



COMMONWEALTH OF AUSTRALIA

# Official Committee Hansard

## **SENATE**

COMMUNITY AFFAIRS LEGISLATION COMMITTEE

ESTIMATES

**(Budget Estimates)**

TUESDAY, 30 MAY 2006

CANBERRA

BY AUTHORITY OF THE SENATE



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**SENATE**

**COMMUNITY AFFAIRS LEGISLATION COMMITTEE**

**Tuesday, 30 May 2006**

**Members:** Senator Humphries (*Chair*), Senator Moore (*Deputy Chair*), Senators Adams, Barnett, Nettle and Polley

**Senators in attendance:** Senators Adams, Allison, Barnett, Bartlett, Calvert, Carr, Crossin, Chris Evans, Ferris, Heffernan, Humphries, Ludwig, Marshall, Moore, Patterson, Polley, Ronaldson, Siewert and Webber

**Committee met at 9.02 am**

**FAMILIES, COMMUNITY SERVICES AND INDIGENOUS AFFAIRS PORTFOLIO**

Consideration resumed from 29 May 2006

**In Attendance**

Senator Kemp, Minister for the Arts and Sport

**Department of Families, Community Services and Indigenous Affairs**

**Executive**

Dr Jeff Harmer, Secretary

Mr Wayne Gibbons, Associate Secretary

Mr Stephen Hunter, Deputy Secretary

Ms Glenys Beauchamp, Deputy Secretary

Mr Bernie Yates, Deputy Secretary

**Group Managers**

Ms Robyn McKay, Group Manager, Social Policy Group

Mr David Hazlehurst, Group Manager, Families Group

Ms Liza Carroll, Group Manager, Children Group

Ms Kerry Flanagan, Group Manager, Women and Youth Group

Mr Robert Knapp, Group Manager, Housing and Disability Group

Ms Frances Davies, Group Manager Acting, Communities Group

Mr Andrew Wood, Group Manager, Corporate Support Group

Mr Tim Youngberry, Chief Financial Officer and Group Manager, Business and Financial Services Group

Mr Roger Barson, Group Manager, Program Operations Group

Mr Max Deveraux, Group Manager, Information Management and Technology Group

Ms Jennifer Bryant, Group Manager, OIPC Performance Group

Ms Kerrie Tim, Group Manager, OIPC Leadership Development Group

Mr Greg Roche, Acting Group Manager, OIPC Land and Resources Group

Ms Kathryn Shugg, Acting Group Manager, OIPC Policy Group

**Cross Outcomes**

Ms Robyn McKay, Group Manager, Social Policy Group

Mr Andrew Wood, Group Manager, Corporate Support Group

Mr Tim Youngberry, Chief Financial Officer and Group Manager, Business and Financial Services Group

Mr Roger Barson, Group Manager, Program Operations Group

Mr Max Deveraux, Group Manager, Information Management and Technology Group

Mr Adrian Brocklehurst, Branch Manager Property and Security

Mr Ian Canney, Branch Manager, People

Mr Sean Innis, Branch Manager, Strategic Policy

Mr Steve Jennaway, Branch Manager, Budget Development

Mr Simon Rosenberg, Branch Manager, Social Security Relationship and Compliance

Mr Andrew Whitecross, Branch Manager, Research and Analysis

Ms Fran Parker, Branch Manager, OIPC Communications

Ms Gwenda Prince, Branch Manager, Ministerial, Media, Events and Executive Support Branch

Ms Peta Winzar, Manager, National Disability Operations and Queensland State Office

Mr Mark Warburton, Branch Manager, Financial Wellbeing Taskforce

Ms Susan Finnigan, State Manager, New South Wales

Ms Christine Bruce, Branch Manager, Business Services

**Outcome 1—Greater self-reliance and economic, social and community engagement for Indigenous Australians**

**Whole-of-Government coordination of policy development and service delivery for Indigenous Australians**

Mr Bernie Yates, Deputy Secretary

Ms Jennifer Bryant, Group Manager, Performance Group

Ms Kerrie Tim, Group Manager, OIPC Leadership Development Group

Mr Mark Warburton, Branch Manager, Financial Wellbeing Taskforce

Mr Brian McMillan, Assistant Secretary Investigation Services, OIPC

Ms Kathryn Shugg, Acting Group Manager, OIPC Policy Group

Mr Greg Andrews, Branch Manager, OIPC Communities Engagement

Ms Deidre McNally, Branch Manager, OIPC Mainstream Engagement Policy

Mr Bruce Smith, Branch Manager, Intergovernmental and Welfare Reform

Ms Alison Smith, Branch Manager, Intergovernmental and Welfare Reform

**1.2 Services for Indigenous Australians**

Ms Jennifer Bryant, Group Manager, Performance Group

Ms Kerrie Tim, Group Manager, OIPC Leadership Development Group

Mr Evan Mann, Branch Manager, Indigenous Housing and Infrastructure

Ms Christine Freudenstein, Branch Manager Acting, Indigenous Housing and Infrastructure

