terms of the detail, if you like, in that time frame. I do know that very recently we have procured services from an Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander business that is to do with our survey tool, which is the tool that we use to sort of pulse check the satisfaction of students when they engage with the institute. That is a contract we have just recently signed.

**THE CHAIR**: Over the next iterations of these, just so that you have got some context from me, I understand that there are some significant facilities upgrades and some other larger scale contracting that the CIT is going to undertake. We are trying to put on the radar opportunities for both employment and businesses to be involved in not just very specific Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander programs but the broader supply chain for CIT.

**Ms Cover**: Sure. I certainly appreciate that. Just to be clear, that survey tool is for all survey activity across the institute, not specifically for any surveying that we might do as a deeper dive at the Yurauna Centre into Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander needs. That is in place. But we are well aware of that procurement policy and are always looking to leverage that.

**THE CHAIR**: In respect of selection panels for any positions at CIT, do you have a process and/or keep records of how many Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander people sit on the panels?

**Ms Cover**: I do not think we have a formal mechanism in place currently for that to occur. I could have a look at what we do have and provide that to you, but I do not think we have that in place as you have described it, no.

**THE CHAIR**: The reason we ask this—we will ask it of each directorate—is that part of the issue for us in looking at the opportunities that our community get in the public sector employment is having panels fully understand the skills that someone is presenting. That is not always the case with people who are either not from the community or who do not have a high level of cultural competence. That is the reason for the questions. I am trying to open the pathways for employment into general positions at CIT. I think the Yurauna Centre would do that quite well and have full panels for those, but there are only the 10 positions. That is where that question is coming from.

I also have a question in relation to staff. You might have a different answer to this question as it relates to casual employees and your permanent staff, but give me an idea of how many people have completed cultural competency or integrity training. Is that part of your onboarding?

**Ms Cover**: I will have to take the specific numbers on notice. Do you have a time frame in mind?

**THE CHAIR**: Could you provide it for the last financial year?

**Ms Cover**: Yes.

**THE CHAIR**: I am particularly interested in your system of training. The numbers and impact are interesting to me, but how you require that or deliver that is particularly important to me.

**Ms Cover**: We have a great awareness around cultural awareness training in terms of the need and the benefits for our staff. It is not just for our staff, which is incredibly important, but obviously their ability to raise awareness and to be culturally sensitive to the students in that space as well. We have formality around that training. I know that as an exec group we have been very active in that space ourselves and have tried to role model that with our broader leadership group through formal programs that we have done with the Yurauna Centre around that cultural awareness.

In terms of broader opportunities, it perhaps is not as formal as some other directorates, but what I can say is that those opportunities that the relationship with CIT, the Yurauna Centre and the broader Indigenous community present for us are well leveraged by our staff and students. I will provide a couple of examples of that. We, as you probably know, celebrate NAIDOC Week slightly differently from the national date because we want to maximise the—

**THE CHAIR**: You want people there.

**Ms Cover**: Yes, we want to maximise the awareness of our students and staff and celebrate that community on a day that works for that maximum attendance. From my personal experience of going to those activities is that I have always been impressed at how students and staff use those opportunities to come and actually increase their awareness and actually broaden their experiences by being embedded in that day.

For instance, teachers will bring their international student cohort to those activities to raise awareness. International students are very interested in that. Our domestic students are often coming to those sorts of events as well. It is not just the CIT community. It actually attracts other communities. Last year we attracted the Campbell High School students. A particular cohort of students came across and got involved in the activities. It is not perhaps as formal in terms of the way that the induction or the training happens throughout all of those particular areas. It is around our executive team and our staff. But I think it is still very active in that space.

**THE CHAIR**: Thank you. I turn to student numbers now. I hope you have that lined up because it is our starting point. Can you provide an update on how Aboriginal students who have previously participated in courses across CIT are tracking into further studies? I understand that you have a very good track record in getting people to start studying. Some of those foundation-type courses are very successful. I am interested in how, as an organisation, you are able to transition people into a further certificate or higher qualifications but also then into employment. Do you track that?

**Ms Cover**: Yes. As you say, obviously, an institution like ours has very good HSA records around enrolments and what students are actually studying. We can provide specific details on which courses and what levels. I apologise for my misunderstanding the earlier question, but we do not have a formal mechanism to track, monitor and keep connected to the students once they have actually left the institution. But neither do we have for other students as well because there are no formal arrangements between institutions and the private and public sector for that to happen.

However, what I was going to promote or acknowledge earlier was the outstanding employment outcomes of the CIT students collectively compared to the national outcomes. Our results there are 81.5 per cent for 2017, which is higher than the 72.3 per cent for the year before.

Those outcomes from our students who are reporting better employment outcomes, having studied for a qualification at CIT, continue to be some of the highest in the Country and continue to improve. Obviously, the Aboriginal Torres Strait Islander cohort are part of that broader collective, but we do not have a specific tracking mechanism for the employment outcomes.

**THE CHAIR**: So in respect of that number you have just given me, do students opt in? How do you get that information?

**Ms Cover**: It is a national survey. It is a national data collection. Students are contacted and asked to provide that detail. Trying to get to that next more specific layer about our students, this year what we are going to attempt to do is contact every student who has identified as Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander who has been enrolled at CIT in the past and ask them whether they are prepared to tell us a little bit about their employment journey and story.

**THE CHAIR**: Excellent; thank you. So how does the Yurauna Centre have a good sense of how they support and introduce people into this type of training? If I come to CIT with no idea about the Yurauna Centre, how would I be supported as an Aboriginal student at CIT?

**Ms Cover**: Yes, I acknowledge the awareness of the Yurauna Centre. I think it is important for us to celebrate how successful that approach has been. So it is by design that we have a targeted, specific approach to the Yurauna Centre. In addition to that, though, students have access to the very broad range of services that all students have access to. I will take you through some of those because it is—

**THE CHAIR**: Thank you.

**Ms Cover**: quite broad. Because we have that awareness, I have to say that in respect of the way that staff engage with the Yurauna Centre, there is obviously a heightened awareness around Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander student needs by the broader CIT community. How does that play out? You will see at our student services hubs, where students come to enrol, that our staff wear badges. These have been designed by the Yurauna Centre in terms of trying to get awareness around the opportunities and cultural issues there. There is an awareness around the way that the precinct or the campus is actually set up in trying to raise awareness. Perhaps it is artwork in the cafe, for instance.

That is a sort of subtle awareness piece that happens all the time in the background. Wherever we can, we have good signage; we have good acknowledgement in all of our information that goes out; on our website. When students are first looking to come into CIT, there is lots of obvious visibility that we have services that are dedicated specifically through the Yurauna Centre.

In addition to that, though, all students have access to a really broad range of counselling support and referral services. We have dedicated trained experts in those areas that support teachers. There are very good relationships between those areas. Those staff that are dedicated professionals for counselling support and referral services, in addition to the Yurauna Centre, are sitting and accessing classes all the time and supporting students in counselling.

There are disability support services to all students. Of course, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students can access those. Obviously, we have information sharing between the Yurauna Centre, the support services and the teaching areas all the time so that we can wrap around and make sure the information that is appropriate to be shared is shared and that support is actually offered as well.

There are a number of FEE-HELP programs and assistance programs for all students to help reduce the cost of their fees. There are scholarships that they can apply for that help them, not just with their study fees but also with other expenses that they may have. There are also other scholarships for further education and training.

You may know that we have a student association. Not all TAFEs have this. Certainly, not all post-school institutions have such a really strong student association. The student association has dedicated contacts and initiatives that they run that specifically help Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples as well within the community. They work very closely with all students in that space.

I think you are well aware of the variety of events that we have on our calendar. All of our business areas, all of our colleges, have dedicated activities within their business plans that support all students. But, again, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students can access those services outside of the Yurauna Centre if they do not choose to specifically use or avail themselves of the support and resources at the Yurauna Centre.

**THE CHAIR**: Thanks for that. Certainly, the Yurauna Centre is central to this type of model. I appreciate that you have multiple campuses across Canberra. I understand that the Reid campus is changing. In the planning of that, given that the centre itself will be for students of all types of courses, is the plan for Yurauna to stay at Reid but also to be quite central so that it is an easy access point for our students?

**Ms Cover**: I think the first thing to say is that we have not started any planning in terms of what that might look like.

**THE CHAIR**: It is a good time to raise the question, then.

**Ms Cover**: But what we do have in place is a subcommittee of the board that is specifically looking at our campus renewal plans and activities. Very much front and centre—in fact, it is the board’s directive to that subcommittee—is that any development of CIT campuses, regardless whether it is at Reid, should be culturally sensitive. That is a requirement of the board through to that subcommittee as we start to move into some planning space, which we are doing now and into the coming years.

**THE CHAIR**: Who helps you with knowing how to measure that?

**Ms Cover**: How to measure that it is culturally—

**THE CHAIR**: The cultural, yes.

**Ms Cover**: Good question. We do engage, obviously, with the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community. I guess the focal point for us is the Yurauna Centre.

**THE CHAIR**: Your consumers, yes.

**Ms Cover**: But the students as well. Next week Paul Ryan and I will be talking to the Yurauna Centre advisory committee around what some of those needs are. But we are always reaching out to students, either directly or indirectly, through the student association, because sometimes students would prefer to talk to the student association than more directly to us. So we are always looking for mechanisms to get the student voice into some of that planning.

But, as I say, we have not actually started any specific planning around the Reid campus yet. But will the needs of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples either through the Yurauna Centre or beyond that be part of the mix? Absolutely front and centre. We will be respectful about what that looks like. Will it be a standalone building? Is it integrated into the building? If it is integrated, how should it be integrated? What are those needs beyond just where our building is? If we can, how do we influence what that looks like in the grounds and the broader precinct that we are within as well?

**THE CHAIR**: Particularly as it is an asset not just for our students but for other students to learn from as well.

**Ms Cover**: Yes.

**THE CHAIR**: You touched on the Yurauna advisory committee. Is that a student committee?

**Ms Cover**: All of our curriculum—which, as you would probably be aware, is how we describe the training packages that we teach—is actually developed by industry in terms of the employability outcomes for those particular qualifications. All our teaching areas have advisory committees that give us advice about the programs we are offering. For the broader services we offer at CIT we try to use those advisory committees to input into our thinking around the needs of our students. So each of our bodies that interact with our students has advisory groups that we access.

**THE CHAIR**: Of those other committees, how many have Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander people on them?

**Ms Cover**: They are not as formal as representative bodies like that.

**THE CHAIR**: No, but they have people on them.

**Ms Cover**: Yes, they do.

**THE CHAIR**: Are there any Aboriginal people?

**Ms Cover**: I can take that on notice. They do not have designated representative positions in that structure. They are developed by the teaching areas, depending on the offerings within those colleges and depending on the industry links and the employability outcomes.

**THE CHAIR**: The reason for trying to narrow the question is for exactly that reason. As the curriculums develop for each of these areas, how does the CIT introduce Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander learnings into that? I am talking not about support for our students but about people who are about to go out into the world and do these jobs. They need to know a bit about us. So how does that work?

**Ms Cover**: In some courses there are units of competency that are specifically around how to best support and engage Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples within the courses. For instance, aged care, child care, nursing, and community services courses have mandatory units of competency within those courses. Other courses—your traditional trades, electrician courses, plumbing courses et cetera—do not. That is where we are always looking for other opportunities to either work directly with our teaching staff about their competency and currency around cultural awareness or to use the Yurauna Centre to support the students and/or the staff to gain that awareness or increase the context for the students if that is relevant for their course.

**THE CHAIR**: Are you able to give an indication across each of those qualifications how many have it as compulsory, how many have it where it is not compulsory but it is in there, and then how many are silent on it? Like you said, it could be neither here nor there with it, but I want to get a sense of how many of your courses have some component of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander understanding. There are some certificates where you are going to be working with some of our old people or some of our vulnerable people where that is a far more significant and obvious component, but I want to get a sense more broadly. The other reason for the questioning is about the different faculties, if you like, or committees and also more broadly with your board. Are there any Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander people on the board?

**Ms Cover**: There are not. They are not representative positions identified within the board. There are two—

**THE CHAIR**: That was not my question; I am not asking about an identified position.

**Ms Cover**: The answer is no. There are two positions identified on the board. The rest are skills-based positions. There is a student representative and a staff representative, and the rest of the positions are around broad skill sets rather than representative.

**THE CHAIR**: Most of our questions are around what we are trying to achieve in the agreement we have just signed with government. A large part of that is around leadership and having our voices at decision-making tables. I do not necessarily hold the position that there need to be identified positions on every board or advisory committee to government, but one of the issues for me is that there are lots of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people with a good skills base who are not even aware that there are these opportunities.

I am not sure who selects your board and I am not saying that is your responsibility, but some committees are opportunities for people in our community to start growing their experience and skills in those types of governance mechanisms. Given the track record of bringing students in and their experience with CIT, it would seem to be a safe and reasonable place for some people to start in those types of roles. So one of the things I am interested in is how the CIT can help to contribute to that component of the agreement.

**Ms Cover**: I certainly take that on board because we are very focused on the students, and there are lots of explicit opportunities for leadership within the student cohort while acknowledging that we also need to be looking at staff opportunities for leadership. We tend to offer leadership opportunities at an individual level around personal development discussions, but I understand what you are saying about raising that to a broader context.

**THE CHAIR**: And also to be conscious of cultural load for staff specifically when asking them to take on these other roles. It might be that we draw a broader bow of opportunities across the community and the student cohort. I just put on the radar that I feel this is a place within government that has opportunities to grow those things for our community.

**Ms Cover**: As I said earlier in my comments, we would really welcome engagement with the body around how we could do that better. With the number of students who are coming through our program, in addition to the students we have talked about already, I do not think I have mentioned that we are probably the largest provider to the commonwealth of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander training, through our Indigenous apprenticeship program, which we run through our CIT Solutions company.

**THE CHAIR**: Is that the Department of Human Services apprenticeship program?

**Ms Cover**: Yes, and I might get our executive director, Paul Ryan, to comment on the detail of that. But what I am getting at is that if you think about the number of students we are touching that we could be promoting and exploring for those broader opportunities there is some more work we could do there.

**THE CHAIR**: With one of your certificates in cultural awareness, it should be about actually working with people and not just general information. There are some really good opportunities within CIT to have a broader impact in that lifelong learning component that we are interested in.

Mr Ryan did you want to give some more information about that cohort of apprentices? In the generic questions we have a sense of numbers on those sorts of things. But is there anything more specifically around how they are supported or what is the role of CIT with them? I understand they are from all over the Country as well.

**Mr Ryan**: Correct. It is a national program. It is run out of the Department of Human Services, based in Canberra. Even though you said you have the numbers, they are really quite significant. In the last cohort there were 278 individual students and 92 per cent of those successfully completed the qualification. The qualification underpins their future career with the Australian public service.

If you multiply that over the last five or six years that CIT Solutions have been successful in winning that program, you have some thousand Indigenous APS staff who now have formal qualifications, which we know is one of the number one barriers to getting promotion up through the public service.

**THE CHAIR**: I want to clarify that. Is that program guaranteed employment or is that different to—

**Mr Ryan**: My understanding is they are already public servants before they start. The ACT government ran a different sort of cadetship program where you are on probation until you have completed that year.

Probably the number one success factor of that program is supervisor training. That is where we provide cultural awareness training to all the supervisors of the students to make sure not only that the formal learning takes place but also that the support is there back in the workplace so that they can implement what they have learnt and that supervisors have a greater awareness of cultural diversity in the workplace. The 92 per cent shows that they are getting the support back in the workplace.

**THE CHAIR**: That is a really interesting program. How is that marketed or rolled out across the ACT public service for managers?

**Mr Ryan**: Most programs like that are competitive.

**THE CHAIR**: So they are fee for service?

**Mr Ryan**: Fee for service, accessing user choice funding. But the ACT government has a training panel and all trainees are directed through that panel.

**THE CHAIR**: So you do not just get to jump the line?

**Mr Ryan**: We hope you do—through your directorate you get your supervisor’s support and apply for programs. But the one I am referring to is a commonwealth program, so the Department of Human Services takes that to market.

**THE CHAIR**: I understand it is a commonwealth program; what I am getting at is that here is a package that is successful, that is run out of ACT government and that helps non-Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people do their job better. How is the rest of the ACT government leveraging off that?

**Mr Ryan**: Ms Cover earlier made the point that we are well positioned to work with government, be it through the body or directly through government. CIT is about workforce capability and a lot of people see that in traditional industries. So we are the ones that stand up the carpenter workforce or the plumbing workforce or the—

**THE CHAIR**: I get that, but that is not my question.

**Mr Ryan**: But we could do that with the public sector workforce.

**THE CHAIR**: So has that been explored to date?

**Mr Ryan**: Not to my knowledge, but it is certainly something we could explore.

**THE CHAIR**: Just to be clear why I am asking it, we have within our 10-year agreement an action plan and part of that is about the growth and retention and progression of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people in the public service. What I am trying to get to the nub of is: if we have not leveraged off it yet, why not? That is something we can feed into that activity.

**Mr Ryan**: Formerly we had some—

**THE CHAIR**: Whether it is you providing it or not, there is something that works.

**Mr Ryan**: We had some input into CMTEDD’s action plan around that to say that we are able to provide that capability.

**THE CHAIR**: The last two questions relate to another key component of overarching agreement, which is to address systemic racism. The end goal is obviously written in an aspirational way that we all live in a community that values each other and that we do not have those issues, but at the moment that is not the case.

In the last calendar year of 2018, how many incidents of racism were reported by students? Given that you have international students, it might be a bit hard to disaggregate what the issues were about, but we want to know whether there are systems for people to report it; what are the numbers and how is it addressed?

**Ms Cover**: I will take on notice the specifics of that. I would be confident that it would be very low numbers in that space. I am confident because we have very good awareness reporting, monitoring and interventions in place around policies and procedures.

We have in the last couple of years really tried to increase the awareness for students around the support that is available as early as possible. So rather than not talking about it we have tried to increase the awareness through posters and social media, through the conversations the student association are having with students and that teachers have in the classroom. Our support people are in and around the classes to raise and have those conversations that none of that is tolerated.

As I say, I am confident the numbers would be very low, but I will get the specific statistics. But if it does occur there are lots of processes in place for that to be managed and for the students or the staff to be supported in that process. We are part of the ACT public service and we have very strong policies and procedures through that. We have escalating procedures where, as an exec team, we report and we monitor. We have good awareness of that, which is why I am confident that when we come back with the statistics they will be low.