Ms Elizabeth Stehr, Branch Manager, Indigenous Policy Branch

Mr Greg Roche, Acting Group Manager, OIPC Land and Resources Group

Dr Paul Omaji, Assistant Secretary, OIPC Land Policy and Repatriation

Ms Yvonne Fetherston, Assistant Secretary, OIPC Land Rights Services

**1.3 Incorporation, regulation and capacity building of Indigenous corporations**

Ms Laura Beacroft, Registrar of Aboriginal Corporations

**Indigenous Land Corporation**

Mr David Galvin, General Manager

Ms Jodie Lindsay, Chief Financial Officer

**Aboriginal Hostels Limited**

Mr Keith Clarke, General Manager

Mr Russell Lane, AGM Operations

Dr Kamlesh Sharma, AGM/Company Secretary

**Outcome 2—Seniors, People with Disabilities, Carers, Youth and Women are supported, recognized and encouraged to participate in the community**

**2.1 Support for the Aged**

Mr Robert Knapp, Group Manager, Housing and Disability Group

Mr Ben Wallace, Branch Manager, Disability and Carers Branch

Mr Nick Hartland, Branch Manager, Seniors and Means Test Branch

**2.2 Support for the Aged Support for People with Disabilities**

Mr Robert Knapp, Group Manager, Housing and Disability Group

Ms Peta Winzar, Manager, National Disability Operations and Queensland State Office

Mr Ben Wallace, Branch Manager, Disability and Carers Branch

Ms Michalina Stawyskyj, Branch Manager, International Branch

**2.3 Support for Carers**

Mr Robert Knapp, Group Manager, Housing and Disability Group

Mr Ben Wallace, Branch Manager, Disability and Carers Branch

**2.4 Support for Youth**

Ms Kerry Flanagan, Group Manager, Women and Youth Group

Ms Lee Emerson, Branch Manager, Policy Research and International, Office for Women

Ms Donna Griffin, Branch Manager, Safety, Leadership and Consultation, Office for Women

Ms Kim Loveday, Branch Manager, Youth Bureau

**2.5 Support for Women**

Ms Kerry Flanagan, Group Manager, Women and Youth Group

Ms Lee Emerson, Branch Manager, Policy Research and International, Office for Women

Ms Donna Griffin, Branch Manager, Safety, Leadership and Consultation, Office for Women

**Outcome 3—Families and children have choices and opportunities**

**3.1 Support for Families**

Ms Liza Carroll, Group Manager, Children's Group

Mr David Hazlehurst, Group Manager, Families Group

Mr David Henri, Acting Branch Manager, Children's Policy and Programs

Ms Deborah Winkler, Acting Branch Manager, Family Services

Ms Margaret Moreton, Acting Assistant Branch Manager, Early Childhood and Communities

Mr Mark Warburton, Branch Manager, Financial Wellbeing Taskforce

**3.2 Child Support**

Mr David Hazlehurst, Group Manager, Families Group

Ms Pamela Kinnear, Branch Manager, Child Support Policy Branch

**3.3 Child Care Support**

Ms Liza Carroll, Group Manager, Children's Group

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Mr Phillip Brown, Branch Manager, Child Care Compliance and IT  
Ms Gabrielle Phillips, Branch Manager, Child Care Performance and Reporting  
Ms Leesa Croke, Acting Branch Manager, Child Care Branches

**Outcome 4—Strong and Resilient Communities**

**4.1 Housing Support**

Mr Robert Knapp, Group Manager, Housing and Disability Group  
Ms Clare Wall, Branch Manager, Housing Support

**4.2 Supporting Financial Management**

Ms Frances Davies, Acting Group Manager, Communities Group  
Ms Elizabeth Stehr, Branch Manager, Indigenous Policy Branch  
Mr Mark Warburton, Branch Manager, Financial Wellbeing Taskforce

**4.3 Community Recovery**

Ms Frances Davies, Acting Group Manager, Communities Group

**4.4 Community Partnership and Delivery**

Ms Frances Davies, Acting Group Manager, Communities Group  
Mr Tony Carmichael, Branch Manager, Community Branches

**Department of Families, Community Services and Indigenous Affairs**

**CHAIR (Senator Humphries)**—I declare open this public hearing of the Senate Community Affairs Legislation Committee considering the budget estimates. Today the committee will continue examination of the Families, Community Services and Indigenous Affairs portfolio. I welcome back Senator Rod Kemp, the Minister representing the Minister for Families, Community Services and Indigenous Affairs, and officers of his department led by Dr Jeff Harmer. Yesterday the committee completed outcome 3 and output groups 4.1, 4.3 and 4.4. We should be able to advise shortly whether officers from outcome 4.2 are required. We are to deal today with outcomes 1 and 2. We will now focus on outcome 1, Greater self-reliance and economic, social and community engagement for Indigenous Australians, and move to output group 1.1, Whole-of-government coordination of policy development and service delivery for Indigenous Australians, and output group 1.2, Services for Indigenous Australians.

**Senator CHRIS EVANS**—Firstly, if we could get a sense of how the lines of responsibility now work inside the department between OIPC and FaCS and how reporting to the minister occurs on Indigenous affairs, given that the old FaCS had Indigenous programs and responsibilities and obviously OIPC has as well. I want to be clear how that has come together in the new department in terms of reporting lines.

**Dr Harmer**—Since the machinery of government changes in late January, the department has been working on integrating the OIPC and the old FaCS into one new department called FaCSIA. We have taken a number of steps. We have revised our governance arrangements so that the OIPC and the old FaCS executive are part of the key decision-making body in the department. We have consolidated our corporate services areas so that the corporate areas now provide services to both the former OIPC and the old FaCS.

We have also moved to make some other changes in policy areas. The Indigenous policy branch that was in the old FaCS has been changed so that some of those functions have gone to OIPC and others to the Social Policy Group. The OIPC remains as a separate entity within



FaCSIA. It has responsibilities for coordinating the whole-of-government approach to Indigenous affairs; providing the secretariat for the secretary's meetings, the taskforce and the National Indigenous Council; and reporting on whole-of-government issues. The OIPC coordinated, for example, the single Indigenous submission for the 2006 budget. It relates directly to the minister on whole-of-government issues. The FaCSIA department still retains responsibility for key programs in Indigenous affairs, including the Community Housing and Infrastructure Program, family violence programs and other mainstream programs that provide assistance to Indigenous Australians.

**Senator CHRIS EVANS**—Thank you, that is helpful. So the Indigenous policy branch is effectively no more—

**Dr Harmer**—That is right.

**Senator CHRIS EVANS**—It has been consumed into the OIPC?

**Dr Harmer**—Parts of it have gone to the policy area in the OIPC and parts of it have gone to the Social Policy Group in the old FaCS.

**Senator CHRIS EVANS**—But is there still a branch called the Indigenous policy branch?

**Dr Harmer**—Not in the department as in the old FaCS but there is a whole Indigenous policy group in the OIPC.

**Senator CHRIS EVANS**—So it has gone into the Indigenous policy group as part of the OIPC. What area of work has gone across to the Social Policy Group?

**Dr Harmer**—The area is responsible for monitoring our performance in terms of the mainstream programs and running a couple of programs. Generally, the OIPC does not run programs; it is a policy area coordinating whole-of-government work. FaCS retains most of the responsibility for running the FaCSIA programs.

**Senator CHRIS EVANS**—Yes, I understand that, but the Social Policy Group is more about providing advice, isn't it?

**Dr Harmer**—It is, but including advice on the effectiveness of our mainstream programs in terms of how they relate to Indigenous matters. The reason they are in the Social Policy Group is that the Social Policy Group is a cross-group policy body.

**Senator CHRIS EVANS**—Okay. In terms of reporting to the minister, do the OIPC report directly to the minister?

**Dr Harmer**—Yes, as all my groups do. There is a direct line of contact with the minister. On big issues of policy in the Indigenous area, Mr Gibbons and I are usually both involved in briefing the minister.

**Senator CHRIS EVANS**—But in terms of their responsibilities, they have a direct reporting line to the minister?

**Dr Harmer**—Yes, as do all of the separate groups in FaCSIA.

**Senator CHRIS EVANS**—So is your point there that the OIPC is no different from the other groups within FaCSIA in that respect?

**Dr Harmer**—It is a little different because it is a separate unit with separate responsibilities around coordination. It is quite similar in some ways—although it is much bigger—to the Office for Women, which we also have in FaCSIA and which has whole-of-government coordination responsibilities. It is not uncommon in FaCSIA to have units within the organisation that have whole-of-government coordination. We have the Youth Bureau, for example, which is a branch level that has whole-of-government coordination for youth activities.

**Senator CHRIS EVANS**—FaCSIA has Indigenous affairs in its title so the department is responsible for Indigenous affairs but within that responsibility there is a subset, which is the OIPC, that has specific responsibilities. Is that a fair summary?

**Dr Harmer**—Yes.

**Senator CHRIS EVANS**—Thanks for that. If I could start by asking some questions about the family violence prevention program. I am not sure whether your officers follow PM&C estimates with any great interest but I tried to track through PM&C the history of this program. They were quite helpful until they got to the ‘You would have to ask FaCSIA’ line. You will be pleased to know that they dropped you into most of the hard questions.