**THE CHAIR**: The Education Directorate may be in a similar position, but given that you have core functions that are about supporting students, particularly students from different disadvantaged and diversity groups, if I was to disclose to you that I was having a problem with racism not with CIT but in the more general supports you provide, are your processes allowed to help advocate or assist students with those issues?

**Ms Cover**: I would hope so. Certainly for some students what they report to us is not necessarily something that is happening at CIT. Many students have complex lives and some of the things happening in the community may be an issue for the students that is impacting their study at CIT. Are you talking more broadly of the students who would not be enrolled at CIT?

**THE CHAIR**: No, I am talking about the students you have got supports for. It sounds like—and certainly my experience at the Yurauna Centre is this—you have created a safe place.

**Ms Cover**: Correct.

**THE CHAIR**: What I am interested in is, for people who then feel comfortable enough to disclose a sensitive issue, how that is managed. If the safe place does not look after them, they are not going to tell anybody else. So it is not necessarily a service delivery question for you, but it is likely that some of your teachers, your student support staff and even your student association will have issues raised with them not specifically about racist processes in CIT but more from a community perspective. How might your staff address those types of issues when racism is raised with them that way?

**Ms Cover**: As you have alluded to, the institute staff are very connected to the broader support services and facilities that sit outside. A lot of support activity sits inside; a lot of referral activities happen all the time, not just in educational institutions but other community bodies as well.

I think we do really well at those connections. There are always anonymous ways that we get information like that. People can email the board directly. They can submit anonymous complaints or raise things anonymously. A lot of that is promoted very strongly through the institute. Whenever we are giving feedback to a particular person we always refer them to other places they can go to get other assistance if they are not happy with our response, for instance.

**THE CHAIR**: What I am particularly interested in is: what resource or information do you give to staff to make sure they know who and where to refer people to?

**Ms Cover**: I will refer to Paul to add to the answer but, again, there is lots of information, awareness sessions, training around who do you refer to, postcards, emails, information on screensavers about what other sources can assist you in your job if you are aware of issues that students need help with that they may not feel comfortable reporting within the institute. I say again that there is very good support for that inside but some mechanisms are there for broader referral as well.

**Mr Ryan**: I will quickly refer to two policies we have in place. The bullying and harassment policy refers to discrimination within the policy, and that suggests to staff and students that there are counsellors within student support that they can go to for confidential support and that that counselling support is outside of the structures they might normally be in. So it would not be in their teaching area; it would not be in their work area.

**THE CHAIR**: Not the person marking their test today?

**Mr Ryan**: Correct. Your question was about how would they know what to do, and the policy very clearly says, “Those counsellors are there to hear your concerns.” The other policy I mention is the equity and diversity policy, which pulls out that there are defined equity officers and that staff or students can go to them to raise their concerns. There are very discrete resources that they know are outside of their normal business arrangements.

**THE CHAIR**: It needs the confidence that there is a structure to it; it is not just that you have someone good personality-wise at the moment and if they go what happens?

**Mr Ryan**: No. Those policies pull out for people to say, “If you observe any of this activity or you feel this way, here is your avenue of care and support.”

**Ms Cover**: Whilst that level of formality is there, the other important thing to note is that, because the broader supports are in the classroom environments or around the social areas where students hang out—in the canteens, in the library, just around campus—it is visible as well.

**THE CHAIR**: Thank you very much for your time and for all your team coming. We look forward to working with you in the future. To the board and directorate, thank you for your time all morning. We have finished with CMTEDD for this year’s hearing.

## Hearing suspended from 12.45 to 1.06 pm.

Appearances:

Community Services Directorate

Cross, Ms Rebecca, Director-General

Sabellico, Ms Anne Maree, Executive Director, Strategic Policy

Gilding, Ms Louise, Executive Director, Housing ACT

Wood, Ms Jo, Coordinator-General for Family Safety

Dunne, Ms Ellen, Executive Branch Manager, Office for Disability

Murray, Ms Christine, Executive Branch Manager, People Management

Pappas, Ms Helen. Executive Director, Children, Youth and Families

Saballa, Ms Melanie, Director, Children and Families

Charles, Ms Lisa, Director, Office for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Affairs

Evans, Ms Jacinta, Executive Group Manager, Inclusion and Participation

Robinson, Ms Jodie, Senior Director, Practice and Performance

**THE CHAIR**: Thank you to members of the Community Services Directorate for joining us this afternoon. We formally started proceedings this morning with an acknowledgement of Country but, given that we have different people each time, I will make sure that people recognise and acknowledge that we are on Ngunnawal Country and have the privilege to share with Ngunnawal people our lives here.

As part of the elected body process we have portfolio responsibilities, so Member Hughes will be asking our questions this afternoon. I appreciate that the questions are perhaps not neatly aligned to your areas of responsibility, but we try and give preference to questions that have been given to us directly from community members. Given that from time to time we run over and there is a need to take things on notice it is important for us that the community-based questions have priority and are part of the formal record. Director-General Cross, are there any opening remarks you would like to make before we start with the questioning process?

**Ms Cross**: Thank you and, yes, I would like to make an opening statement. I start by acknowledging the Traditional Custodians of the land we are meeting on, the Ngunnawal people. I acknowledge and respect the continuing culture and the contribution they make to the life of this city and this region. I also acknowledge and welcome other Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people who may be attending today’s hearing.

For those I have not yet met, I am the new Director-General of the Community Services Directorate. I have been in this role since November last year and have appreciated the opportunities I have already had to meet with a number of you in a variety of forms.

Since joining the ACT public service I have been impressed by the work of the Community Services Directorate and our staff’s commitment to listening to the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community to encourage self-determination. I am also particularly pleased with the level of cooperation and collaboration between the elected body and the office of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Affairs in progressing work that is significant to the community.

I do not want to speak for too long this morning, but there are a few key achievements from the past 12 months, since we last came to the elected body hearings, that I would like to mention. Firstly, as you are aware, the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander agreement 2019-28 was signed last month and sets out the long-term direction in Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander affairs in the ACT.

It outlines how the ACT government, the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community and our community partners will work together to meet the social, cultural and economic needs of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples. This agreement continues the government’s commitment to be accountable to your community through the elected body.

The agreement has the principle of self-determination at its core and acknowledges Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples as Australia’s first peoples. It acknowledges that Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples have the ability and resources to provide their own solutions and that community leadership is central to the process of ensuring the long-term emotional and physical wellbeing of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples.

I take this opportunity to acknowledge and thank Katrina Fanning and all the members of the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Elected Body for the leadership and commitment you brought to the development of the agreement and the focus area action plans to ensure that the views of the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community were listened to and strongly advocated for during the development of the agreement.

I next highlight the Our Booris, Our Way review. This review, led by a wholly Aboriginal steering committee, seeks to understand the reasons for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children and young people entering care and to develop strategies to reduce the number of children and young people entering care, to improve their experience and outcomes while in care and, where appropriate, to exit Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children from care.

As at the start of March this year over 175 file reviews have been undertaken, providing valuable insights into the systemic improvements needed to address the over‑representation of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children in the child protection system in the ACT.

In August 2018 the steering committee provided an interim report, with four recommendations to government. I am pleased to say that the ACT government has agreed to these initial recommendations, and significant work is underway to implement them. A further five recommendations were provided in December 2018. The government is currently considering these and will provide a response to the steering committee shortly.

The final highlight I want to mention is the Community Services Directorate 2018‑28 strategic plan, launched in July last year. CSD consulted with 85 per cent of our staff and overwhelmingly the feedback received noted that our strategic focus needs to be on improved outcomes for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities. At the front of our strategic plan sits a cultural integrity statement which acknowledges the directorate’s commitment to cultural proficiency and cultural safety, authentic engagement, designated positions at all levels, celebrating cultural identity, delivering culturally specific and accessible services, and partnering with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander service providers.

While these are all great achievements, I acknowledge that there is a long way to go on our journey to true reconciliation in Australia. I know CSD is committed to continuing to work with the elected body to ensure the best outcomes for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people in the ACT.

**THE CHAIR**: Thank you, director-general. I will pass over to my colleague Member Hughes to commence questions for this session.

**MS HUGHES**: I want to recognise the work that has been happening in CSD, in particular with the elected body and the work that Lisa and her team do. Thank you for your opening statement. We have identified with the agreement that there are at least four priority areas we would like you to progress in the next 100 days. What activities are you going to undertake in that time, looking at those four priority areas? The first one is preservation of restoration services for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander families.

**Ms Cross**: I might pass to Helen Pappas to respond to that question. Would you like her at the same time to respond to the impact of the Youth Justice Blueprint?

**THE CHAIR**: If she has those collective responsibilities that would be fine.

**Ms Pappas**: In terms of preservation and restoration services, there has been quite a lot of work since the implementation of A Step Up for Our Kids strategy. A step up for our kids is ordinarily known as kids in out of home care, but we take quite a broad view of A step up; for us it is about a reform of the service system from beginning to end.

In terms of preservation, through the implementation of A Step Up we were able to bring the Uniting children and families program into the ACT for the first time. They run a series of evidence-based programs that focus on keeping kids at home or transitioning kids who are in care and restoring them to their home. The Newpin program, for example, works with young mums who are pregnant or who have newborns. It is about supporting them as much as possible.

You will all be aware of the work that Gugan Gulwan is doing with OzChild around functional family therapy. Referrals were taken in November of last year and we are really optimistic that that will be a program that supports families to stay together and preserve them at home, and for kids to be restored to their homes quickly and to make sure they do not then come back into care. We are really optimistic that that program will get the outcomes that the evidence demonstrates it can.

**MS HUGHES**: Can you focus on what is going to happen in the next 100 days?

**Ms Pappas**: Sure. These are the things that will continue. The Uniting program has been in place for a couple of years, but the Functional Family Therapy Program is only relatively new. For us it is about embedding that. The team leader of the program is now coming into the city and talking with staff on a weekly basis, I think.

**Ms Robinson**: It is on a fortnightly basis, and it is with one of the cultural advisers from the program as well.

**Ms Pappas**: They come in, and that is a relatively new aspect to that program. It is about talking with caseworkers, identifying families as early as possible and getting those families referred out to that program. Then the Family Group Conferencing Program is the other thing we are going to continue to focus on and continue to mature. The model has been in place in the ACT for 12 months. We had a pilot and we were successful in getting some permanent ongoing funding for those positions. We have recruited to those positions permanently. Now it is about training, embedding and moving from an opt-in referral process to an opt-out.

What that looks like—we were just talking about that last week—is that the cultural services team and the family group conferencing team will be able to get a list of all the Aboriginal families in the system. They can then go to those caseworkers and ask, “Why are we not doing family group conferencing?” It is about making sure that families have access to family group conferencing, about Uniting, about functional family therapy or about the cultural services team and, in some cases, maybe even all of them. That is where we are focusing. That has to be an area of focus for us because we know that keeping kids at home is where we want to be. Once they are in care, it is really hard to get them back home and it takes longer. So our effort has to be about keeping them home.

**MS HUGHES**: And working with the families?

**Ms Pappas**: Absolutely; families, immediate and extended, and then community.

**MS HUGHES**: Tell us about the impact that the Youth Justice Blueprint has had on our community.

**Ms Pappas**: I will throw to Jodie for that.

**Ms Robinson**: The blueprint for youth justice is the ACT government’s 10-year strategy to look at reducing the rate of children and young people generally involved in the criminal justice system, the youth justice system. In March last year the ACT Government released its progress report, the halfway point of the strategy. It certainly identified some early gains across the first five years of the strategy for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities.

Some of those gains included, over the five years of the strategy, a 31 per cent reduction of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander young people under youth justice supervision; a 34 per cent reduction of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander young people under community-based supervision; a 48 per cent reduction of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander young people in detention; a 71 per cent reduction in the average time that Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander young people spent in custody; and a 43 per cent reduction in the rate of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander young people under supervision on an average day.

They are some gains that we have seen over the first five years of the strategy. However, noting those gains, there is an over-representation in the number of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander young people involved in our youth justice system. That over-representation remains a critical issue. In late 2017 a blueprint task force was re-established, as requested by the minister, to provide some advice to the minister about the priority areas for the remaining five years of the strategy.

Given that your question goes to progress in the next 100 days, that report will go to the minister and the government within the next 100 days in terms of priorities for the community. I know, chair, that you have been involved in the task force and the blueprint as well. One of the particular focuses in terms of moving forward will continue to be the over-representation of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander young people in the youth justice system.

**MS HUGHES**: I have a general comment before we progress. There is so much across your directorate that we collectively are all very interested in. We will try to keep bringing people back to the impact and the question. Can you assume that we have some of the background knowledge so that we can get through the breadth of the questions we have. Thank you.

**THE CHAIR**: Otherwise we could be here until midnight, and then some, probably.

**MS HUGHES**: My next question is in regard to the ACT Housing strategy in the next 100 days, in particular diversionary housing, disability, high-needs disability, and those experiencing family and domestic violence.

**Ms Gilding**: I will take that question. In responding to the question, I am going to quickly mention two things under the housing strategy and then talk about diversionary programs as well, if that is all right, particularly in the next 100 days. Under the housing strategy and also the actions under the elected body agreement priority actions, there is a crossover. There is quite a bit of crossover.

One of the key things that we are looking to do in the next 100 days is work out the commitment that we have made under the housing strategy but also under our priority action areas around a community participation approach to understand housing needs and requirements within the Aboriginal and Torres Straits Islander community—that is, how do we actually work together to then progress a lot of those actions?

We have a piece of work under the housing strategy, which is what we are calling our social model framework. That is how ACT Housing itself actually delivers services. We know that we are the housing provider of last resort. There is a general consensus under the Housing Act about how Housing ACT actually operates in the broad. But on a day-to-day basis and operationally, what does that mean for our clients? What does that mean for people who need our services?

Particularly, we need to be able to connect with the elected body, Indigenous folk, the many voices that are out there, to figure out how do we do that piece of work together, because I think that will form the foundation of our operational policies, particularly our operational policies in terms of what kinship principles look like in terms of eligibility for housing, in terms of transfer for housing. How do we actually embed that line and that cultural understanding within our day-to-day operations?

The first thing is that in the next 100 days we want to begin that conversation: how do we work together, taking into consideration the relationship principles under the agreement, to actually start asking ourselves some of those questions about Housing ACT’s day-to-day operations? That is the first piece. That is one piece of work that we are going to be absolutely kicking off and coming to talk to you about in the next 100 days.

Certainly, something that is ongoing under the housing strategy and under the priority actions is developing the capability for an Indigenous-controlled organisation and a housing provider. I will not labour that too much because I know we have had meetings in the past 12 months with Yeddung, Good Pathways, which is an Indigenous organisation that we are working collaboratively with to see how we can actually support it and how we labour together to achieve that outcome for the community.

One of the things that is happening in the next 100 days in that space is that we have worked with the elected body. We have now written to do Yeddung and to EveryMan to ask them to nominate an Indigenous representative or employee to attend the international housing conference in May. I think there are some great connections that can be made from there.

**THE CHAIR**: To clarify, that is the World Indigenous Housing Conference.

**Ms Gilding**: Yes.

**THE CHAIR**: You missed that bit out.

**Ms Gilding**: Did I? Sorry. I am thinking a bit in front of myself.

**THE CHAIR**: I am just getting us focused.

**Ms Gilding**: That is quite exciting. I am hoping that we might be able to get some international connections there with those two representatives. That is happening in the next 100 days. In terms of our diversionary programs, we are working very closely with JACS on the drug and alcohol court and hope to have a program working with what we bring to the table, which is houses, in terms of designing support and in terms of the drug and alcohol court. There is a commitment to have that up and running by the end of 2019. Again, that work is progressing in the next 100 days. Do you have a question on that? No? You look like you have a question.

**THE CHAIR**: I have a question on that but I am giving you a chance to give your answer before I dive in.

**Ms Gilding**: That is okay. Then we are also working with justice on a justice housing program and what that looks like, particularly for detainees exiting the AMC. We are looking at how we scale that. What are the supports? Who is it for? What are the supports that are required? Again, how does housing work with justice to make sure that we not only have the accommodation but that we have the support around trauma, we have the support around drug and alcohol services to support folk exiting from the AMC? I will leave it there. There is still more, but I am going to stop.

**THE CHAIR**: My question, I think, relates to the area that you just spoke about. It is that last comment about people coming into and out of AMC. Is that part of the building communities, not prisons package that was announced recently?

**Ms Gilding**: Yes, it is.

**THE CHAIR**: The next thing is to make sure that people in the ACT community and our service organisations are also included. Given that many of the people we are talking about who need this housing are already existing clients of not just justice but other directorates, are there plans for them to be included so that there is a whole person view rather than just the bricks and mortar of a house?

**Ms Gilding**: Absolutely. From the housing point of view we often end up with: “Just give us a house and it’ll solve the problem.” We know that it is just not the case and we are actively working with health, mental health and justice around how we bring all our strengths to the table and collaborate to form programs that take a holistic approach to the person.

**MS HUGHES**: Are you working with education as well?

**Ms Gilding**: Not as closely with education. In terms of the next 100 days we have work happening with mental health and particularly the justice portfolio.

**THE CHAIR**: There is a fairly strong commitment in the agreement about Indigenous voices, and several service organisations would be very valuable in that conversation.

**Ms Gilding**: Yes.

**THE CHAIR**: So a commitment that they will be included in that?

**Ms Gilding**: Yes. Again, JACS has the lead on many of those, likewise health, but we certainly advocate back the other way and say, “Have we brought those voices in?”

**THE CHAIR**: Questions in every folder?

**Ms Gilding**: Yes, but absolutely on the work we have the lead on. In terms of the model social landlord, we are taking those relationship principles and that community mechanism and how we do that very, very seriously because we want the voices; we need the voices in there.

**MS HUGHES**: In the next 100 days what are the activities around improving the government’s response to family violence and its impact on our communities?

**Ms Wood**: The specific commitments we have in the action plan for the agreement are to progress work with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community and representative organisations to respond to the *We Don’t Shoot Our Wounded* report from 2009, as well as the 2017 community forum report. The chair has been involved in conversations with ministers about how we get this work started.

The *We Don’t Shoot Our Wounded* report, which is very significant, is 10 years old and we are very conscious that the fact that there has not been a formal government response in that time has caused great distress and disappointment in the community. We know that, to engage people in how we take that work forward, we need to start with a fresh commitment. The first priority is to work with ministers, the elected body, the new Domestic Violence Prevention Council Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander reference group and anyone who contributed to *We Don’t Shoot Our Wounded* who wants to participate to shape up that commitment and set a framework for taking that work forward.