**Dr Harmer**—I am sure.

**Senator CHRIS EVANS**—I am sure you have reviewed the transcript. Have relevant officers seen it?

**Mr Hazlehurst**—Yes, Senator.

**Senator CHRIS EVANS**—You have come well prepared.

**Mr Hazlehurst**—I will do my best.

**Senator CHRIS EVANS**—I want to start by following its rather—not chequered history—convoluted route to you. First of all, can you explain to me the difference between the Family Violence Partnership program and the Family Violence Regional Activities Program?

**Mr Hazlehurst**—The Family Violence Regional Activities Program is an ongoing program that has been going for some years with an appropriation in the order of \$4.2 million a year. It has a particular focus on supporting local initiatives identified by local communities but with a focus on increasing their capacity and reducing family violence in those Indigenous communities.

That is contrasted with the Family Violence Partnership program, which is a more recent program that came about as part of the 2004-05 budget. The government made a commitment to that program in the 2004-05 budget of \$37.3 million over four years to work in partnership with state and territory governments and Indigenous communities similarly on projects addressing family violence in those communities, but the mechanics of the program are different. They have involved in the first instance the negotiation of memorandums of understanding with state and territory governments, and the selection of projects in consultation with them and local communities that are then administered through the state and territory governments. It also involves a partnership with the state and territory governments in the sense of contributions of funding to those projects.

**Senator CHRIS EVANS**—Do you know when the Family Violence Regional Activities Program first started?

**Mr Hazlehurst**—I do not know the precise date of that. I could take that on notice. That program has been in existence for quite some time. It was managed originally through ATSiC and ATSiS and actually managed, as I understand it, through the regional councils.

**Senator CHRIS EVANS**—You said ‘quite some time’. It was around at least in the late 1990s, I think.

**Mr Hazlehurst**—I would have to confirm that.

**Senator CHRIS EVANS**—That has been a fairly steady level of funding over the years?

**Mr Hazlehurst**—Yes, that is my understanding.

**Senator CHRIS EVANS**—Can you give us an idea of the sorts of projects it has financed?

**Mr Hazlehurst**—It is a mixture—as is the case under the partnership program too. In some cases it involves things like community patrols or specifically working with men in Indigenous communities and in other circumstances it involves working on family wellbeing in those communities and improving the relationships within families in general.

**Senator CHRIS EVANS**—The formal aim was to provide practical and flexible support for grassroots projects that have been identified by Indigenous communities as a local priority to address family violence, sexual assault, child abuse and/or child protection. Are these programs ongoing or are they a grant per annum or three-year grants? How does it work?

**Mr Hazlehurst**—They are one-year grants.

**Senator CHRIS EVANS**—And typically do you roll them over?

**Mr Hazlehurst**—In some cases they are rolled over in the sense that the same organisation or the same community may apply again and, if it is working well, they may get further funding. In other cases, there will be new projects that either that community or other communities are putting forward.

**Senator CHRIS EVANS**—Is the sense that you might provide a year’s funding and then it will be self-funding after that—is it one of those programs?

**Mr Hazlehurst**—In general, the programs are about building capacity within the community to respond to family violence and also to link in with other mainstream services that might be relevant.

**Senator CHRIS EVANS**—As you know, one of the criticisms of a whole range of programs, not just in Indigenous affairs, is that we fund them for a year or two and then walk away and the programs fall over. I am just trying to get a sense of the objectives of this. Is it seriously about trying to have an ongoing program or is it to meet a year’s need and not necessarily continue?

**Mr Hazlehurst**—The intention is not to provide an ongoing mainstream service—that is probably as clear as I can be about it. But, that said, we are in the process of reviewing the way in which the program works, the way in which the funding works. Indeed, the Office of Evaluation and Audit (Indigenous Programs) within the Department of Finance and

Administration are conducting an evaluation of both this program and the partnership program. We will be looking closely at the outcomes from that evaluation in thinking about how we take those programs forward.

**Senator CHRIS EVANS**—That is an evaluation not an audit, isn't it?

**Mr Hazlehurst**—That is correct; it is an evaluation.

**Senator CHRIS EVANS**—Was that requested by the department or on their initiative?

**Mr Hazlehurst**—I understand that it was on their initiative.

**Senator CHRIS EVANS**—What evaluation has the department done over the years of this program?

**Mr Hazlehurst**—In relation to the regional activities program, there was an evaluation commissioned by the department in 2005 and carried out by Courage Partners. That report is available on the internet. In broad terms, that evaluation found that, in most cases, the projects were going well, that there was scope to even further position the program at the early intervention and prevention end of the spectrum, and that there was also scope to provide further support around the program, including having propagation of best practice by linking up the service providers more frequently—that sort of thing.