I hope that process can also identify some really early aspects of the *We Don’t Shoot Our Wounded* recommendations that we can start working on. There will probably be some alignment between what comes out of those conversations and the other commitment in the action plan to work with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander men and boys to develop an approach to the prevention of violence. That was an important theme from *We Don’t Shoot Our Wounded* and the 2017 report as well. We are looking at, firstly, getting that commitment clearly on the record and really visible to community and then working with people on some early actions but also taking forward a longer term work plan coming out of the *We Don’t Shoot Our Wounded* recommendations.

We are really conscious that the overarching goal set out in the action plan is to reduce the prevalence of violence against Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women. So all our work needs to include a focus on Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women. In the work we are doing to look at the impacts of domestic and family violence on children, coming out of the DVPC report there is an initial research insight-gathering piece with children and young people. We have been scoping that research and the research will start probably within the next 100 days.

We are also looking to scope a specific focus on how we reach and bring in the voices of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children in that work. We are not assuming that that necessarily happens in exactly the same way. Over the next few months we want to be talking to a range of stakeholders about how we do that.

We are also just starting to roll out our front-line worker trainer on domestic and family violence. The foundation piece of that is for all ACT public servants. Included in that foundational piece is a recognition of the significant impact of domestic and family violence for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people and the additional barriers Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people may find in accessing help and disclosing domestic and family violence. So we will work to build awareness there.

Then we move into designing the more specialist training for our more specialist workers. We are using the Domestic Violence Crisis Service to help us design that training, but we will also be looking at how we bring in the right expertise to do that content around family violence for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander families.

**THE CHAIR**: When you said for your more specialist staff, do you mean staff who are more likely to come into contact with people who are experiencing family violence?

**Ms Wood**: Yes. We have a tiered structure. We have a foundation piece that is basic awareness and understanding for everyone. If we are going to train our front-line workers safely we need to have the organisations, the managers and their colleagues also understanding domestic and family violence. We know training our own workforce will lead to more disclosures in the workplace. Then we have two levels of training after that.

The highest level is the more specialist training, and we already deliver that in CSD to child and youth protective services caseworkers; they already get a five-day intensive training course. We are looking to do something that aligns with that for other specialists—social workers in the hospital and some of the specialist people in ACT Housing. Below that we have a slightly more advanced one-day training course for people like teachers and generalist nurses in the hospital. The maternal and child health nurses will get the more intensive training, but everyone will get the one-day training.

We are looking at targeting the intensity of the training to the type of role people do. The specialist people will be working with families with complex issues already and so it is about better equipping them for that. The one-day training is more for people who have maybe an ongoing relationship with a family or a client and have a wellbeing obligation. They need to know where there is risk and they need to know when they need to refer to more specialist support.

**MS HUGHES**: Can you tell us how many Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people have been part of selection panels for the directorate in the last 12 months, including staff and independent community representation?

**Ms Cross**: I am not sure whether we can provide that.

**Ms Murray**: Thank you for that question. We do not keep data on that. As I have been sitting here I have thought of five examples where I have sat on panels with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people. So to get some additional detail I would like to take that on notice so that I can provide you with the most fulsome response I can.

**MS HUGHES**: How many selection panels have had at least one member who has completed cultural awareness training?

**Ms Murray**: To answer this question we need to have a look at the cultural awareness training that CSD has conducted over the last 12 months and the real effort made to ensure every staff member has participated in a variety of cultural awareness training. We have CORE, which is, as you know, an AIATSIS e-learning model that has 10 modules that sit within that. Some 855 of those modules have been completed by individuals. People are encouraged to take a period of time to do that, and 180 individual people have completed it and 163 have completed module 2.

In addition, we have worked really hard on carrying forward through the directorate the theme of “don’t keep history a mystery”, which is the reconciliation theme. Over 500 staff attended the *After the Apology* film.

**THE CHAIR**: Sorry, Ms Murray, we will get to some of those questions later. Can you stick to the specifics of interview panels?

**Ms Murray**: Sorry.

**THE CHAIR**: The reason for this is that we are very interested in how we are going to get more Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander staff into jobs. Part of the issue is having selection panels that (1) understand the context of this community and (2) understand how to value the experience that people from our community might bring.

**Ms Murray**: Absolutely. The point I was trying to illustrate was that actually most people in CSD have completed cultural awareness training. Therefore, as to why we do not keep the data on how many people have attended the training and sat on panels, the assumption is that pretty much every panel will have one person who has completed cultural awareness training. I am sorry for that.

**MS HUGHES**: Thank you. You are assuming that most of them have done it.

**Ms Murray**: We know that most have done it.

**MS HUGHES**: But what about people that may need to do it? Is the training mandatory?

**Ms Murray**: It is. It is mandatory.

**MS HUGHES**: Do you keep a record of who is actually attending the training?

**Ms Murray**: Absolutely.

**MS HUGHES**: So you will be able to give us a response on how—

**Ms Murray**: The numbers of staff who have not completed?

**MS HUGHES**: Completed, yes, but you cannot give us a response on how many staff that have completed it have participated in selection panels?

**Ms Murray**: That is right. It would take me a long time to sit down and go through each individual selection panel and then marry that with the data. I am more than happy to do that.

**MS HUGHES**: Perhaps something to consider would be how you would collect that data in the future.

**Ms Murray**: Agreed.

**MS HUGHES**: Thank you.

**Ms Cross**: I think that, as well as just collecting the data, we could, as a principle, make sure that every panel has people on it who have had that training—

**MS HUGHES**: That is right.

**Ms Cross**: which prospectively would be a good way of ensuring that there is a proper view on the panel.

**MS HUGHES**: That is right. That leads us to our next question. How many incidences of racism have been generally reported within your directorate each year? How are they reported? We know that sometimes people find it quite difficult to be able to come forward and seek support when there have been incidences between staff or clients that may have experienced what they perceive as racism from staff within the public service. We would be interested in that response.

**Ms Murray**: I can answer that. It is through our RED framework and then subsequently our actions under the enterprise agreement. There was one instance that related to a component of racism. We require our RED contact officers to upload reports into our system. We also encourage staff who have made reports to enter them into our RiskMan system. If there are particular issues which include racism, it is escalated immediately to my position and also to the manager, employee relations. We immediately commence a preliminary assessment as part of the enterprise agreement to take action against that. That is in relation to the issues, particularly internally. It is the mechanism to resolve staff-to-staff type complaints.

In respect of complaints that are levelled in relation to our staff members from external sources, when they relate to issues such as racism, cultural bias, sexism and a variety of other inappropriate behaviours, they come across through an internal channel, through the complaints system. Then they come across to us when they relate to the behaviour of a staff member. Whether that is being investigated through the housing complaints team or, for example, through the CYPS complaints team, they get escalated to us so that we can make a decision in relation to the conduct matters and any actions taken.

I confirm that there was one instance that we undertook. I cannot go into its detail, obviously. But the systems are actually set up so that all of them are funnelled into the one spot, so that there can be a consistent approach, and it is taken incredibly seriously.

**THE CHAIR**: I have a follow-up question. That system would be to deal with the perception, at least, when a racist act has happened by a staff member. You run several facilities and processes where acts of racism might be disclosed, but are not, because of the acts of staff. For example, if I was in family group conferencing and said, “I was at the hospital and they only wanted to take my baby because they are racist,” how is that dealt with? Is there a way to capture that?

**Ms Murray**: For example, again, that would be channelled through to the complaints system.

**THE CHAIR**: Would it?

**Ms Murray**: If someone makes an allegation that someone took my baby because of “this” it would be reviewed at the complaints—

**THE CHAIR**: Sorry, that is a bad example.

**Ms Murray**: Sorry.

**THE CHAIR**: If the issue was about racism experienced at the hands of a different directorate but it is disclosed at one of your directorate’s functions, how would that be handled?

**Ms Murray**: That has occurred. The usual process that we have followed is that it is escalated through the management line. Then it is escalated across to me. In the particular example that I am recalling as the most recent example, we sought permission and some advice from the Government Solicitor on how we should disclose that information to the directorate that is responsible for the staff member who undertook that.

**THE CHAIR**: You have a process and a system.

**Ms Murray**: We have a process and a system, yes.

**MS HUGHES**: Ms Cross, what is your directorate’s role with Boomanulla Oval? How has it collaborated across other directorates to address the current situation, community concerns and future management of the facility? Can you or one of your team answer that question, please?

**Ms Sabellico**: I have been the person most involved to date in terms of Boomanulla, as the CSD representative on a cross-directorate meeting that has been looking at the restoration works at Boomanulla. My role on that has been as a participant and understanding at what point the restoration work is up to and when it will be completed, with the specific for CSD then to look at undertaking the work to establish a new community management of the site post the restoration.

Once we know exactly how far the restorations are going to go, then we can start to look at talking with community about the community management, what that looks like, what that needs to be. Then we will work in with community on that. Our role will be of more significance once it is opened with the four playing fields.

**MS HUGHES**: Can you tell us about your directorate’s support for any future submission for the longer term tenure of the 99 years of perpetuity of Boomanulla Oval by the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community? If not, what are the issues in securing a longer term lease?

**Ms Sabellico**: I think all opportunities will be considered and will be considered with the community in terms of what is needed and what we need to do. Part of our role will then be to undertake discussions across directorates about looking at what are some of the legal requirements or the arrangements that need to be put in place for the leasing. Does it include being financially sustainable? What other funding is available in order to support that? It will be looking at that whole picture in terms of then being able to support a community management mechanism that is fully aware of the scope and breadth of their responsibilities and accountabilities, and that government is as well. We would be looking at all of that within that discussion.

**MS HUGHES**: What will your directorate will be doing in terms of pursuing program management and stakeholder engagement at the Boomanulla Oval site?

**Ms Sabellico**: It is probably part of what strategic policy will be doing in its first one hundred days of the agreement. We have a clear action in there to return Boomanulla to community management. We will be looking at having conversations then with the elected body, the United Ngunnawal Elders Council and other community stakeholders in terms of progressing those discussions and how we would go about doing that. We would also be looking at what are some of the other opportunities that are then available in terms of how the community management committee can be supported to undertake the work as defined in their roles and accountabilities.

**MS HUGHES**: Thank you.

**THE CHAIR**: Ms Sabellico, I want to clarify something. In talking about the management of the oval, you have used the term “community management committee”. But it is not predetermined what the governance committee will be. I just want to not that that that has not been pre-set. That is just a term for whatever the community-led governance for that oval will be. Is that right?

**Ms Sabellico**: Correct; yes. It will be led by community and then defined by that consultation.

**MS HUGHES**: How many Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children have been restored to their birth families in the last two years, broken down by children on short‑term versus long-term orders? Can you also tell us about the data on various activities provided by the cultural care team?

**Ms Cross**: I am not sure we have exactly the data you are after, but I will ask Helen Pappas if she can respond at least in part to the question.

**Ms Pappas**: I can give you the numbers of Aboriginal kids who have exited care. I cannot give you a breakdown of the type of order. We would have to go back and do some manual extraction of that data.

**MS HUGHES**: So that is not telling us if they have exited care and are definitely going back to their birth families.

**Ms Pappas**: The majority of them would have, but I cannot tell you the number of them. I can give you the data in terms of kids that have exited care.

**THE CHAIR**: Is it that you cannot tell us today?

**Ms Pappas**: I cannot tell you today. I can take it on notice; it will just require a bit of pulling from different data sources.

**MS HUGHES**: Thank you.

**Ms Pappas**: In 2016-17, of the 145 total population who exited care, 35 were Aboriginals and Torres Strait Islanders, about 24 per cent. In the 2017-18 year, of the 131 who exited care, 23 were Aboriginal, so 18 per cent. For 2018-19, to date, of the 56 who have exited care, 17 have been Aboriginals or Torres Strait Islanders, so 30 per cent.

That is a combination of kids who have been on short-term and long-term orders and a combination of kids who have been restored because that is the right thing to do and then also kids who have either aged out or have made some different decisions about where they want to live. That tends to be the adolescent kids or the young people who make their own decisions about what they do and where they live. That is the total cohort.

**THE CHAIR**: The number you gave us for this financial year, is that proportionate to the number of Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander kids in care? If 30 per cent of the exits are Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander kids, are we 30 per cent of the population? Is it proportional? Are we doing better at exiting or the same?

**Ms Pappas**: It is about the same. The number of kids coming into care is slowing, but there are still children coming in.

**THE CHAIR**: Are you talking about all kids or our kids?

**Ms Pappas**: All kids. They are dropping but proportionately. We are seeing decreases in the numbers of Aboriginal kids coming into care. For the last quarter—July to December 2018—there were nine Aboriginal children. That is about 17 per cent and that is a substantial drop from the same quarter of last year, when there were 29 kids. In July to December 2016 there were 35. We are seeing a decrease in the numbers of kids coming into care, so we are optimistic.

**MS HUGHES**: Have strategies been implemented to reduce that?

**Ms Pappas**: I think it is a combination of things. All those things we talked about at the beginning around some of those newly established programs are starting to take effect. We have done a lot of training. We have done a lot of work with Curijo around how we embed Aboriginal child placement principles into our practice. We are doing some work with SNAICC, which is today presenting the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander child placement principles in child protection practice to all of our team leaders. That is a series of about seven or eight quite intense training sessions. The cultural services team would have had quite a big impact in walking alongside our staff and challenging them. All of those things together are starting to have an effect on the numbers.

At the Our Booris, Our Way steering committee recently the chair was saying they are getting some early feedback from families and from other service providers that they are noticing a difference in the way child protection are conducting themselves. That was said at the end as almost a throwaway line, but I am holding onto it. That is a good sign, and we will know we have landed it when the families and communities are telling us they experiencing something different.

**THE CHAIR**: There are several programs from CSD and a couple of other directorates working across families and old people in our health service and our youth service that are making the other side of the scale a place where our young people would go back to. It balances what you are saying: that a large scale of things are happening that probably contribute to that.

**MS HUGHES**: And the work with our community’s organisations is integral.

**THE CHAIR**: Yes, that is what I meant.

**Ms Pappas**: Absolutely; without a doubt.

**MS HUGHES**: The next question is in relation to the Carer Assessment and Linking Panel, CALP. How are these panels formed to ensure the best outcomes for our Aboriginal and Torres Islander children?

**Ms Pappas**: The Carer Assessment and Linking Panel has two functions, in effect. The care assessment bit is around those people who put themselves forward to be foster carers, whether it is kinship foster care or foster care. The assessments go to a panel to make sure they are robust and detailed enough and then the committee make a recommendation as to whether a family is suitable or not.

The other aspect of CALP is as a linking panel, which is a matching process between the carers and children. This generally happens when children are staying in care on a long-term basis. It is about making sure kids are in the right places in terms of their long-term care.

That panel has been in place for a long time. We are in the process of working back together to rethink the panel. Where Aboriginal children are presented to that panel, there is an Aboriginal rep on the panel. Generally it is a foster carer or somebody else that puts themselves forward to participate in that panel. We are looking to review it.

It has been in place for a long time and we are not sure whether we should be conflating the two issues of assessment and matching. We think we probably need to have that separated. But we are in discussions with ACT Together about what that looks like and how we have a focused effort, particularly for Aboriginal kids, and the right representation on those panels.

**MS HUGHES**: Sometimes it is not always clear that you are working with an Aboriginal child. In those cases I could see that having Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander representation on most panels would be important, considering how many children are being removed across the ACT.

**Ms Pappas**: There is a step before CALP, for us, which is maturing; it is about a restoration panel. Before anything goes to CALP or whatever the new form of CALP looks like, we need to reassure ourselves we have done all of the work around: are we sure these kids cannot go home, have we done everything we can do to find family, have we done all of those assessments? When all those options are exhausted, that is when it should go to this linking panel. For us, that is where our effort needs to go because that gives us an opportunity to continue to push those kids out of the system rather than further into the system. CALP will continue in its current form, but we are going to change it and we are going to shift our effort to earlier in the process.

**MS HUGHES**: Ms Cross, in relation to the work being undertaken by the adoption task force, we want to know why the elected body and the Our Booris, Our Way steering committee were not consulted in the development of the discussion paper. Was there any other Aboriginal and Torres Straits Islander community input into that?

**Ms Cross**: I will ask Anne Maree to respond.

**Ms Sabellico**: The discussion paper that was released was around an area of work that emanated from a review of the adoption legislation which was specifically looking at dispensation of consent in terms of matters that are already before the court or going through the court. Those submissions opened publicly in November and were to close in the March. We got a submission from the Our Booris, Our Way steering committee which clearly identified a number of concerns. We met with the chair of the committee and also the senior leader of the Our Booris, Our Way group that supports the committee and worked through the issues that had been identified there.

We apologised at that point that they were not directly provided with a copy through our mail-out; that was an oversight on our behalf. But we talked through what the underpinning issues were that needed to be resolved, given that this was specifically about the dispensation of consent once a matter had been taken through, and talked about the view that, say, in my mind as the executive director who signed this off, I would never think that adoption of Aboriginal children and young people is an option, that it is only in very extraordinary circumstances. But that needed to be defined.

We agreed that what we would undertake was some work then with community, with the Our Booris steering committee, with the elected body and with other stakeholders to look to establish the policy piece for CSD in terms of defining if adoption of an Aboriginal child or young person—

**THE CHAIR**: The very narrow parameters that that might be.

**Ms Sabellico**: Yes, and what that parameter is, to help them support the decision‑making that would be happening within child, youth and family on any matters there.

What we also discussed was the fact that this was a really critical issue for the community. We have agreed that we will take this issue through what will be a newly established Aboriginal and Torres Straits Islander co-design forum. It is a forum that first originated in thinking through our work on early support whereby we heard from the community that there needed to be a mechanism whereby we could have community-led solutions for issues that were being identified by community and that there should be an opportunity then for community to define, outline and describe what those responses should be.

We are now in the process of setting that up. We have brought on Lynnice Church to assist in consulting on the final design work of that, then this will be one of the first issues that we take through. We actually have community very much involved in defining that part of the work which has got the greatest impact in terms of the decision, and then the dispensation of consent paper is stand alone in terms of what happens once a matter gets to court. So that is how we have tried to resolve that.

**MS HUGHES**: Can I take from that that there will be early commitment to any other committee formation and discussion papers that may be happening in the future so that we can help allay fears in the community?

**Ms Sabellico**: Yes.

**MS HUGHES**: With the A Step Up for Our Kids program—and I know it was mentioned earlier—we would like to know what the mid strategy evaluation shows in relation to the effectiveness of funded programs to support Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children and their families.

**Ms Pappas**: The mid strategy evaluation is in its final stages of development. There has been a lot of work backwards and forwards around the data. They collect data from us and all the other funded agencies across A Step Up, and that has been quite a difficult process to go through because our systems are not helpful in terms of throwing out data. KPMG has been working with us for some time to get that right.

We anticipate that, probably in the next six to eight weeks, we will have a strategy evaluation. Actually, we have given a commitment to come and speak to the elected body in some detail on what that is telling us about what A Step Up is doing, where we see things progressing as we had intended and where we think we have got to do some more work to get to where we thought we would be at this stage. As soon as we have that data we will make a time to come and speak to any of you or all of you about what that looks like in some detail.

**MS HUGHES**: This next question would be yours too, I believe. Of the cultural care plans that must be in place for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children in care, have all plans been developed in the last 12 months, after the establishment of Our Booris, Our Way? How are they measured for cultural proficiency compliance?

**Ms Pappas**: I can talk to you about the numbers. This is the entire population—those cultural plans that are developed by child protection, CYPS, and also those that are developed by ACT Together. It is the entire population. For 2016-17 there were 202 Aboriginal kids in care; 194 of them had a cultural plan in place. At the end of 2017-18 there were 231 Aboriginal children in care and 218 had a cultural plan in place. For the first two months of this quarter we have got 221 children, of which 205 have a cultural plan in place. That gives you the numbers. If Barb Causon was in the room she would tell us, yes, that is great. But what does that actually tell us about the quality, and then what does that tell us about the impact that that has on kids? That is a piece of work that we have to do.

We are doing a lot of thinking about—and the IT system will get us some way to being able to do this in a much more automated way—where we actually amalgamate all the various plans that kids have, and cultural plans have been front and centre rather than something that sits off to the side. And then is it doing what we need to do? Is it having an impact on children? Is it improving their connection to community and to identity? That is work we have to do. We cannot extract that—it is qualitative—and we are going to have to do some work around understanding its usefulness.

I think the Our Booris, Our Way committee will go here and they will give us some guidance. They are reviewing and they have access to all the cultural plans and they will provide a narrative about what they think is happening. I suspect we need to improve not only how they are developed but the information that is in them and then understanding the impact of them. Does that answer the whole question? What I cannot do is give you a breakdown around the numbers since Our Booris, Our Way, but that is sort of the total population over the 2½ years.

**MS HUGHES**: You can see improvements in some of the Our Booris, Our Way figures that you have given us?

**Ms Pappas**: Yes. We have for a long time talked about a target of 90 per cent, and we are up and down. But you can count things. What we need to do is understand the impact, and I think that is the next maturity we need to get to.

**MS HUGHES**: It is the measurement that needs to be improved?

**Ms Pappas**: Absolutely.

**MS HUGHES**: Our next question is: can you tell us what progress there has been in the implementation of the recommendations of the Our Booris, Our Way interim report?

**Ms Pappas**: The interim report?

**MS HUGHES**: Yes.

**Ms Pappas**: You know that there are four recommendations. We are really pleased, I have to say, with the progress that we have made around that. The first recommendation is around case allocation. This was about making sure Aboriginal kids are reported to our system, and if the system decides there needs to be an investigation or an appraisal we are making an up-front decision that one of our staff members who have completed the cultural development program has priority allocation of that family. That is just recognising that staff members immerse themselves in the training and have a level of understanding that perhaps somebody who is new to our system or has not gone to that training does not have. We have developed a bit of a baseline there in terms of understanding how many of our front-line staff have actually done that training and then the process. It is a manual process around allocating to those people where that is possible.

There are some complexities when you talk about allocation because staff have a range of cases in their caseloads and it would depend on how big families are in terms of numbers of kids, how complex those young people are, where they are in the system and how difficult that work is with that family. We prioritise where we can. And we will just keep building. We have got another 13 staff who are actually doing their cultural development training at the moment. That will increase those numbers.

In terms of the SNAICC training, I already spoke about that and we are really excited to have SNAICC here. I am looking forward to going back and finding out what the team leaders thought of that training today. The other thing to say, I guess, about the SNAICC training is that we have been able to identify and recruit an Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander trainer, and he commenced with us on 4 March. We are really thrilled about that. Steve’s job will be to review the cultural development program and deliver that more often so that we can get people through. The commitment is that 80 per cent of our staff will have done that training in the first 12 months of them working with us.

On the revision of policy and practice, we have been working with Curijo. Belinda Kendall and her team did quite a bit of consultation with community members, and Maurice was involved in that. We thank him for his time. We had a one-on-one and gave quite a lot of feedback.

**THE CHAIR**: Just for Hansard, that is Member Walker?

**Ms Pappas**: That is right. Belinda and her team had been working to develop a practice guide for our staff around what it looks like. What does embedding the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander placement principle in our practice mean? It is a guide, and we are at the final stages of that. That is now just waiting for design and publication and we will make that available online. We set ourselves a bit of an aspirational target. There are things there that we are not going to be able to do immediately but we are going to work towards that.

We have also managed to identify and recruit an Aboriginal policy officer, and she started with us on 4 March also. We are really excited about that. They have been fairly pragmatic about going through all our policies and procedures and improving them in terms of the guidance that we can give our staff.

We have spoken about family group conferencing in some detail. I guess the only other thing to say around the recommendations is that we were able to identify and recruit a practice leader, and she has commenced with us as well. She was actually from the cultural services team and has moved over into practice leadership. She is one of those people that work alongside our case workers, challenge them, support them in their practice, do some debriefing, work with team leaders when they identify that case workers are not getting it or are not behaving or practising the way that we want them to and supporting how they develop cultural confidence across the workforce.

**MS HUGHES**: Is that an identified role?

**Ms Pappas**: It is.

**MS HUGHES**: That moves onto the next one. What is the plan to extend family group conferencing to high-needs families?

**Ms Pappas**: The focus at the moment in terms of family group conferencing is on all Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander families who want to participate in family group conferencing, regardless of their need. You get families in the entire spectrum. Some are really complex and some are not. It actually is not about complexity for us; it is about getting in early enough and family led decision-making in order to divert those families out of the system.

**MS HUGHES**: It is offered to all families?

**Ms Pappas**: It is offered to all families. We have got some more work to do to promote that to families and to find a way to encourage families to take up the offer. Sometimes they are not ready to but the offer is there, and sometimes you see families get some way through a process and then opt in. Do you have enough of a safety net there that when they are ready they can participate?

**MS HUGHES**: Our next question, Ms Cross, is: can you tell us how Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander families are assisted to assess specialist services for disability diagnoses? How many families have accessed that support?

**Ms Cross**: I will ask Ellen Dunne, who is the head of our office for disability, to take that question.

**Ms Dunne**: I will start off, but my colleague Melanie will be able to provide you with more specific detail in relation to the question. The office for disability is no longer a direct front-line service provider. But, as you would know, it works very closely with the National Disability Insurance Agency to implement the scheme. It will be at full scheme stage from 1 July next financial year. Melanie’s responsibility is in relation to the Child Development Service, which undertakes a mainstream service offer. Her area works very closely with the NDIA and their partner EACH. The question is more directed towards the work that Melanie is undertaking.

**THE CHAIR**: To help with your response, Ms Saballa, for our families who have children with complex needs and a disability that requires expensive processes for diagnosis—which is what they require before the NDIS will help them—how do we help people get the evidence they need to be eligible? That is what we are trying to get at. We understand the supports that kick in once you are eligible; our problem is with the hurdles to get the eligibility and the diagnosis done and what that costs.

**Ms Saballa**: Thank you very much for your question. I oversee the three Child and Family Centres and the Child Development Service, so I will concentrate briefly on the child development service. We are a universal service, so we are a universally accessible platform, based in Holder but also at a range of sites across Canberra. If parents and carers and family have concerns about their children’s development, it is the Child Development Service that they can access. They can access through speech pathology clinics, which operate in the child and family centres on a rostered basis, or physio. They can call up and can come in. All families with young children are welcome to access the Child Development Service. That is the first thing I want to mention.

I will talk quickly about the numbers of children we are seeing in a year and then I can talk about the number of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children.

**THE CHAIR**: We appreciate and understand the impact you are having in our community. What we are trying to get at is, for families who need to go to multiple specialists and pay quite expensive fees to get the diagnosis they need and the letters of support to say, “Yes, my child has autism” or those sorts of things, are there supports available to help our community members do that?

**MS HUGHES**: And it could be a dependant, not necessarily a child. It could be a young adult that is a dependant.

**Ms Saballa**: The focus of my work in the Child Development Service is for young children and families with children up to 12 years of age for an autism spectrum disorder assessment. That is just the remit of the service I work with.

But, in answer to your question, we do a lot of really proactive work with community in terms of how we engage with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander families. There is not the expectation that families will necessarily come to the Holder site. That is the first thing. It is with our Aboriginal community-controlled organisations that that has been available. We now have an early years engagement officer who plays a really critical function in connecting with families and then linking them into services.

We are a free service, so if families come into the Child Development Service and go into any of the drop-in clinics that is a free service. Then there is the opportunity to see one of our allied health professionals for further assessment.

**Ms Pappas**: To go to that question around autism assessments, a child under 12 can get a free autism assessment through the Child Development Service. That is one example. Because it is for kids under the age of 12 we do not have total coverage of all of those needs. It is a multidisciplinary process where a range of people work together to make sure kids get the assessment and information they need in order to get to the next step. It does not have coverage and not all families can access that service, so there is some further work to do there.

**THE CHAIR**: I picked on autism only because it is one of the disabilities that the earlier you identify the more supports can help and that sort of thing. But, besides our own health service, when commonwealth assistance kicks in are there things that this directorate does that can help with that? Notwithstanding that there are a whole bunch of child and family programs that do great things in that space, this is specifically to ensure that there is no delay in being able to help these families.

**Ms Saballa**: I will quickly mention two things. The first is that there are community paediatricians as part of the service offer of the Child Development Service. They are part of ACT Health but they are on site at the Child Development Service, so families can go on the waitlist for community paediatricians. We also offer the autism spectrum disorder assessment and diagnosis.

**MS HUGHES**: Do you have a sense of how long that waitlist takes?

**Ms Saballa**: There is a waitlist. It is something we actively look at. It can be past six months. It is a service that is highly sought after. Families can access that assessment in community, but I recognise that that is a cost. We have worked very hard to put something in place to make sure we are mitigating those wait times for families.

The other thing is that NDIS EACH are the early childhood early intervention partner funded by the NDIA and they are collocated at Holder. They are the commonwealth‑funded service that is also an access point for families. If families have a diagnosis or have concerns about their children’s development, they can go to NDIS EACH and receive some therapeutic early intervention support while they are going down the diagnostic path. As you would all appreciate, the journey for families around a diagnosis is individual and can take some time.

**MS HUGHES**: What I am understanding from your response is that there is a gap for young adults who are dependent on their families for support where they may already have other disabilities and the autism or whatever the other diagnosis is has not been picked up?

**Ms Pappas**: There may be programs run by other directorates that we are not aware of. Health might have some programs or Education might have some programs.

**THE CHAIR**: It is also helpful to know that there are things that can happen for people while the other process takes the time that it needs.

**Ms Dunne**: If a young person is referred to EACH they will be considered for early childhood early intervention services. That is a bridging kind of service that allows some support to be provided to those people before they reach the point where they become eligible for the NDIS. Quick bridging services might possibly deter a person from requiring full-term NDIS support.

**THE CHAIR**: For our 221 kids in child protection, if any of those kids need these sorts of assessments, the directorate helps with that?

**Ms Pappas**: Absolutely.

**THE CHAIR**: Because they will not have someone to take them perhaps?

**Ms Pappas**: That is right, and we can access that through the Child Development Service or we could go out to private providers, depending on what is required.

**THE CHAIR**: So they are catered for?

**Ms Pappas**: Yes.

**MS HUGHES**: How is the directorate assured that the service providers you contract provide culturally appropriate disability services?

**Ms Cross**: I do not think we contract any providers. I think that has been overtaken by the national disability insurance scheme.

**Ms Dunne**: The only thing we do in relation to our integrated service response program is provide funding for people who are NDIS eligible but for some reason do not have a plan or their plan is considered to be insufficient. It is short-term financial support and we would be paying a provider of their choice to supply those supports. That is about as close as we get.

**THE CHAIR**: As I understand the NDIS, you direct the service that you want to purchase, so it is an individual choice?

**Ms Dunne**: Yes, it is individual choice. When someone comes to us for support because they have a crisis and they do not have the adequate supports in their plan and they cannot navigate the system without support, it is on a referral basis. If we determine that there is a case for additional support, we work within the ACT government and directorates to see if it is a health service or otherwise. If it is clearly NDIS, we will act on their behalf to get them to complete a review to see if there is any additional support they can get. If it is not, we will consider paying short‑term for supports and we will ask the person or their families to nominate a provider.

**Ms Cross**: Once they are accessing an NDIS package they can choose which provider they use.

**THE CHAIR**: That is what I was getting at.

**Ms Cross**: From 1 July they will be registered by the NDIA, so there is a registration process for a number of services to make sure they meet appropriate standards for providing services to people with disability.

**MS HUGHES**: What is the directorate’s strategic plan going forward with the United Ngunnawal Elders Council?

**Ms Charles**: I am commencing the role. In the early days of commencing this role I met with the UNEC co-chairs to discuss how they have been supported. Arising from those discussions, they talked to me about a number of their priorities. One of those was secretariat support. The second one was about treaty and how we move forward in that space. I understand that the minister last year met with UNEC also to talk about treaty; so those discussions have been happening. In the agreement there is a commitment to work with the United Ngunnawal Elders Council to better understand treaty.

I have also met with the Victorian Treaty Advancement Commissioner, Ms Jill Gallagher. I have also met with government officials in Victoria to get a better understanding about their process and how they are moving forward in this space.

UNEC have recently met, in the last month. Arising from that, they have provided cultural and heritage advice to a number of government and non-government agencies. They also agreed to their terms of reference, so that that gives more clarity on how we move forward and talk about these things. Finally, at the next meeting we will be looking at bringing representatives from Victoria to talk more about the process in that space.

**MS HUGHES**: Thank you. Can you tell us how many smoking, water blessings and welcome to Country ceremonies were undertaken throughout the directorate in the last 12 months?

**Ms Cross**: I do not think we have any consolidated data on that. If you are interested, I could ask a couple of the executive directors to talk about things they have specifically done in the last 12 months, but I could not give you—

**THE CHAIR**: I am mindful of the time.

**Ms Cross**: Yes, I know. Again, I was going to hand over to Louise, who has had a couple—

**THE CHAIR**: She is likely to have had a few of those events?

**Ms Cross**: Yes, and a couple of important ones which we might just mention.

**Ms Gilding**: I think we have had three in the last six months.

**MS HUGHES**: Smoking ceremonies?

**Ms Gilding**: Smoking ceremonies; that is right. It is something that we have learned from our work with developing the Elders units. We are looking to take that principle and apply it more broadly across the portfolio. In particular, we have had one in Dickson and one in Watson. They are where we have had events on those sites that have been quite confronting. Where we have had to demolish or we are rebuilding, we have done a smoking ceremony. What we are doing is actually noting that we have done that on that site so that when it comes around to allocating that site in the future, we can actually tell our Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander folk that the site has been cleansed. We are finding that that is something that will be very helpful going forward.

The third one we did was with our new TFM—total facilities management—provider, Programmed, when they opened their new offices out in Fyshwick. I do not know that that has happened often, a commercial operator actually undertaking a smoking ceremony in the opening of their new office premises. It was good. Yes, it was fantastic. We had handprints by the door as well. They are the three that we have done.

**THE CHAIR**: Given that that data is a bit problematic and it might not be something you have finalised as yet—I am going back to the structure and system of embedding this process—what guidance do you give across the directorate for when those sorts of things are appropriate and how to make them a reality?

**Ms Cross**: Completely by coincidence, Anne Maree and I have been talking today about what sorts of protocols we ought to be developing for the directorate and then sharing with other directorates those sorts of matters. We are very happy to consider that as part of that work.

**MS HUGHES**: We know that staff attend cultural competency training. Can you tell us how the number of hours per session are determined and how they are determined as meeting the ACT Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community expectations? In your response, can you tell us whether that was consulted on with the elected body and the United Ngunnawal Elders Council?

**Ms Murray**: I will try to be a little more concise on this occasion. To answer the question in relation to a direct conversation and consultation with the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Elected Body and the United Ngunnawal Elders Council, the answer is we have not. The conversations that we undertook were with our own staff. But I would like to take on board the comment and think about how I can do that better. I will take that on board. As I started to explain last time—I will try to whip through it quickly—we have really focused on Core as our fundamental baseline and—sorry.

**THE CHAIR**: Go on; I am thinking ahead for other questions and seeing if someone is still here. Please continue.

**Ms Murray**: We are focused on Core because our team felt that, in consultation with our staff, through our creating excellence conversations, this is a really good baseline of work that we should be undertaking to do. One thing I flag that we are working quite actively on but still have not landed is the local content. That is an issue for us and something that we would like to work very hard on to continue.

In addition, as I indicated before, over 500 people attended the *After the Apology* film. We have had cultural safety master classes with Associate Professor Richard Franklin; 126 people have attended those. We have had 36 people attend embedding Aboriginal and Torres Straits Islander child placement principles into practice. The SNAICC workshop, which we were speaking about earlier, 42 people attended.

The fundamentals of working cross-culturally training, we have had 20 people attend. A really intensive course is the Berry Street Childhood Institute yarning up on trauma training course, which 25 people attended. There have been two events in the Canberra conversation, the talking excellence speaker series, that 85 people attended.

The difficulty in saying how many hours that has included is that they are all remarkably different. Some of those, as you would be aware, are four-day courses. Core is a fundamental requirement for all of our staff to work through. We have asked people to work through that over 18 months. The modules are about an hour long if you sit down and do them as a team. We have asked managers to lead those as team facilitation conversations so that we can broker and identify whether there are any issues that people are not understanding.

Sometimes with e-learning people skip, skip, skip through and they reckon that they can have a crack at the question at the end. We want to actually engage in those really deep conversations. We took the advice from our own staff, but we are happy to really engage on what is better practice and what is best practice. I would really like to do that if I could.

**Ms Cross**: I should add that the deputy director-general and I will be attending a cultural awareness session with all of the deputy directors-general and directors‑general. It will have been closely developed with the elected body and delivered by Katrina, I believe.