**Senator CHRIS EVANS**—What was the nature of the evaluation? Was it just by interviewing and observing? Were there objectives against which the program was to be measured?

**Mr Hazlehurst**—I do not have the detail of that in front of me but I am happy to provide the detail.

**Senator CHRIS EVANS**—I can look it up on the net as well as you can if it is all on the net. What was the departmental response to that report? Sorry, when did you get that? Some time in 2005, was it?

**Mr Hazlehurst**—We received the final report on 4 June 2005.

**Senator CHRIS EVANS**—What was the departmental response?

**Mr Hazlehurst**—At this stage, we are still reviewing how we will respond to the evaluation. We will do that in the context also of the evaluation that has been conducted by the Office of Evaluation and Audit.

**Senator CHRIS EVANS**—So it is fair to say it is on hold until it reports?

**Mr Hazlehurst**—We have been doing some development work around the overall management of the program to further improve that, but we want to do it in a comprehensive way, with the benefit of the Office of Evaluation and Audit report as well.

**Senator CHRIS EVANS**—Was part of the Courage Partners report concerned about the ongoing sustainability of the programs?

**Mr Hazlehurst**—I am not sure. I do not have that material in front of me.

**Ms Winkler**—I can clarify some of the details. Regarding the long-term sustainability of the program, one of the issues they identified was that if there were substantially greater funding within the program it could certainly achieve a broader range of outcomes. They also

identified that there could be greater focus on the early intervention prevention components of that program.

**Senator CHRIS EVANS**—How many programs do you fund under this—

**Mr Hazlehurst**—It is around 50.

**Senator CHRIS EVANS**—So it is \$4.2 million to fund 50 programs?

**Mr Hazlehurst**—Yes.

**Senator CHRIS EVANS**—That is \$4.2 million a year, not over four years?

**Mr Hazlehurst**—That is correct.

**Senator CHRIS EVANS**—So, typically, what do they get financially?

**Mr Hazlehurst**—It varies. I could give you some examples.

**Senator CHRIS EVANS**—Do you have a list?

**Ms Winkler**—Yes.

**Senator CHRIS EVANS**—Perhaps you could table the list—the programs and the amounts.

**Mr Hazlehurst**—We may be able to table this list. We will just need to check that it is in the right format. Perhaps my colleague could give some examples.

**Ms Winkler**—They range from quite small amounts such as \$8,000 right up to \$175,000-plus.

**Senator CHRIS EVANS**—So they are very different scales. What would you have funded for the \$8,000, for instance?

**Ms Winkler**—That particular project was run through the Dubbo Neighbourhood Centre. It was to enable the community to develop some strategies to deal with domestic violence, and they ran some men's and women's groups.

**Senator CHRIS EVANS**—What about the \$175,000 ones?

**Ms Winkler**—One of the \$175,000 projects is in Alice Springs. It is about raising awareness and providing protection for Indigenous women and families.

**Senator CHRIS EVANS**—Providing?

**Ms Winkler**—Providing practical support and activities. Those are obviously targeted specifically within their community via their health clinics, local schools and regional services such as the hospital, their link to child protection agencies and the court. That is run through one of the women's councils.

**Senator CHRIS EVANS**—Women's council?

**Ms Winkler**—That is a central project that runs across the Northern Territory, South Australia and Western Australia, so it is down in that border region.

**Senator CHRIS EVANS**—What is the title? Is the women's council a subset of something?

**Ms Winkler**—Its name is the domestic violence service (across border) project.

**Senator CHRIS EVANS**—A service like that is getting partial funding from you from this program, but it is obviously getting funding from other sources as well; is that right?

**Ms Winkler**—In terms of this program, we are not necessarily funding on the basis that they are receiving dollars, as we were through the other program from the state government. It is likely that they are receiving money from a whole range of other sources, but that is not a condition of the funding.

**Senator CHRIS EVANS**—No, I appreciate that, but obviously some of the other women's councils have other funding sources and you are funding them to run a particular program.

**Ms Winkler**—Yes.

**Senator CHRIS EVANS**—Is it fair to say that the majority of these funds end up going on staff costs—staff and travel type costs?

**Ms Winkler**—You would have to look at each individual project because some of them have a significant amount tied up in staff costs. When you are running smaller group type programs, less of that dollar value is tied up in staffing time as opposed to other resourcing for the community.

**Senator CHRIS EVANS**—But particularly in outback regions, when you do outreach programs staff and travel costs eat up a huge budget very quickly.

**Ms Winkler**—Yes.

**Senator CHRIS EVANS**—If you could table that list, that would be great. I will give you time to have a think about that. When is the funding round held?

**Mr Hazlehurst**—We are in the process of finalising the funding round for 2006-07 right now.

**Senator CHRIS EVANS**—When do you announce that?

**Mr Hazlehurst**—It would be a matter for the minister, but we expect it would be in the next few weeks.

**Senator CHRIS EVANS**—Traditionally it is done around this time, once you have seen what the budget is?

**Mr Hazlehurst**—The budget remains pretty stable, but traditionally I think we would be doing it around this time.

**Senator CHRIS EVANS**—Has the budget allocation been about the same for a number of years?

**Mr Hazlehurst**—Yes.

**Senator CHRIS EVANS**—Was that the case when it was with ATSIC and in earlier times?

**Mr Hazlehurst**—I believe so.

**Ms Winkler**—The amount of money that we have currently is basically the funding, with indexation, that was transferred to the department. We are just clarifying that that was part of a global funding pool in ATSI originally.

**Senator CHRIS EVANS**—Typically, what number of applications do you get? What did you get this year?

**Ms Winkler**—This year we had a similar number of requests to existing organisations that are currently being funded, because it has been a direct selection process going out to existing providers who have a proven record in providing service. Some of those services are obviously seeking greater funding than they have had in the past, and there is obviously a limited resource pool. The nominations come in through the ICCCs via our state office and then through the national office, so there is a process of vetting through each of those stages. Obviously that information will be provided to the minister for his decision.

**Senator CHRIS EVANS**—Do I take it from that you are saying that you do not advertise—you just go back to the known providers? Is that the import of what you are saying?

**Ms Winkler**—We have not put out a national advertisement for the program.

**Senator CHRIS EVANS**—You basically go out to those who you know are working in the area and ask them to submit?

**Ms Winkler**—We have to date. It is our intention to review that process and look at how we should proceed in future with the program. That is the process that we adopted in the last two rounds. We are going to review that and look at how we might continue to do that in future.

**Mr Hazlehurst**—Senator, you will recall the earlier points we covered in relation to the issue of ongoing funding and sustainability. One of the factors that have led to the approach that has been taken in the last couple of years is being mindful of the good work that is being done in some of these projects or in these communities and the potential to continue either the projects themselves where they are working well or related initiatives in those communities.

**Senator CHRIS EVANS**—Fair enough. Is it the case then that we will only get 50 applications for potentially 50 grants, or is there a wider spread of applications?

**Ms Winkler**—It is a similar number of applications to the previous year.

**Senator CHRIS EVANS**—Which is what? I will not hold you to the exact figure.

**Ms Winkler**—Around the same number of projects that we have currently.

**Mr Hazlehurst**—Around 50.

**Senator CHRIS EVANS**—So you have about 50 applications, about 50 programs this year, and you have effectively gone back to the same market. I am pleased, Mr Hazlehurst, that you are focused on the question of continuity, because it seems to me that it is—

**Mr Hazlehurst**—Yes. I know we are focusing on this specific program but, of course, it is only one part of a range of things that the government does in this space. I imagine you will want to move on to some of those shortly.

**Senator CHRIS EVANS**—I will give you the opportunity to explain it all to me—so relax; you will get your chance. If there is anything we have missed at the end, you can bring it up in response to the general question: is there anything else you would like to tell me?

**Mr Hazlehurst**—Thank you, Senator.

**Senator CHRIS EVANS**—I just want to make sure you do not get into any trouble when you get back to the office for forgetting a program. That is the Family Violence Regional Activities Program. The Office of Evaluation and Audit might break their duck of the last four years and publish it with any luck, so we might be able to have some public evaluation. Do you want to tell me how you got the Family Violence Partnership Program?

**Mr Hazlehurst**—Yes, I can give you some history. It might be helpful to the committee if I trace the history since 2003, some of which you would have covered in other hearings.

**Senator CHRIS EVANS**—I always like to check whether the stories are the same.

**Mr Hazlehurst**—Perhaps I can give you a potted history. You will no doubt have covered the roundtable that was held in Parliament House that the Prime Minister convened in July 2003.

**Senator CHRIS EVANS**—That was the one to concentrate on family violence?

**Mr Hazlehurst**—That is right, and child abuse in Indigenous communities.

**Senator CHRIS EVANS**—Do you know who was at that roundtable. Did FaCSIA organise that?

**Mr Hazlehurst**—No, the Department of Prime Minister and Cabinet organised the roundtable, but I imagine the list of people is available.

**Senator CHRIS EVANS**—Could you take that on notice. I have seen some press reports but I was not sure exactly who was there.

**Mr Hazlehurst**—I believe we could do that. The intention of the roundtable was, in part, also to inform COAG that was meeting in August of that year. A working group was established with some of the members from the roundtable working with senior officials to produce a set of recommendations.

**Senator CHRIS EVANS**—Do you know what the membership of the working group was?

**Mr Hazlehurst**—It was Commissioner Alison Anderson, Professor O'Donoghue, Associate Professor Ian Anderson and Jackie Huggins.