**THE CHAIR**: Just for clarity, it is as part of the elected body—not in a commercial sense. It will focus on a bit of the history of government, community relations and other things as well. I was looking around because the Coordinator-General for Family Safety was talking earlier about some training that was being delivered and rolled out. This question is perhaps not for you, Ms Murray, but more broadly. When the directorate develops other training modules for external use, will they have that same rigour and look at that opportunity to make sure that Ngunnawal and/or Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander-specific context are included? I am referring not just to being directed to your staff but to any of the third parties that you work with or the other directorates where you are leading that sort of work to make sure that that is included.

**Ms Murray**: Yes. Could I correct the record? There were around 300 people who participated, not 126. I clearly have old figures that Melanie has corrected me on. About 300 people have participated in the cultural safety master class.

**THE CHAIR**: Thank you.

**MS HUGHES**: How many hours is the master class?

**Ms Murray**: It is three hours. It was a half day that we dedicated to it when I participated in it.

**MS HUGHES**: I move on to the next question. This is in relation to Gugan Gulwan. As you know, it is a topic of conversation quite regularly. Can you tell us the progress for new premises for Gugan Gulwan?

**Ms Sabellico**: Yes, I will take that one. In respect of recent progress, I have now met a number of times to talk to Kim Davison to confirm what her priority options are for moving forward. I then presented that at a joint meeting of CSD, Property ACT and the planning directorate to talk through what we need to look at this point in time but also into the future—making sure that we are checking what is in the master plans and things like that so that we assure ourselves that, if we are focused on the current site, the current site is going to be available into the future as well.

Of those options that Kim has provided, the preference is to remain where they are. So we are looking at the option of extending. If the building as it is not appropriate to extend, then it will be a knock-down, rebuild. If the site then is not big enough to do a fit-for-purpose building to cater for both current and growth over the next 10 to 20 years, then we will be having a look at one of the other options around the same geographic location. They want to remain in that area but they are also happy to consider being over two sites if that is the option.

Those options have then been developed into a brief for a scope of work. We are going out then to engage someone, like a structural engineer, to consider all of those options, to have a look at this for us so that we can know whether or not option 1, 2 or 3 is the one to proceed.

**Ms Cross**: I believe as well that we have been able to find a second site for them in Erindale for a short-term expansion.

**Ms Sabellico**: They have an overflow site. Given that they have the functional family therapy now in place, they needed extra space; so an overflow site has been provided.

**THE CHAIR**: In respect of that answer, can I ask this, Ms Sabellico: those options are not too dissimilar to the conversations we had this time last year. Granted, there are processes to go through to formalise things. Moving forward, what is the time frame for the next step, for the engagement of an architect or a structural engineer? I am not trying to bind you to something for the next five stages, but just to get that bit done.

**Ms Sabellico**: I believe we are going out in the next week or two to engage someone to then have that work done over the next couple of months so that we actually know what we are doing before the end of the financial year.

**THE CHAIR**: Thank you.

**MS HUGHES**: That kind of meets the 100-day time frame then.

**Ms Sabellico**: It also meets the 100 days, correct.

**MS HUGHES**: Can you tell us the progress of the OzChild partnership with Gugan-Gulwan? There was some mention of it earlier.

**Ms Robinson**: I wish OzChild and Gugan-Gulwan were here to talk about the success of the program themselves. However, the committee will know that we have engaged with OzChild and Gugan-Gulwan. It was a partnership that they developed together and then came to government seeking support for. It is the implementation of functional family therapies specifically with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander families. The pilot is over a 12 to 18-month period. It is anticipated that during that time they will be able to work with around 40 families.

We are in the first tranche of that at the moment. As at 11 March, there had been 15 referrals to the program. They are actively working with 13 families, comprising 43 children. That engagement rate is exceptionally high. I think it is testament to the partnership that has been developed between those two organisations and how they are working—obviously, there is existing community knowledge—and also how they have tailored the program to adjust to the local Canberra community. They have been spending the time engaging with families.

Of those 13 families at the moment, five are in the engagement phase and seven are in the behaviour change phase of the program. We are seeing families actively progress through the program as well. The program will include an evaluation component that includes feedback from families themselves on how they have experienced the program. That will be available towards the end of this year.

**THE CHAIR**: I have seen programs that are run by community organisations, and the minimalist touch from government is great. I am interested in what is the role of your area of responsibility in making sure other parts of ACT government are as supportive of this partnership? To be specific, you have 13 families, so you are going to have kids in schools. Is the Education Directorate across what this program is and how to support it, as an example?

**Ms Robinson**: We have been informing areas across government about the program. But, importantly, I am informed by the teams themselves as to how they like to engage. The feedback they are telling us is that once they have met with the family and engaged with the family and the family have opted into the program, what occurs is a case conference where the functional family therapy team can explain to a family’s care team what they are doing and what their role will be. In a sense some of those other providers can sit back for a bit while functional family therapy do their work.

The end stage of the program is a maintenance phase, and part of that is functional family therapy and the family determining what ongoing supports the family need to sustain the changes that have occurred. That is when there is another opportunity to draw in those broader community and government providers to talk about how they sustain and support the family with what they determine they need moving forward.

**MS HUGHES**: What is the strategy to employ Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people across all employment levels of Bimberi? How many women are employed at Bimberi and in the women’s information service? There is still a lot to go through, so if you could be tight with our responses.

**Ms Murray**: I will try. We are trying to work very closely with a particular recruitment agency—I will not name them because we are just in the process of trying to finalise that arrangement—so that we can specifically focus on broader employment of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people within our directorate. We are looking at doing specific rounds of employment for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people with an Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander employment firm.

Within Bimberi we are moving to a more structured approach with our recruitment so that we will not do the more rolling, ad hoc process. We will be running one at the start of the year and one in the middle of the year in terms of regularised recruitment. Our intention is—again, we are still in the early stages of working with this particular recruitment company—to increase the numbers of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people who are employed into the Bimberi system.

We have Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander female staff at Bimberi. The numbers are low and will identify people, so I am a little bit uncomfortable saying that publicly. We are talking about one staff member who identifies as Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander in the Bimberi space.

The women’s information referral service is run slightly differently to a single service. It is not a stand-up service like it used to be when it was on the main street on London Circuit. It more broadly is responded to as part of the office for women. I would have to take on notice whether we have any Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander staff who identify within that.

**Ms Cross**: I think there is a single person employed to provide the referrals and they are not Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander but they then refer people to appropriate services.

**THE CHAIR**: So that list is endless of what the services could be.

**Ms Murray**: Yes.

**MS HUGHES**: Is the recruitment agency a local provider?

**Ms Murray**: Yes. We are trying very hard to do that.

**MS HUGHES**: How many of the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Bimberi clients have cultural care plans?

**Ms Robinson**: Children that are subject to a care and protection order are required to have cultural care plans. Currently there are no Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander young people in Bimberi that are subject to a care and protection order.

In relation to ensuring that the cultural needs of young people are considered within the youth justice system, when young people are sentenced they are required to have a youth justice case plan in place within six weeks. That includes an element in relation to culture as well. Off the top of my head—I will come back and correct the record if I need to—over the last 12 months, of the seven Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander young people that were sentenced and in custody, six had that case plan in place within the six-week time frame.

We have a family engagement officer at Bimberi and that position is a designated position held by an Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander woman. Part of her role within the centre is around providing access to cultural programs, ensuring the strengthening of families, supporting staff and supporting young people in the centre.

**THE CHAIR**: For the record, where we have a member of the elected body who has a direct conflict crossways to government—because it happens with a few of us—they are not directly involved with the questions. It might sound a bit obvious but we actually do the process and, in fact, when we circulate the questions they are taken out of their packs and those sorts of things. That is just so you understand our process a bit.

**Ms Robinson**: Absolutely. I am sure your member could speak much more confidently than I about the work she is undertaking there.

**THE CHAIR**: But she is not allowed.

**MS HUGHES**: What is the strategy for transitioning young people to return to education when released from Bimberi?

**Ms Robinson**: The Education Directorate run the education program at Bimberi. It is a school, the Murrumbidgee Education and Training Centre. One hundred per cent of young people in Bimberi are engaged in education programs within the school. The school has a dedicated transition officer and their role is to work with the young person on their education options post release. Some young people, depending on their security classification, are eligible for day release and engage in education programs prior to release and that assists in transitioning back into the community.

**THE CHAIR**: One of the reasons for the questions is to be assured that if I am detained at Bimberi and I am in year 10 I am doing something equivalent so that when I am released I do not come out and go, “Oh, well, I can’t do year 10 work anymore. They were just keeping me busy, not attaining.” So it has that equivalency?

**Ms Robinson**: Absolutely. I do not have the data in front of me, but certainly the minister provides a report to the Assembly twice per year and that includes all of the modules young people are working towards and the levels of educational attainment within that report.

**MS HUGHES**: How is the community services industry relationship and reform strategy building a more collaborative working relationship with community sector organisations? What is the strategy, and how are Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community organisations prioritised?

**Ms Sabellico**: The industry strategy was funded by a levy of community organisations a number of years ago and a plan was established in terms of the work the community sector wanted to have a look at for better sustainability of the community sector in the longer term. They have run a number of projects. The current projects are around professional development and career pathways; emerging leaders; a volunteers project to look at the use of volunteers as members of the workforce; onboarding and supervision; and workforce data—that is, how the sector looks at being consistent around the needs of the sector in being able to implement reform in their own right in those areas.

The industry strategy is managed by a group of community sector organisations, as chaired by ACTCOSS, and they manage the projects. Each of those projects, though not specifically focused on Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community organisation, is inclusive of all organisations, but they are looking at the sector more broadly.

The work we will be looking at undertaking as one of the actions under the agreement is developing some policies, some resources and some tools around building the capacity and capability of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander organisations, particularly new organisations and how to establish them, and how to work in a strategic partnership with current organisations to support the establishment of organisations or broaden existing work. We are looking at doing some very specific work, but the industry strategy is inclusive of the consideration of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander organisations across their portfolio of projects.

**Ms Evans**: This also refers to a question you asked earlier about the work we do to make sure funded contracted organisations in the community sector are culturally competent. That relates also to the industry strategy. ACTCOSS are funded to the value of $269,000 through CSD to provide the Gulanga program. They work with a number of community sector organisations around cultural competency. Their team are Aboriginal people; I think there are three Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people in that team.

Late last year they finalised the development of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander recruitment and retention resources for the community sector. They had online and offline tools. The idea behind that was to assist community organisations to be able to deliver their employment strategies or their programs in a culturally appropriate way.

**THE CHAIR**: Could I ask: given that you have opened the door on that subject, in those third-party contract arrangements between the directorate and that sector of service provision how do you assure yourselves about their cultural competence and their cultural appropriateness in their service delivery? Is that part of their contract arrangements?

**Ms Evans**: Yes, in general. In our contract arrangements, over time, in Anne Maree’s area and my own we are working really closely on looking at what it is we are trying to achieve in terms of outcomes. We are getting better at that. I would say that in the past a lot of the time it has just been: how many people did you engage with rather than what impact did that have. To be completely honest, there is still further work we can do to make sure things like cultural competency training actually have an impact rather than being just delivered. But certainly, yes, we do ask for impact statements in a lot of cases. We also include things like case studies or requests for case studies and things like that in reporting—some qualitative and some quantitative reporting.

**THE CHAIR**: One of my reasons for asking this question is that when I talk to our leading service organisations part of the issue they have across the sector is that other organisations will drop off clients to them that become a bit hard to work with or they make claims about being able to do services that they cannot. It is unfunded work that gets picked up by our community-specific organisations. Is there potential in that consideration for how they demonstrate partnership and connection with Aboriginal‑led organisations in measuring that so that our organisations become part of the measurement tool?

**Ms Evans**: Yes.

**Ms Sabellico**: Yes, we can definitely take that on board.

**Ms Gilding**: And we will take that on in the specialist homelessness sector.

**MS HUGHES**: We have already covered the next three questions, so we are going to move to 32. What strategies and activities does the family violence hub have that are specifically targeted at Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people?

**Ms Wood**: In the design process for the family safety hub, where we were informed by a range of people in front-line services as well as people with lived experience of violence, we did make an effort to ensure that we were bringing the lived experience of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people into that and we did have a group of Aboriginal women whom we accessed through the support of Victim Support ACT who came together as a group to talk to us about their experience and what they wanted from the service system.

That has captured their story. Their collective story is captured in our family safety hub insights report. Coming out of that, that informed the priorities for the work plan for the family safety hub and, in particular, around ensuring that one of our priorities has to be supporting better capability in culturally competent responses to family violence across the whole system—and the system is not just community services; it is justice, it is health, it is across all those sectors.

It also identified that we do not have the right responses to many Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander families who might want a response to family violence that actually supports the whole family, that is not about family separation. One of the comments that really stuck with me was from the woman who said she wants awesome support for her kids. Because of the impact of the violence there are a whole range of challenges for those kids, and if we do not actually support children to get through that then we are setting up the next generation for those kinds of issues. It has informed the work plan.

In terms of the work the family safety hub has done since being launched about a year ago, we are doing the work around a problem at a time. The first problem was looking at early intervention for pregnant women and new parents, and coming out of that there was a whole range of people who came together to be engaged in that conversation.

We have not always been able to bring the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander specialist organisations locally, necessarily, into those conversations and where we have not we have made sure that we have invited other organisations who are participating, if they have a specialist team, a cultural services team or a specialist team that works with the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community, to also invite some of those staff into that conversation.

The first pilot that has come out of that challenge is providing legal information in maternal health and community settings, working in Centenary hospital, in Calvary hospital and in the Gungahlin child and family centre. The legal services partners are the Women’s Legal Centre and Legal Aid. Those services are operating.

We have not yet been able to get data about how many Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander clients those services are seeing, but that is something we are seeking to collect. Because one of the partners for Calvary and the Gungahlin child and family centre is the Women’s Legal Centre, we are working with them on how we connect this health justice partnership pilot with their existing Mulleun Murra program that has a particular focus on supporting Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women.

In everything we do, we want to think about how the next thing can be integrated with existing services and actually make it reach more people who might need that help but also make it a more seamless experience for those people. That is where we are at the moment, but we do have, as a priority, particular work with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people that will be informed by the *We Don’t Shoot Our Wounded* work.

**THE CHAIR**: We have the steering committee that the DVPC put together of people from our community who work in refuges, legal support that is offered, that sort of debate. The follow-up question I have got is in the area that you are working in now, Ms Wood, which is quite difficult, as people do not want to know about family violence until they have to know about it. How do we tell our people what the hub actually means and what you can expect?

It is not something people just rock up to for a family fun day. We want them to be very empowered with the knowledge. I think your example about the stuff being available at maternal health places where people are interacting with the system is great, but how do we make sure that the communication product and placement are going to reach into our community?

**Ms Wood**: I think we have that communication challenge for the whole community still. We are continuing to work on how we communicate what the role of the family safety hub is: it is not a service delivery hub; it is not a physical place; it is actually a way that we are going to bring people together to improve the system for everyone. We are continuing to tell that story and to work on how we get that story out to all the different parts of the community.

One of the really important principles, and one of the important insights that guided the development of the hub, was the insight that said people are not necessarily going to come to one central place. We actually need to reach people where they have a trusted relationship already. An important priority for us is understanding where those trusted places are, how we work with those trusted people and places and how we get information out in the right form.

**THE CHAIR**: Is part of that consideration how we do it at a resource-neutral place for those organisations?

**Ms Wood**: Yes. We are very conscious that a lot of our partners that we are working with on that system reform are community sector organisations which obviously are very focused on that front-line service delivery. Yes, we are really conscious, all the time, of the time that we take from people and making sure that when they work with us there is value for them as well as us in the time they commit.

**THE CHAIR**: Because they are feeling that they are not talking to a client; right?

**Ms Wood**: That is right. We have to be finding ways to enable them to get that information out that is not coming at an additional impost to them.

**MS HUGHES**: What activities will the directorate be supporting for NAIDOC Week in 2019, following the success of the 2018 NAIDOC lunch, and how will our community be involved?

**Ms Charles**: The directorate will continue to support the NAIDOC lunch as an annual event for community to come together and celebrate. We are currently in the process of starting to plan what that might look like and, noting that a lot of celebrations happen during NAIDOC Week, putting in place tentative bookings and things like that for possible venues. We would work closely with the elected body on the programming of events and what that would look like and also the United Ngunnawal Elders Council in terms of how we bring culture and language into that celebration.

We will continue to do the flag raising ceremony and look at ways we can leverage the annual NAIDOC ball in Canberra this year. Through our cultural grants we provide funding for community organisations to host their own NAIDOC Week events. Another of the events is the NAIDOC family day and luncheon.

**MS HUGHES**: How does the directorate celebrate Ngunnawal culture at culturally significant periods throughout the year?

**Ms Charles**: Under the agreement, we have committed as an ACT government to showcase Ngunnawal culture in all celebrations that we have, and in public spaces. How the ACT government goes about celebrating Ngunnawal culture will be discussed at the Intra-Directorate Committee more broadly. The directorate have led the way in terms of the Multicultural Festival. Jacinta can talk a bit more about what they have done in bringing Ngunnawal culture to the festival.

**Ms Evans**: I would be delighted to speak to that. It has been such a great opportunity to have responsibility for the division I have—inclusion and participation, the office for multicultural affairs, the office for women and a range of other offices—and working alongside Anne Maree and Lisa in having Aboriginal affairs. It is such a great opportunity in the events we tend to run to be able to say first and foremost that we are meeting on the land of Ngunnawal people and that we want to acknowledge first nations people before we move into whatever celebrations we are having.

The Multicultural Festival was a really good example of that where we were able to contract a local Aboriginal artist to do a piece of work for us to have some additional banners in both English and in language around the festival. We had about eight banners across the footprint acknowledging that we were meeting on Ngunnawal land. Our Aboriginal showcase was a great success as well.

More importantly, in some of the smaller events we hold throughout the year we have a really big focus on that initial welcome. We invite somebody who can speak to the experience of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people. Another example is the awards for International Women’s Day. We had a really beautiful and meaningful welcome where the aunty who spoke talked about her mother’s and grandmother’s contributions as women. That is the kind of thing that we are focused on in our regular events across ACT government now but trying to do it in a way that is not just paying lip-service.

Last week the entire Assembly agreed to join the Welcoming Cities network. It is important to draw to your attention that the very first commitment and criteria we meet under this agreement as local government is that we recognise Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people as the First Peoples of the nation and seek to engage with those communities through our welcoming work. There are a range of ways to do that. I will leave a copy of that. It shows the commitment we are making that fits in with our agreement more broadly.