**Senator CHRIS EVANS**—They were serviced by a couple of officers out of PM&C?

**Mr Hazlehurst**—I believe so. The matter was then scheduled for discussion at COAG, but that did not occur.

**Senator CHRIS EVANS**—So it did not actually happen at the August COAG?

**Mr Hazlehurst**—That meeting ended early. Senators might recall—

**Senator CHRIS EVANS**—Was that one of the walkouts?

**Mr Hazlehurst**—It may well have been a walkout, yes.

**Senator CHRIS EVANS**—About every two years it happens or something like that.

**Mr Hazlehurst**—The work that had been done was progressed by PM&C, including some discussions with state and territory governments, through to around March 2004.



**Senator CHRIS EVANS**—If I can stop you there. What happened to the working group? Did it dissolve? How often did it meet? I never heard what happened to it.

**Mr Hazlehurst**—I must confess that I do not know the details of that, other than that it provided a report. PM&C were managing that process.

**Senator CHRIS EVANS**—So it actually reported to the Prime Minister?

**Mr Hazlehurst**—I believe so.

**Senator CHRIS EVANS**—So FaCS did not get a copy of it? Did you have any role at this stage or were you not in the loop?

**Mr Hazlehurst**—No.

**Senator CHRIS EVANS**—So there was a report arising out of the working group with those four people that went to PM&C at least?

**Mr Hazlehurst**—Yes.

**Senator CHRIS EVANS**—And at some stage the working group disbanded, I presume at the end of the report.

**Mr Hazlehurst**—Yes, I believe so.

**Senator CHRIS EVANS**—So we are up to March 2004.

**Mr Hazlehurst**—At that point the responsibility for progressing things was transferred over to AT SIS within DIMIA, the Department of Immigration, Multicultural and Indigenous Affairs.

**Senator CHRIS EVANS**—Did that involve transfer of staff or just responsibility for?

**Mr Hazlehurst**—I do not know.

**Senator CHRIS EVANS**—It was not a program at that stage, was it?

**Mr Hazlehurst**—No, it was not a program.

**Senator CHRIS EVANS**—It would be fair to say they had carriage of the outcomes from the Prime Minister's roundtable?

**Mr Hazlehurst**—Yes. Then in the budget in May the actual Family Violence Partnership Program was announced. In July, the functions associated with that program were transferred to the then Department of Family and Community Services. And then COAG met and had a longer meeting in August where the matter of family violence and child abuse in Indigenous communities was discussed—

**Senator CHRIS EVANS**—This is COAG 2005?

**Mr Hazlehurst**—2004.

**Senator CHRIS EVANS**—So the earlier COAG was 2003 where it did not get on the agenda.

**Mr Hazlehurst**—Sorry, I think it might have been June 2004.

**Senator CHRIS EVANS**—If we can just go back: the August COAG 2003 was when the working group report did not get on the agenda or did not get considered—

**Mr Hazlehurst**—The issue was not discussed, that is right.

**Senator CHRIS EVANS**—And then this is a COAG in—

**Mr Hazlehurst**—June 2004. And from that the national framework for preventing family violence in indigenous communities was agreed—the jurisdictions agreed to work in partnership and with Indigenous communities.

**Senator CHRIS EVANS**—I got a bit confused here because I think at that COAG there was also some other announcements and this question of bilaterals arose. I thought the original announcement was that there were going to be bilaterals on family violence.

**Mr Hazlehurst**—Yes.

**Senator CHRIS EVANS**—They seemed to disappear and then memorandums of understandings seemed to appear. But the bilaterals process started as a much broader concept.

**Mr Hazlehurst**—There are two separate things being progressed. The broader bilaterals may be something that my colleagues in OIPC might give you some details about.

**Senator CHRIS EVANS**—I will talk to them later.

**Mr Hazlehurst**—There were memorandums of understanding that were going to be progressed, and they have been progressed, with states and territories specifically as a follow-up to the COAG announcements around family violence. Those were then progressed separately.

**Senator CHRIS EVANS**—Am I wrong to think that originally they were going to be called bilaterals or—

**Mr Hazlehurst**—They are bilateral—

**Senator CHRIS EVANS**—Have I confused the concepts? I thought at the original announcement when they were talking about family violence they were going to have bilaterals. Then at the COAG meeting bilaterals came to mean a broader concept and memorandums of understanding emerged. I am trying to make sure I understand it because, if you read the material around the time, it seems to become—

**Mr Hazlehurst**—As I recall—but again my colleagues in OIPC may wish to interject—there were at least two kinds of things covered in that COAG meeting. One was in general to do with Indigenous service delivery and a set of principles was agreed out of that. And my understanding would be that there was then an understanding that there would be a series of bilaterals more broadly around Indigenous service delivery. But the other was that, in relation to family violence, it was also agreed there would be in effect bilateral agreements, but I think they might have been referred to as memorandums of understanding. Indeed, that is the way in which it progressed from that point.