**MS CHIVERS**: I want to clarify that the Indigenous showcase is not an ACT government event.

**Ms Evans**: The festival is an ACT government event, yes.

**MS CHIVERS**: But you made specific reference to the Indigenous showcase and I want to acknowledge that that is not an ACT government specific thing.

**MS HUGHES**: Does the directorate fund non-Indigenous organisations to deliver Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander programs and, if so, for what purpose?

**Ms Cross**: We will take that on notice so that we can check properly.

**THE CHAIR**: We are keen to understand, if a specific program for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander members of the Canberra community is not being delivered by an Aboriginal organisation, why that is the case.

**Ms Cross**: Yes; we are happy to take that on notice.

**MS HUGHES**: Are Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander mediators utilised if there is a cultural conflict between Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander and non‑Indigenous staff?

**Ms Murray**: Thank you very much for the question. Where I have led mediation in relation to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people and non-Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander staff members we have always sought to utilise an Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander mediator.

**MS HUGHES**: Do you have a number for last year?

**Ms Murray**: None in the last year. I would say three years ago was the last time I engaged in that.

**THE CHAIR**: Because that was the last time it was required?

**Ms Murray**: Yes, the last time it was required.

**MS HUGHES**: Thank you for your time.

**THE CHAIR**: Thank you for your time and preparations today and your extensive support. When we started this session I did not note the directorate’s support in getting the agreement across the line but also yesterday’s finalisation of moving COAG from a ministerial council to one that has Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people at the table. I formally thank the directorate for their input into that.

## Hearing suspended from 3.07 to 3.22 pm.

Appearances:

Environment, Planning and Sustainable Development Directorate

Ponton, Mr Ben, Director-General

Simmons, Mr Craig, Chief Operating Officer

Walker, Mr Ian, Executive Director, Environment

Elton, Ms Jaime Elton, Director, People and Capability

Iglesias, Mr Daniel, Director, ACT Parks and Conservation Service

Moore, Ms Fiona, Senior Manager, ACT Heritage

Mudford, Ms Mary, Manager, Healthy Country

Taylor-Grant, Mr Jackson, Aboriginal NRM Facilitator

**THE CHAIR**: Can I begin by thanking the directorate for attending today. We appreciate the time and effort that have gone into preparing for today’s hearings and also acknowledge the significant work across the directorate that was done in preparation for the whole-of-government agreement, in particular your first action plan. We are really happy with where that got to and the commitments that have been made in that. Some of the questions for today and some priorities of where we are going will stem from that.

As we have done with the other two directorates today—this morning we did an official Welcome to Country—we acknowledge with you that we are on Ngunnawal Country. For the purposes of this afternoon, director-general, we will give you an opportunity in a minute to make any opening remarks that you might have. Then we will go through a series of questions which, I think for this year, are provided and you can have a look through them and have a bit more prep time and work out who needs to be at the table and those sorts of things.

Our process for developing the questions is that, whilst Member Jacob Keed is responsible for this portfolio, we do a consensus approach to writing questions. We also offer the opportunity for community members to provide us with questions. Part of the ordering of the questions is that we give priority to questions that might have come from the community. They do not necessarily align in a thematic way that suits the government structure of the directorate. Apologies for that. But given that we are only here for an hour it should not be too much up and down for people.

As with other hearings that you might participate in here, whilst some of the other rules that sit around it might be different, I ask the Director-General if he has any opening remarks.

**Mr Ponton**: I will only spend a few minutes making a few opening remarks so that we have more time for your questions because, of course, that is what we are here for today. I just want to make the observation that the directorate is absolutely committed to genuinely partner with the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community in Canberra and meaningfully engage with that community to support the protection of the Country, the maintenance of spiritual and cultural practices and the broader aspirations of moving to the 21st century. And this is something that I have been lucky enough to have had the opportunity to talk about at our regular meetings with the member we work with, Mr Keed.

From my perspective, I think I am particularly lucky that I have worked across various organisations in the ACT public service, and the Environment, Planning and Sustainable Development Directorate has a unique opportunity to work with, and for, so many parts of the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community. I think that we are very lucky to be able to do that.

With those few remarks, I am happy to take your questions. Of course, I will have my officials here as well to assist with those answers.

**THE CHAIR**: We appreciate that.

**MR KEED**: My first question is: we have identified three priorities that we would like you to progress within the next 100 days. Can you tell us what activities you will undertake within that period for that strategy for on-Country service delivery?

**Mr Ponton**: Certainly. In terms of on-Country service delivery, I might ask my colleague, Mr Walker, to respond.

**THE CHAIR**: If I could add, just for a slight bit of context, where it is particularly relating to the commitments in the agreement and the action plan.

**Mr Ponton**: Certainly.

**THE CHAIR**: If you could focus on those, that would be much appreciated.

**Mr Walker**: Thank you for the question. In terms of the next 100 days and our, I guess, relationship with the agreement and the action plan, we have committed in that action plan to establish a Traditional Custodian Caring for Country Committee. It is referred to as a council in the action plan but following consultation with the community we have refined that to a committee. That will provide a voice and a role for community, Ngunnawal community, to provide direction and support around the on-Country type programs that will occur. For example, today we have got prescribed burns occurring on some grassland areas. Wally Bell, a Ngunawal elder, was on site, I believe, this afternoon to use a bit of cultural practices in establishing that burn of the grassland. We are really integrating, I guess, cultural practices into our land management activities. Fire is a key part of that, and that has been a lot of work over the past few years to deliver burning programs. We will continue to invest in that space.

We have a significant number of Aboriginal staff who are trained as firefighters and are leading cultural burning practices on Country. Over the course of the next 100 days, as posed in the question, we will be implementing our prescribed burning program, which will include cultural burning as one element.

There is a whole range of other activities like water, where we have cultural water programs, where we are engaging with Ngunnawal community about their aspirations for cultural water. You will see those manifest themselves in our water resource plan, which is a commitment under the Murray-Darling Basin plan. That has an explicit commitment around supporting Ngunnawal community in how they manage and look at cultural water in the ACT. It is a commitment at the national level as well. We are ticking a number of boxes in that space.

I would also highlight—and perhaps it goes back a little to, if I may, acknowledging the passing of a significant elder, Uncle Carl Brown—that our programs are really built on trying to understand culture and the relationship with Country. And Uncle Carl was certainly one of those people who provided advice to us and, importantly, connected us with things like our ecological burning and cultural burning practices. I think we need to acknowledge and pay respect to Uncle Carl for that, and his legacy has really been those sorts of activities around cultural burning but also his work as a registered Aboriginal organisation. As part of the directorate we have RAOs that provide heritage advice to us. In this case, talking about Uncle Carl, he was one of those people that we sought that advice from.

One of the legacies of his work and the work of the directorate has also been about the scarred tree relocation to Namadgi National Park. Again, that was celebrated by Uncle Carl and the community. They are the sorts of activities and programs that we will continue to implement in terms of protecting cultural sites across the ACT, and that is part of the function of our heritage team and our parks and conservation staff.

**THE CHAIR**: I will make sure that I pass on to his family as well that you have done that in this forum.

**MR KEED**: Probably that sort of answers the question but I will ask it anyway. Can you tell us what activities you will undertake within the period to develop an engagement strategy for planning purposes?

**Mr Ponton**: Sorry, can I just clarify, when you mention planning purposes, are you referring to the planning—

**THE CHAIR**: The non-E part of your directorate.

**Mr Ponton**: I just wanted to clarify. That was what I was going to say and talk about and I did not want to go off on a tangent if that is not what you are after.

**THE CHAIR**: That is exactly the right tangent.

**Mr Ponton**: In terms of the planning part of the portfolio, the most significant body of work that we will be undertaking this year is the Territory Plan review, and again I have had the opportunity to talk to Mr Keed very briefly about this significant piece of policy work. We have acknowledged that, not just for the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community but for the broader Canberra community, we really need to think about how we engage with what I have referred to before as the missing voices in the planning space. We are very conscious of the need to do that.

In the past when we undertook planning policy work we tended to get the same people engaging in that work, and the Territory Plan review for that matter is not just about buildings or the city, it is about the entire ACT. We are currently in the process of the final scoping for that project. Within the next 100 days, in fact sooner than that, I would expect that we will have developed the scope for the project in draft form and also a draft engagement strategy.

We are working with a number of experts—and we still have to settle on some of those experts to help us—to make sure that we have got that right. I did write to you, chair, recently in relation to that particular project—and I am hoping that you have seen that correspondence—essentially asking for your assistance to help us with that work. Once we develop the draft scope and the draft engagement strategy we would like the opportunity to either meet with you or the body itself or, if you are happy to delegate that to Member Keed, we can have that conversation.

But I am really keen to make sure that we do not do what has happened in the past where we think that we know what to do and we just go out and we start doing it and find out halfway through or towards the end that we are not hearing from the people that we need to hear from.

As I said, if you have not seen that correspondence, I am happy to send that back through the secretariat so that we can commence those discussions once we have got a draft.

In addition we are also working with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people within our own organisation to help us as we develop those strategies. I acknowledge that I have got a wonderful resource in that, because of the nature of our work, we have so many Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people in our organisation. No other directorates have that benefit. We are wanting to test ideas with our own people before we start going out more broadly.

**THE CHAIR**: Director-general, the secretariat may have passed that on to me. It does not come to front of mind just at the moment, but I will follow up on that. The Territory Plan review is obviously quite important. I assume that that includes the National Capital Authority group of work as well?

**Mr Ponton**: There is a component but essentially we have a dual planning system; so the NCA is quite separate. Our focus for the Territory Plan review will be that area under our control, but they will be a key stakeholder.

**THE CHAIR**: The area that I am particularly interested in is around the cultural centre and the bike paths. Some of it is your space and some of it is National Capital Authority. In particular, how does the flow of potential traffic around that as an opportunity at the cultural centre fit within that scope?

**Mr Ponton**: That does not fit within this body of work. I think, in terms of that particular area, that would be more within the space of our colleagues in Transport Canberra and City Services in terms of the land and the pathways there. But, of course, we have an interest from the broader planning perspective. If that is a particular point of concern, I am more than happy to talk with my colleague Ms Thomas in relation to the role of Transport Canberra and City Services, but I am thinking more in terms of the broader policy for the city and the ACT.

**THE CHAIR**: Will that process that you are talking about, the specific purpose of the review, translate to broader systemic change, I guess, on how the directorate engages with the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community on all issues?

**Mr Ponton**: Absolutely, I see this as an opportunity, if you will, to be a sort of flagship in terms of how we engage with the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community. In the nearly two years that I have been in this role, I have observed that we do things in a traditional public service way, and that has not been working. As I mentioned, I have also had some very useful conversations with Member Keed in relation to how we can do things better.

I think that it is best, rather than try to change everything at once, that we focus on a particular project. As I said, the Territory Plan review is a significant policy document. I think this is a great opportunity for us to work on the scope and the engagement, and work with the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community to understand how we ought to be engaging with you, because that is the other thing; as planners, we tend to think that we know how to engage best. But what we do and what we provide do not necessarily resonate. Therefore, we do not hear from the people that we need to hear from.

My proposal is that we start with the Territory Plan review. But having said that, there are things that we are already starting to learn as we start to scope out this work. We know we can do things differently in other parts. It may not be broad policy pieces of work. For example, Actsmart is a sustainability program. It has a lot of collateral in terms of how we get out and communicate what we do. That team has touched base with one of our Aboriginal people in the directorate. It is not their job to do this but they thought, “Let’s test whether this material is culturally sensitive. Will it resonate with the Aboriginal community?” The feedback that we got was, “No, it will not and you need to change it.”

I am pleased to say that the executive director of that particular team shared recently at our executive board meeting his experience of going through that process. What he shared with his colleagues was, “You all need to do things differently because I had not even thought about this.” It was only when the team made that approach and got the feedback that he realised how poorly they were doing that work. So he is also looking to make some changes.

As a matter of course, we talk about this in our executive board meetings. When I meet with Member Keed, there are things that fall out of those discussions that I also elevate to the executive board. So that is all front of mind that we need to be thinking about the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community.

**MR KEED**: What activities will you undertake to develop a strategy which encompasses cultural practices in the management of Namadgi in areas such as kangaroo culling, fire and back-burning, and also the carp management?

**Mr Ponton**: Thank you for the question. Again, I know this is an area that my colleague Mr Walker has been working very closely in; so I will ask him to answer that question.

**Mr Walker**: Thanks Mr Keed. Certainly, the first part of this is always about asking the question and seeing what the community is looking for in those areas. We are in the process of establishing, as I have already alluded to, our Traditional Custodian Caring for Country committee. We have called for nominations on that committee. They will be front and centre in providing direction advice to us about the sorts of activities that the Ngunnawal community wish to see happen on Country. That represents not only Namadgi but also the rest of the parks and reserves managed by the parks and conservation service, approximately 70 per cent of the ACT.

We will engage with that group, and then more broadly UNEC and the elected body, to actually inform and design the activities that best mirror the needs and aspirations of the community. That will be the first part of that. We already know that the community are quite interested in a number of areas; so we are working with the community on things like rock art and identification of sites.

We are working with the community on tourism and tourism-based opportunities. We are working with the community on cultural water, cultural burning. There is a range of those activities that are already in train. Our engagement with Elders in the community I guess is picking up those sorts of aspirations and needs of the community in very much a self-determination way so that we can work with them, understand the importance of Country and look after Country for the community. That is sort of the broad overview in that space. Is there anything specific that you would like?

**THE CHAIR**: Can I double-check something? In the next 100 days if we came to meet with the directorate, would we expect that in that 100 days the committee that you are establishing will be set down and have the ability to formulate a strategy across all of this? What I am worried about is a whole bunch of activity not being able to measure impact, return on investment and those sort of things. So in the next 100 days that group with be established?

**Mr Walker**: Certainly, that group will be established. We are in the process of nominations being sought. We have those nominations and we are now working to ensure that that is representative across the Ngunnawal community.

**THE CHAIR**: Of course, whilst we have some suggested areas there, given that it is traditionally-owned membership, they will be determined by what is suggested?

**Mr Walker**: Correct. The varied membership of the committee will be determined by Ngunnawal and also the terms of reference of how that committee will operate will be determined by the community. They will provide direction to us about the sorts of activities that they would like to see happen on Country.

**THE CHAIR**: Could I ask perhaps a mechanical question, then? If it is open to self‑nomination, who chooses the membership?

**Mr Walker**: When we have those nominations coming in, we will call that group of people together. They will self-determine the membership in that space. Also, chair, they will elect the chair in that space as well.

**THE CHAIR**: So there will not be a predetermined terms of reference for any of those things?

**Mr Walker**: No, this is very—

**THE CHAIR**: It is who is interested coming together—

**Mr Walker**: They come together, explain what you would like to have happen on Country and what sorts of activities would be undertaken. It is very strongly focused on self-determination. In our first meeting there were some, I guess, ground rules around that established by the community to inform how that would go forward.

**THE CHAIR**: Thank you.

**MR KEED**: My second question: how many Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people have been part of selection panels for the directorate in the past 12 months?

**Mr Ponton**: Before I answer that, chair, could I seek your indulgence? I am looking ahead at question 3. Could I touch on question 3 and then come back to answer question 2, which in fact is going to be a challenge for me. But I thought I would like to provide some context in response to question 3. Is that okay?

**THE CHAIR**: I will ask the member to read the question, so it is in *Hansard*.

**MR KEED**: Question 3: on how many selection panels have you had at least one member who has completed cultural awareness training?

**Mr Ponton**: Thank you for the question, Member Keed. I want to touch on the cultural awareness training first. In terms of cultural awareness training, this is again something that when I took on this role just shy of two years ago, it was apparent to me that we could do better in that space. I just want to give you an update—

**THE CHAIR**: Director-General, I am conscious that it is 3.40 pm. In order to get other information on how things are going, could we stick to questions about—

**Mr Ponton**: Certainly.

**THE CHAIR**: selection panels.

**Mr Ponton**: Could I very quickly, though, point out that in this financial year alone, 120 people have completed cultural awareness training and it is now mandatory.

**THE CHAIR**: That is excellent to hear; thank you.

**Mr Ponton**: In terms of questions 2 and 3, I am not going to be able to answer them off the top of my head. I think that I will need to take those two questions on notice in terms of specific numbers.

**THE CHAIR**: To clarify, the 120 is excellent and that it is mandatory is excellent. How many staff are in the directorate, just so I get a sense of scale?

**Mr Ponton**: Eight hundred?

**Mr Simmons**: FTE is 630 with a headcount of around 700. It fluctuates; so around 700.

**Mr Ponton**: At this point in time 17½ per cent of our people this year have completed training. That compares to four per cent the year before.

**THE CHAIR**: Would the training be mandatory? What is the time frame you have given your management team to get to 100 per cent—everyone across the line—if it is mandatory?

**Mr Simmons**: We are running a continuous program. We have an external provider who comes in and provides that service. We are working with them to increase the amount of Ngunnawal-specific content as well as broad cultural awareness. It is as often and as frequently as we can get them out there. Those courses actually fill up quite quickly. We are subscribed. It will probably take us more than a year to get everybody through, though.

**THE CHAIR**: Thank you.

**Mr Ponton**: And also—

**THE CHAIR**: Is that a day program?

**Mr Simmons**: It is a half-day.

**Mr Ponton**: It is also talked about at the management level and then in various teams to enforce the fact that it is mandatory, which is why I suspect that the sessions fill up very quickly as they become available.

**THE CHAIR**: I appreciate that you have drawn a line in the sand and that it takes a while to get to where you want to be. I just wanted to get a sense of what the scale was.

**MR KEED**: How many incidents of racism are generally reported within the directorate each year and how are they reported?

**Mr Ponton**: There have been none in the period that I have been director general, so that is over the past two years. They would be reported through direct contact with our human resources or people and capability team or to managers. If somebody were to express a concern to a colleague I suspect that that would be reported through with the consent of that individual.

**THE CHAIR**: To clarify, I assume that that is between staff. Have there been incidents of racism, for example, in Namadgi where members of the public have graffitied? Does the directorate deal with incidents that are not caused by the directorate but that you need to address?

**Mr Ponton**: None that I am aware of, but I will ask my colleague Mr Walker who manages the parks.

**Mr Walker**: That is probably a question to take on notice. Like all communities I suggest we will confront racism routinely across our management regime and dealing with that is a response we take seriously. If there were graffiti or other things inappropriately represented across the parks and reserve space we would certainly proactively investigate and then respond to those issues.

**THE CHAIR**: It is about the other people’s experience on Country and making sure there is a system‑wide approach in the directorate so if something like that appears it is dealt with and eliminated quickly. That is the purpose of the question.

**Mr Walker**: I think, chair, you are exactly right. If we encounter such an issue we deal with it on the spot and respond appropriately.

**MR KEED**: What is the status of the Namadgi agreement and what are the steps forward?

**Mr Walker**: We have had a number of meetings with the signatories to the Namadgi agreement. One of the principles in our action plan is about free, prior and informed consent. Going through the discussions with the signatories it became evident that not all the signatories understood what the agreement was about at the time of signing. So we have been working with that group of people to broaden the understanding of the agreement.

Also in those discussions the challenge has been identifying the right people to speak for Country. That continues to be an ongoing discussion with the community and particularly the signatories. As I said, we have had a number of meetings. We are now working with OATSIA around some genealogy work to help clarify the right people to speak for Country. That will continue to build a better understanding of where that sits.

If I can speak frankly, there is a degree of tension in those meetings around who are the right people and do they have the responsibility to talk for Country? We have been proactively trying to address that. Part of the response is the broader Caring for Country committee that we are progressing to make sure that we have a good voice around the Ngunnawal people, the Traditional Custodians of the land.

**THE CHAIR**: The questions about the Namadgi agreement go specifically to management decisions of the national park, not just culture and heritage decisions. In the last year, outside of staff how have Ngunnawal people been able to have a voice in how the park is managed?

**Mr Walker**: I will ask Daniel Iglesias to respond to that further. But across our business we are engaging Ngunnawal Elders in a range of activities, whether they be as I have already mentioned—

**THE CHAIR**: We will get across a lot of those, Mr Walker. I am particularly interested at the moment in the management of the Namadgi park.

**Mr Walker**: Sure. Mr Iglesias will respond to that in the specifics.

**Mr Iglesias**: Specifically Namadgi National Park?

**THE CHAIR**: That is what the agreement was for.

**Mr Iglesias**: Yes. A number of our staff have a very close relationship with both the park and members of their community who have an interest in the park. There have been recent times in the past where we have relied on those relationships to be able to get access to community members where there have been aspects of park management that we need advice on. A good example was the shifting of the scar tree into the park.

Not being the custodians of that sort of knowledge we really depend on Traditional Custodians and how they can communicate what the issues are, what needs to happen, how it should happen, who should be involved in it. That illustrates a fundamental shift in the thinking of park managers. When I first became a ranger that did not exist at all.

We have realised that, first of all, there are Traditional Custodians out there. Second, our staff are empowered and know that they have a voice to be able to say to the management group, “Hey, guys, this is our traditional land. We have a voice back into the community and we can influence the sorts of decisions you make”. Those same people have demonstrated time and again the value of their capacity to do that. That reflects on the whole park service in really positive way. Another example is—

**THE CHAIR**: Let me stop you there. The question is about how Ngunnawal people—not staff—are engaged to help with the management of the park. Is the answer to that through staff networks?

**Mr Iglesias**: Yes, predominantly.

**THE CHAIR**: Let me say this before I ask the next question: this is not a reflection on any of those staff because they do a fantastic job, and even the process of the scar tree removal seemed to go very well. But I am concerned about those individuals who are walking in two worlds in what you are asking them to do and the level of conflict that that places them in. What support structures do you have for them?

**Mr Iglesias**: Our own staff?

**THE CHAIR**: You are asking staff to put themselves in boiling water.

**Mr Iglesias**: Okay, I understand that.

**THE CHAIR**: You are asking them to be public servants and to connect to family connections in particular. Given that we do not have the agreement—and I understand why that is happening—I am really worried about how people working in the directorate are supported to do that work in a way that protects them not just professionally but personally.

**Mr Iglesias**: That is a good question. About four or five years ago we created what we call the Murrumbung network. That had its roots in supporting our Aboriginal staff in many different ways. One of the key ways was exactly what you have just described: that unique challenge that our Aboriginal staff have. It is true to say that that network has over the course of the years enabled Aboriginal staff to talk openly about those challenges and to workshop amongst themselves how they can get through it.

Supporting that is a unique process of staff support that we provide through the park service. We have access to the directorate-wide employee assistance program but we also have a more specific program which supports all our park staff, including our Aboriginal staff, on anything at all. That is a confidential service that is provided.

The Murrumbung network has given us the opportunity to highlight some of those issues that you are describing, to bring them out in the open, to talk about them and to empower that group amongst themselves to have the conversations in a safe place. I have heard them many times when they have said, “Geez, this is going to be difficult for me.” The only way we have been able to deal with it is to talk about it and say, “Well, how can we help? Are there more senior people who might be able to make some phone calls?”

I have met with Aunty Matilda and Aunty Ros and we have spoken about some of these sorts of things. That has helped me to understand what some of these people might be going through and how I might be able to help them. In many ways it is a case-by-case thing; some of them are pretty specific. Sometimes staff will come to their managers if they trust them enough; at other times they will deal with it amongst their little group. It is not a one size fits all but I would be confident in saying that we acknowledge it is an issue and we have tried to facilitate the forum to deal with it.

**THE CHAIR**: I agree the staff network is a mechanism in that, but what structurally does the directorate provide? Are there guidelines or processes or conflict of interest forms or things that protect them on the intellectual property they might share or the relationship issues they might have should the advice they give be challenged at some point?

The people stuff is great; it is the structural issues I am asking about. So if their manager is not great at a particular point or their director is not prepared to have the conversations you are talking about, what structurally will support them rather than just relying on the right people in the right place at the right time?

**Mr Ponton**: What I am hearing from Mr Iglesias is that there has been a very strong focus on the people side of things. We have structures in place more broadly. I cannot say that there is anything specifically to deal with the particular issue you are raising. I will ask that that be brought back to our senior executive group and—

**THE CHAIR**: Because I think the broader agreement for Ngunnawal people to work at needs time.

**Mr Ponton**: Yes.

**THE CHAIR**: So doing this as an interim measure to protect staff with great knowledge and great skills would be excellent.

**Mr Ponton**: Yes. The senior executive group and the executive management board look at governance issues, and I will put it in that frame. I will ask my chief operating officer, Mr Simmons, to bring something to that group and we will monitor that so that when we come back to you next year we will be in a position to give you a more fulsome answer. It is a really good point you have raised and I thank you for doing so.

**Mr Walker**: Part of the role of working with the Elders and the community is also to provide mentoring opportunity for staff, both Aboriginal staff and non-Aboriginal staff, to build cultural competencies and ensure we have a culturally safe workplace. In our agreement and our work there you will see those sorts of sentiments about having a culturally safe work environment. That means looking after our people—

**THE CHAIR**: Which is why you need systems and structures.

**Mr Walker**: I completely agree. I was just mentioning that the mentoring element is built into that process.

**THE CHAIR**: It is making sure that is locked in long term and not just because there is a good bloke doing it at the moment.

**Mr Walker**: Sure.

**MS CHIVERS**: I want to get this clear in my mind. The original question was around the status of the Namadgi agreement and identifying the steps forward. Are you basically saying that in 12 months since the last elected body hearings, when it came to light that nothing had really been done in relation to the Namadgi agreement for over a decade, all that has really been done is that you have discovered that not all of the signatories knew what they were signing up to, that all you have done in that 12‑month period around the agreement is just try to clarify that with those signatories?

**Mr Walker**: No, that is not all—

**MS CHIVERS**: That is what I got from what you said.

**Mr Walker**: That is not all that we have done. I will just recap.

**MS CHIVERS**: Yes.

**Mr Walker**: We have engaged with the community and the signatories around that. We have had a number of meetings with them to work through the agreement. We have gone into the detail of the agreement. We have ascertained that we need to work through the right people to speak for Country and work with OATSIA to understand that relationship.

We have also worked with them on specific things that have come up through those discussions about particular activities, whether that be, as I have already alluded to, fire or fire management. Those sorts of things are also covered through the discussions at those meetings. Then we have been able to implement those things based on that advice coming through those meetings.

**THE CHAIR**: I was distracted at the start of your answer but one of the other pieces of work that you did straight up was to get the Attorney-General’s advice on the legal status of where things are at. Sorry if you said that but that was an important first step on where to go.

**MR KEED**: Question No 7: what is the role and purpose of the Traditional Custodian Caring for Country committee and what region does it cover?

**Mr Walker**: The traditional caring for Country committee will cover 70 per cent of the ACT. That represents the parks and conservation space that we manage. Its role will be determined by the committee. But, in the main, it is about the environmental management and how we look after Country together. It is very much about self‑determination for that community and also for building capacity, both capacity of the community and capacity of our staff, to understand and better appreciate the relationship between Country, community and the work that we do day to day. With the community, we are looking for it to be self-determined and to provide direction. That was a fairly strong direction from the community: that they would provide direction on how Country should be managed.

**THE CHAIR**: Certainly it would seem that the lesson from the Namadgi agreement, which pre-dates most of us here, is not to be so prescriptive on what you want that group to do from one side of the table. Certainly, what you are proposing also sits very well with the leadership and self-determining principles in the agreement.

**MR KEED**: Question No 9: what is the difference between the roles of United Ngunnawal Elders Council, the Representative Aboriginal Organisations and the Traditional Custodian Caring for Country committee? How will these groups value-add to the business of the directorate?

**Mr Walker**: In responding to that, I think I can touch on a number of those things that I have already spoken about. I will deal with the registrar of Aboriginal organisations first. They are clearly about providing Aboriginal cultural heritage advice and advice about cultural heritage values. I will ask Fiona Moore, who heads up our heritage team, to join us at the table. She can provide more detail about RAOs.

**Ms Moore**: The Representative Aboriginal Organisations are established under the Heritage Act. There are four RAOs declared at present. The function that the RAOs have is that they are there to provide advice to the Heritage Council. They are a consultative group for the Heritage Council. They provide advice on all matters that come before the council, including heritage registrations, works occurring within a heritage place—the development works—and heritage guidelines. These are guideline documents about how a place is to be managed. They also provide information about the release of restrictive information. They are the main functions of the RAOs and the relationship with the Heritage Council.

**THE CHAIR**: This is the essence of the question: whilst it is right and proper for the committee that you are establishing to set its work agenda or purpose, if you like, where that intersects with legislative groups who perhaps opt out of working on the—it is more of a structural issue of how to make sure that those things can co-exist and/or live separately should that be the wishes of the members here.

**Mr Walker**: Clearly, the groups that you have already mentioned have a legislative basis. The committee that we are establishing is a representative group and does not have a legislative basis. Where it becomes a legislative issue, that group would be providing advice or thoughts to UNEC in that broader context or to the RAOs.

**MS CHIVERS**: Can you give me an example of what would be a legislative matter or issue?

**Mr Walker**: Protection of a particular heritage site; you would require RAO advice on that. You would go to the RAOs for that. That is a very simple illustration. The sorts of things that the committee would look at would be: how would signage in the national parks best reflect Traditional Custodians? That is an illustrative example. That is the sort of thing that the committee would look at.

Perhaps it could be: how would we introduce a walking trail? How would we start to talk about Country, culture and language through the parks and reserves system? Using language in signage, using language in different areas, would start to be an important element of how that committee would drive a broader appreciation of Country and culture across the ACT.

**MS CHIVERS**: I knew that but the reason I asked the question is that I think our community who might read *Hansard* or our report might not understand that. I think you have actually answered the question much better in how you have just said it than what was said previously. I thank you.

**THE CHAIR**: I did not know. It helps me if I get asked the question.

**Mr Walker**: Thank you.

**MS HUGHES**: For clarity, when would you consult with United Ngunnawal Elders Council?

**Mr Walker**: That is a really good question. I think that would be something that we would be seeking advice on from the committee, who may also end up having membership from the United Ngunnawal Elders Council. I think that is something that is going to evolve. But I would certainly see the council in respect of the broader issues—for example, health-related issues or education-related issues that a more land management-based committee might raise—being an appropriate place to go. How do we elevate health or education-related issues at that broader level to that sort of council, eg, the things that fall out of our responsibility as land managers, land custodians?

**Mr Ponton**: I add that if you think we are getting that mix wrong, we are happy to receive your thoughts on that.

**MR KEED**: Question No 10: does the directorate have an Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander engagement plan?

**Mr Ponton**: Can I clarify whether you are under the heading relating to tourism or are you asking more broadly across the portfolio in terms of the work that we do? I will answer the question as though it relates to the broader work that we do across all aspects of the portfolio, in which case I refer back to my earlier answer: no, we do not. This is something that is very dear to my heart in terms of capturing the missing voices in all the work that we do. The work we are doing—the Territory Plan review, Actsmart and those other areas—will help us to develop such a strategy.

**MR KEED**: Question No 11: what is the process when procuring local Aboriginal businesses to undertake cultural tours or activities at Tidbinbilla?

**Mr Walker**: I guess the process around all procurement is through advertisement, depending on the scale of money that we are talking about. That is a standard process within government. Specifically around cultural tourism, we have a number of existing licence holders who are running Aboriginal cultural businesses. They provide that service. So there is no specific additional procurement that would be required.

As businesses are developed and grow in any part of nature-based tourism, cultural tourism, then they would seek a licence from us to then go and implement that activity, wherever that occurred on Country.

**Mr Ponton**: In relation to procurement more broadly—I know the question was specific to a particular area—can we talk about what we are doing more broadly in terms of procurement for local Aboriginal business?

**THE CHAIR**: We could do both. This question arises from the licensing arrangements. In particular, is there a limit to that? What is the quality accreditation process that might sit with that? However, I am very interested to hear more broadly across the directorate on procurement and its economic impact for our community.

**Mr Walker**: In terms of the licensing and, I guess, the relationship with tour operators, the ACT as a whole is moving into the nature-based tourism space. It is a new area for the ACT government; so our systems and processes are not well evolved.

**THE CHAIR**: Absolutely.

**Mr Walker**: That is an area that we will need to invest in into the future to bring our systems and standards up to a process system-based model. At the moment we are not inundated by opportunities or people wanting to undertake businesses. That is growing, but we are not inundated at this point. So we are at that point of identifying the sorts of licensing arrangements that we need for nature-based tourism. The team in the parks and conservation service are looking at models in other jurisdictions around what could be deployed in the ACT context.

**Mr Ponton**: In relation to other services, I will ask Mr Simmons quickly to make a few comments.

**THE CHAIR**: Before Mr Simmons responds, I think how I read your action plan and commitments lines up with this, but I want to be perfectly clear on this. Tourism operators are one thing but doing Aboriginal cultural tourism in Namadgi National Park in particular I would think needs an assurance process around permission from traditional owners. It would not be appropriate, even though my people share the Murrumbidgee River with the Ngunnawal people, for me, in any other part of that park, to do that without a quality check on what I am doing.

**Mr Walker**: I agree. I think that would equally occur whether that be Namadgi or any other park or reserve in the ACT.

**THE CHAIR**: Yes, I thought so; I raised it just so we have that locked in. Sorry, Mr Simmons.

**Mr Simmons**: Perfectly alright, chair. When it comes to procurement, earlier this year we had what was quite an eye-opening experience. We went up to Parliament House for the Supply Nation showcase. I went up there with a number of members of my team, most importantly the people working in procurement for us. In fact on that very day we were able to come back and make contact with some businesses that we just did not know existed.

**THE CHAIR**: Excellent.

**Mr Simmons**: That was early in February this year. We have spent $52,000 so far on majority-owned Aboriginal businesses. It is a small amount of our spend, but having actually had the opportunity to go to the showcase and see what the commonwealth has been doing in this area as well with its targets, we are very keen to work with businesses. It has been very successful, the businesses we have worked with. Certainly, with some of the businesses we have had repeat custom with them already. We have spent $44,500 roughly on the cultural awareness training so far this year.

Mr Walker has some artworks; so he spent about $7,000 on that. There are some others. But our program for finishing out this financial year, but also into the new financial year, is that we will look to significantly increase our capacity to work with majority-owned Indigenous businesses. It was just the sheer volume of them, particularly in areas we had not—

**THE CHAIR**: And the diversity.

**Mr Simmons**: The diversity was incredible, plus the number of speciality recruitment firms in terms of HR recruitment, in terms of building our skill set when it comes to how you go about finding and hiring and then supporting Indigenous people into the workforce. We are really looking forward to doing some work around that.

**Mr Ponton**: So it is early days, small steps, but we are making a start.

**THE CHAIR**: Given that the ACT government will have its own procurement policy come 1 July and given that contracts will not all roll over on 1 July this year—it is a long-term prospect—finding out early who is in the market is great and it is great to see that you have made a start with that as well.

**Mr Walker**: Just in the tourism space, could I also highlight: as you know, we have got an ACT tourism strategy occurring. With some funding from the Commonwealth we commissioned Gilimbaa to undertake some consultation with the community about the tourism opportunities at Tidbinbilla, and that has been a very useful piece of work to help us better understand community’s needs and aspirations on the site as well.

**THE CHAIR**: Just to understand, is that what the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community would want or consumers of the cultural tourism experience would want?

**Mr Walker**: It is a combination of both but it is specifically more Ngunnawal community views about what they would like to see occur at Tidbinbilla.

**MR KEED**: Question 12: has your directorate met the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander employment commitment in the strategy? Just to give a bit of context to that, in the ACT aquatic and riparian conservation strategy that was made in 2007 and revised last year there was a commitment in the 2007 version that your directorate was to employ Indigenous rangers to help assist in the implementation of the strategy. My question, just to add to that, would be: have you employed any rangers or any other employees in the meantime?

**THE CHAIR**: Specifically for that?

**MR KEED**: Specifically for that.

**Mr Walker**: The answer to that is that we do not employ people specifically to deliver one strategy or one action plan; we employ staff to deliver multiple programs and activities across a range of areas. Mr Ponton has already identified the number of employees that we have engaged in working on Country, and that includes a significant number of rangers and staff who are delivering multiple action plans for, in this case, riparian work but also for threatened species and other action plan-based activities. We are currently in the process of recruiting a level B position within the environment team to actually progress the engagement with Traditional Custodians but also how we better reflect community needs through action plans that you have identified.

**MS CHIVERS**: Can you help me understand why that particular plan has reference to an employment commitment if you are saying that you do not specifically employ people to do that for specific plans?

**Mr Ponton**: I suspect that that action within that plan then helps us to secure the funding to get people on board to work on that plan and other plans. I guess what Mr Walker was saying was that when we engage somebody it is not just for that work. We try to have a number of people working on a number of different strategies and programs. Having the actions in there assists in terms of being able to allocate the funding to those.

**THE CHAIR**: To help me understand in my mind, in being able to deliver against that action plan there have been people employed but it is not necessarily someone who only does that and multiple people might have responsibilities against that?

**Mr Ponton**: Correct, yes.

**Mr Walker**: Correct, yes.

**MR KEED**: And No 13: what is the status of the Aboriginal waterways assessment?

**Mr Walker**: I might ask Mary to provide a response to that. Mary Mudford works in our Healthy Country team and has been part of the waterways assessment work. I will just give a bit of introduction to that and then hand over to Mary. As part of our role with the Murray-Darling Basin we are required to produce a water resource plan. That includes recognition of cultural water assessments and working with community to do that.

We have been doing that for a number of years now, and Mary and our water team have been actively engaging with community and having a range of discussions specifically looking at waterways assessment-based activity. I will hand over to Mary to give a perspective on that.

**Ms Mudford**: As Ian has alluded to, we have had a number of meetings and field trips, particularly throughout 2018, centred on our Aboriginal water assessments. At one of those meetings the community identified an objective and an action to follow through with these Aboriginal water assessments.

At the end of last year we had two water field trips going back to two of the original water sites that had been assessed so that community could reassess and start to think how they would develop their objective and action for that site. They completed another questionnaire based around each of those particular sites. We have correlated that information and now we will have another meeting with those community members to address how we address the action plan that will be developed for that site.

**MR KEED**: Just a question on that, who were the members predominantly made up of? Were they specifically from United Ngunnawal Elders Council or the—

**Ms Mudford**: They were all members of the Ngunnawal community.

**MR KEED**: Question 14: what were the outcomes of the assessment involving the Ngunnawal people?

**Ms Mudford**: The assessments were done to identify spiritual and cultural values of the sites and how we would retain those values for each of the sites as well. This is part of the development of the site management plan for each of those. Until they are actually developed we will not move any further forward with them. We are currently working through all of the 16 sites that were assessed. We had done two of those sites at the end of last year and we are about to set some dates to continue those assessments.

**THE CHAIR**: For my clarification, because I do not work in this space very often, is what you have just described—and, from reading the Murray-Darling Basin plan, what they describe as—cultural flows?

**Ms Mudford**: No. Cultural flows are different. Part of the plan has been to identify areas where we could do cultural water flows. I do not know if you have heard of environmental flows.

**THE CHAIR**: Yes.

**Ms Mudford**: An environmental flow is put into an area for the purposes of protecting that environment, to support that environment to grow. Cultural water flows are similar but also based around ceremonial.

**THE CHAIR**: It would be to enable cultural practice to occur that requires the water?

**Ms Mudford**: Yes, that is correct.

**Mr Walker**: If I may, certainly in the Murray and the Darling systems there is a very robust process around that. It is more challenging in the ACT context because we do not have the ability to manage the water as they do in some of the other jurisdictions—just to highlight that. Part of what has also come out of those discussions and those waterways assessments is also a review of legislation, including our fisheries legislation, to better recognise the protection and take for communities associated with fisheries‑related legislation and also how culture is represented in our other strategies and legislative bases around riparian strategy or our nature conservation strategy, which are legislative based. Part of the process of engaging community is informing changes to legislation which have a range of benefits for community into the future.

**THE CHAIR**: Excuse my ignorance but just so that I am clear on what that part meant, because I am not quite sure what some of the words in the strategies relate to—and I cannot tie a fishing line either—does that relate to things like fishing licenses for Ngunnawal people or what they can and cannot do in a more traditional way? Is that what that relates to?

**Mr Walker**: That is what that relates to, yes. What cultural practices might Ngunnawal community wish to undertake and how can that be supported through legislation that might be different to what—

**THE CHAIR**: For everyone?

**Mr Walker**: For everyone else.

**MR KEED**: Question 15: has there been any allocation given to the Ngunnawal people regarding cultural water use and traditional fishing?

**Mr Walker**: I will take that, if you like. The answer to that is no in terms of cultural water. It is a complex space, working with both the commonwealth and other jurisdictions about water entitlements and how water is allocated across the system.

**THE CHAIR**: It should not be on our 100-day list?

**Mr Walker**: I would suggest not, given the nature of the Murray-Darling Basin plan, with all respect.

**THE CHAIR**: That is a whole other thing.

**Mr Walker**: However, that being said, I think understanding the opportunities for use, fishing rights, resource utilisation, whether that be plant or animal, are the sorts of things that would be discussed with community and if there is an aspiration for that then we build that into legislative change or policy change. In our water resource planning it is very clear that we are incorporating cultural water, cultural use, in those plans, which ultimately are accredited at the commonwealth level.

**MR KEED**: What programs or mechanisms are in place to develop Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander staff?

**Mr Ponton**: It is not really related to the question but we talked about cultural awareness training. The other thing we have established as part of our training framework is essentially a new course effectively supporting Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander team members. That is for supervisors. I was quite keen when I took on this role to make sure that our supervisors understand what they need to know in terms of managing Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people and the strategies they need to employ to encourage those people to work their way through the organisation in terms of career progression. I will ask Mr Simmons to elaborate on that and other programs.

**THE CHAIR**: To add to that, when we were talking to the Chief Minister, Treasury and Economic Development Directorate today it was emphasised that we are not necessarily the problem; it is building other people’s skill sets to retain staff. So to hear that that is already happening, even if it is in a new process, that is excellent news, particularly given your areas of responsibility.

**Mr Ponton**: We certainly acknowledge that and that is why we want to focus on the managers and giving them the training. Mr Simmons will also talk about the work we are doing on our recruitment processes. We are looking at completely shifting even the language we use in our advertisements and the networks we use to get vacancies known to people. That comes back to our earlier conversation around engagement. We are looking at a number of strands and, again, it is early days. But we are making progress and we are quite proud of the work we are doing.

**Mr Simmons**: I will also get my colleague Jaime Elton to talk to you about some more things. A huge chunk of our Indigenous employment is in the parks and conservation space of our organisation.

**THE CHAIR**: Can you tell me what a huge chunk looks like?

**Mr Simmons**: Most of them; 26 people identify as Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander within the organisation, which is slightly over our target.

**Mr Ponton**: Having said that, I am very keen to make sure we improve on that number and not just in the parks and conservation service. There are opportunities across our portfolio, and part of the strategies that Mr Simmons and Ms Elton will talk about is broadening the base across the organisation, whether it be in planning, energy or a whole range of other areas.

**Mr Simmons**: The public service is pretty good at writing job descriptions and employment ads that are impenetrable to normal people. If you do not understand the nuance of it your chance of getting employed from outside the service can be quite difficult. We have acknowledged that and are working to retrain everybody in how to work on recruitment panels, so starting with our senior manager cohort but eventually everybody in the organisation will be trained in the new system. Once our managers have been trained at least one of them will be on every panel to approach the way we do recruitment differently.

We are moving away from long, detailed lists of selection criteria to moving to aiming for two selection criteria, being more nuanced about what is in the position description and also removing language which stops people from applying, whether that is because we have gender bias or cultural bias in our language. It is understanding the types of things you can do to attract people or draw them to you. That is about going through every job we put up on a website and how we write the words to ensure that we get people to apply for those jobs.

That is an agency-wide activity we are undertaking. As my colleague Ms Elton will tell you, the most expensive decision we make is who we recruit, and when we get it wrong it is not costly just in terms of the financial side but the people side as well.

As well as extending our cultural awareness training we are looking to start immersion programs to get more depth for some of the people we put through that.

**THE CHAIR**: You have certainly got a great backyard to do the immersion in.

**Mr Simmons**: Yes, we do.

**Mr Ponton**: Absolutely.

**Ms Elton**: We are looking to be more creative in how we campaign our roles, so getting out to a lot more networks—both online and in paper form—such as Winnunga and different communities like that as well as using our internal networks that have connections with community. So starting to be a lot more creative with how we consult on our jobs to get the right people for the right jobs.

**THE CHAIR**: Given the range of work you have it makes great sense to do it differently. But what about career progression for your existing staff?

**Ms Elton**: We have the foundational skills essential training program the D-G spoke about before. We have just launched our management 2020 program. Within that we are setting up a lot of foundational skills that will assist our current managers in coaching and mentoring and providing more of an inclusive team environment to open up the awareness of how important it is to develop individual talent as well as the team talent as a group.

We are also really focused on collaborating across streams and teams to provide more diversity of a job role and how people can contribute not just within the corporate stream or the planning stream but across streams. That will open up more inclusion and opportunities for all employees. We do not specifically have a training program dedicated to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders per se.

**THE CHAIR**: But is there potential? Given that career progression in any government agency means having to do a mix of mainstream and Indigenous-specific work anyway, is there an opportunity within what you have to quarantine a place for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander participants?

**Ms Elton**: The future leaders program is rolling out in the environment area. Ian Walker may be able to provide more information on that.

**Mr Walker**: Sure. We currently have two Aboriginal trainees in the directorate and we have a number of staff here who have come through that trainee program and are now in roles either as rangers, NRM facilitators or in the heritage stream. So we are seeing that progression. As I mentioned earlier, we are in the process of recruiting to higher level positions so we have that vertical integration. We are now spreading that integration of Aboriginals and Torres Strait Islanders across the business.

The program to develop youth is in the agreement and our action plan. We have gone out to market and sought involvement of community to build capacity of Ngunnawal and other Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander youth to seek opportunities and to develop their capacity to attain employment, whether that be with us, with other parts of government or in the private sector. We are just at the start of that process.

**THE CHAIR**: The reason for the question is to make sure that everyone does not get stuck at entry level and to ensure we are pipelining through, especially given some of the talent you have got in the directorate now.

**Mr Simmons**: When we change the way we write recruitment it also gives some freedom to how we go about the assessment of people. In a previous job, when we were working on this type of reform I was recruiting for motor vehicle inspectors. The chair of the panel was asking the questions and looked out into the brand new test station and said, “Actually, why don’t we just go up?” He got a test sheet and said, “Okay, you want to be a test vehicle inspector? What’s wrong with this car?” And that is how he ran the interview. That meant the practical skills we needed, which were very hard for some people to talk about, were easy to demonstrate. So when we talk about the changes, it is not just that we want to attract people differently but we want to be able to assess them differently if that is appropriate.

**THE CHAIR**: I get that. When I worked at Aboriginal hostels I sat on a panel across from the cooks and asked them how they contributed to the strategic direction. I realised that was a pretty silly process, so I get where you are going with that and I think that is great.

**MR KEED**: What programs are being delivered by the ACT natural resources management team? How many include traditional owners and what has been the impact?

**Mr Walker**: I will start with a broader introduction to NRM and then I will ask Jackson—

**THE CHAIR**: I need to keep moving.

**Mr Taylor-Grant**: I will be quick.

**Mr Walker**: Jackson is our Aboriginal NRM facilitator. I will let Jackson answer in relation to our NRM programs.

**Mr Taylor-Grant**: I will draw you to three projects that ACTNRM is delivering upon. That includes Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people within our community engagement plan for the project. Basically two of the projects come under the national Landcare program. There are actually four main projects as part of that program. There is the Mulligans Flat extension. Basically they are tripling the size of Mulligans Flat so that it incorporates threatened species introduction into that area. It also incorporates a lot of pest species management in the area. But we also really want to introduce traditional land management practices into these new areas.

We have come to this point where we have this amazing predator-proof fence around this block of land and we are trying to re-establish a lost landscape. Part of that lost landscape is the people. That is a really big priority when it comes to introducing traditional land management.

As part of that we want to introduce four main community groups: the youth, the vulnerable, the Ngunnawal Elders community and also the men’s and women’s groups. As part of those groups’ involvement there are different issues that affect each group specifically. We want to foster relationships, create opportunities for a strong Ngunnawal voice through the Ngunnawal Elders’ involvement. We want to increase community capabilities and assess the health and wellbeing of our community by creating economic development opportunities within that project.

The other project is the threatened box gum woodland project, which is part of the same NLP, national Landcare program, funding. And that is to basically connect white gum, yellow box and Blakely’s red gum grass seed woodlands. Again a big focus of that is the introduction of traditional land management basically in the form of fire management within these areas, which will incorporate community involvement into those land management activities.

There are also a few other ways that we can incorporate traditional land management, through plantings, through harvestings, and that will all heavily involve the traditional custodian community but also Aboriginal youth, Aboriginal community groups that exist within the community at the moment: Winnunga men’s, Winnunga women’s groups, also the Access Youth Group in Queanbeyan that Tina Brown does a lot with. We will basically open up these projects to those groups to be involved in a lot of different ways.

The third project I will quickly talk about is basically the location of some of our lost cultural heritage within Namadgi National Park in the form of rock art. We have seven main rock art sites throughout the park. Basically a lot of our cultural heritage has been discovered just off fire trials, basically because that is where we access our national parks from. There is a lot of cultural heritage that gets minimal footfall out there.

A way of protecting cultural heritage in our parks is first getting out there and finding it. Then once we know about it we can work with the community to stablish a cultural heritage management plan around those areas and increase what is known about the cultural and spiritual values of the park. We have engaged a remote area archaeologist who basically goes and finds some of these sites or at least surveys some of these unsurveyed sites and, as part of that, would be bringing the community along.

Once the hard yards have been done and a lot of the areas have been looked at that have not had anything found, when there is something found we will bring the Ngunnawal community along to establish a connection with that site, which will involve the management plan or being added to the rock art management plan as it stands at the moment and potentially increase what is known about the values.

They are three main projects which have heavy Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander involvement at this stage.

**THE CHAIR**: The last part of the question was about the impact of the program.What are the measurements? What is a successful plot for each of those?

**Mr Taylor-Grant**: Going back to the NLP program, the Mulligans Flat extension and the threatened box gum woodlands connectivity project, we are looking at bringing youth in. Bringing youth in will basically be to address their competitiveness. We will train them up. And we are monitoring all the involvement through the next five years. These are five-year projects. I guess we are collecting our baseline data—

**THE CHAIR**: But what are we monitoring?

**Mr Taylor-Grant**: What are we monitoring?

**THE CHAIR**: In five years you want to be able to say, “We did this.”

**Mr Taylor-Grant**: We are basically establishing connection to the reserve. Over the course of the five years we will basically have an objective of how many land management activities we want to have in the reserve. And then we will have monitoring points. We are basically collecting data and really reintroducing traditional land management into these sites.

Over the next five years we should have a connection that has been established over those five years so that the community can say, “Yes, we have had really strong success and involvement,” for example in Mulligans Flat. We can look at the areas that have had cultural burns established. There are more people in the community that have a connection to Mulligans in general, know where it is, and basically we are collecting all that data.

**THE CHAIR**: What is the target?

**Mr Taylor-Grant**: The target at the moment is connecting people to Mulligans Flat.

**THE CHAIR**: No, that is the activity.

**Mr Taylor-Grant**: Sorry?

**THE CHAIR**: Is it 10 people? Is it 1,000 people?

**Mr Taylor-Grant**: Sorry, I have got it here. Our target is: this year, in the next hundred days, there will be one land management activity. There will be two activities with Ngunnawal community specifically—two activities to engage Ngunnawal Bush Healing Farm. That will actually be the vulnerable community—men’s and women’s groups. One activity is to engage youth, partake in one data collection and interpretation activity.

**THE CHAIR**: The measuring of success is the activity.

**Mr Taylor-Grant**: It is the activity and—

**THE CHAIR**: And not that one person turned up and not 10 people; it does not matter?

**Mr Taylor-Grant**: The activity, yes. It will be based on the number of people turning up.

**THE CHAIR**: What is the target? That is what I am after. What is the impact? How many people are you trying to help?

**Mr Taylor-Grant**: I think there are 100—

**MS CHIVERS**: How many people are you hoping will turn up?

**Mr Taylor-Grant**: We are hoping for 100 people to be engaged over the next 12 months.

**THE CHAIR**: I am not judging the scale; I am just trying to understand the scale.

**Mr Taylor-Grant**: Yes, 100 people to be engaged over the next 12 months. When it comes to a youth activity group we are targeting groups of about 20. If we are going for two youth groups we have about 40 in those youth groups, about a classroom size.

**Mr Walker**: Could I also add that the NRM program is an Australian government program. There are 56—

**THE CHAIR**: That is fine, but are you commenting on the impact of numbers?

**Mr Walker**: I am about to go there.

**THE CHAIR**: Can we just do that.

**Mr Walker**: The impact is reported through a national system called the MERI report—

**THE CHAIR**: I do not need to know that; what is the number?

**Mr Walker**: and there is detailed reporting in that. So the specific numbers—

**THE CHAIR**: So you are not giving me the answer?

**Mr Ponton**: I think we might—

**THE CHAIR**: I am happy for you to say, “We can get the numbers for you”.

**Mr Walker**: We can give you the numbers from the MERI report, chair.

**THE CHAIR**: That is all I need to know.

**Mr Ponton**: We will do that.

**Mr Taylor-Grant**: It is about 100.

**MS McGRADY**: One of your programs is at Bimberi that—

**Mr Taylor-Grant**: That will be part of that youth engagement over the course of the five years. So where we engage Bimberi we have not determined yet, but we have determined we want to achieve within this financial year at least two youth activities, whether it be through a school through the holiday program like Tina’s access group or a men’s and women’s group or Bimberi.

**MR KEED**: Do all heritage tracks have Ngunnawal content on them?

**Mr Ponton**: No, and that is primarily because some, for example, are cemeteries so it may not be appropriate. We can provide you with a list of those that do.

**THE CHAIR**: That ends the formal questions. Are there any additional questions, noting where we are at on the clock?

**MS CHIVERS**: What is the artwork?

**Mr Ponton**: The reconciliation action plan. We are very proud of it.

**MS CHIVERS**: Who is the artist?

**Mr Walker**: The artist is Leilani Keen-Church, so a 16-year-old has painted that. It will be part of how we tell the story of the reconciliation action plan and we will use it in other places.

**Mr Ponton**: It will be on our business cards and a range of other things throughout the organisation.

**THE CHAIR**: Is this for a new RAP?

**Mr Walker**: This is for our new RAP.

**THE CHAIR**: Do you have a report card on your last one and how you went against that?

**Mr Walker**: That is a good question. I will take that on notice.

**THE CHAIR**: I am happy to talk about the RAP but about its impact. But that is great artwork and it is great to see a young person involved.

Thank you very much for your time. As I said at the start, it has been great working with your team over the past 12 months and we appreciate the effort, particularly in preparation for today.

## Hearing adjourned at 4.47 pm.