**Senator CHRIS EVANS**—So the national framework then took to developing memorandums of understanding with the states and territories. What programs were incorporated in your Commonwealth contribution to that?

**Mr Hazlehurst**—I am sorry, Senator, do you mean the broader bilaterals?

**Senator CHRIS EVANS**—No, I mean the national framework.

**Mr Hazlehurst**—That was specifically in relation to the Family Violence Partnership Program.

**Senator CHRIS EVANS**—You were careful to point out there were other programs, so I was giving you the opportunity to tell me whether or not the response out of COAG in terms of Commonwealth commitment was broader than the Family Violence Partnership Program. I know there was one coming out of A-G's—the legal centres initiative.

**Mr Hazlehurst**—Specifically in relation to COAG and the agreements around the national framework for preventing family violence in Indigenous communities, the specific bilaterals that were going to be negotiated around that related to the Family Violence Partnership Program. However, the broader set of bilaterals that are being negotiated around Indigenous service delivery at one level are overarching in the sense that they could also cover family violence issues. So there is some interaction potentially between the two sets of negotiations. It is just that the scope of the MOUs that were going to be developed—and have been developed—specifically around family violence had a particular focus on the family violence prevention program.

**Senator CHRIS EVANS**—So the MOUs are strictly relating to family violence and child abuse issues.

**Mr Hazlehurst**—And they specifically relate to that partnership program.

**Senator CHRIS EVANS**—So the method by which the Commonwealth gives effect to its commitment to the framework is the Family Violence Partnership Program.

**Mr Hazlehurst**—In relation to that framework, that is true. There is a range of other things that the Australian government is doing, one of which you mentioned already—the family violence legal services program within the Attorney-General's Department. But there are programs relating to housing and relating to health that are all contributing as well.

**Senator CHRIS EVANS**—But specific targeting arising from the COAG and the Prime Minister's summit, a roundtable in July 2003, it is fair to say, putting the legal centres to one side—I have gone through that previously—the major initiative is the Family Violence Partnership Program and that is the subject of the MOUs. Do the MOUs cover anything else, from your perspective?

**Ms Winkler**—No, the MOUs in this case are specifically for the funding for that program.

**Senator CHRIS EVANS**—What is the basis of the relationship with the states under that program? Is it dollar for dollar?

**Mr Hazlehurst**—No, it is not dollar for dollar, although as it happens the state contributions are marginally in excess of the Australian government contributions at this stage.

**Senator CHRIS EVANS**—That is as a totalling—

**Mr Hazlehurst**—Indeed.

**Senator CHRIS EVANS**—That is not a requirement? There is no deal that they put in three bucks to your two bucks sort of thing?

**Mr Hazlehurst**—No, there is no formula. Indeed, in some projects it is entirely funded by the Commonwealth and others entirely by the states. In general, we have entered into the memorandums of understanding with each state and territory on the understanding that we are going to be contributing in roughly equal terms to the program.

**Senator CHRIS EVANS**—That is not reflected in the MOU in a formal sense?

**Ms Winkler**—It is reflected in the MOU in the sense that it talks about funding recipient contribution. That is specified in relation to each specific project. It would specify the Commonwealth contribution and it would specify the state contribution as part of the project.

**Senator CHRIS EVANS**—For each project?

**Ms Winkler**—For each project.

**Senator CHRIS EVANS**—But that does not necessarily mean they are going to be equal.

**Ms Winkler**—No.

**Senator CHRIS EVANS**—Can you give me the dates on which you signed the MOUs with the various states and territories?

**Ms Winkler**—Yes, we can give you that.

**Senator CHRIS EVANS**—I think the Northern Territory were first off, weren't they?

**Ms Winkler**—No, the Northern Territory was not the first. South Australia was the first, on 31 May 2005, followed by the Northern Territory on 17 June 2005, Victoria on 24 June 2005, New South Wales on 22 July 2005, Queensland on 25 July 2005, WA on 23 September 2005 and Tasmania on 30 September 2005. Currently there is no MOU with the ACT, though there have been discussions with the ACT. When a suitable project is developed, the MOU will be progressed further.

**Senator CHRIS EVANS**—I got it wrong about the Northern Territory but you got a program up fairly quickly, didn't you?

**Ms Winkler**—It was one of the early projects in the first year.

**Senator CHRIS EVANS**—That effectively started before the MOU was signed?

**Ms Winkler**—Yes, it did.

**Senator CHRIS EVANS**—That was the end of 2004?

**Ms Winkler**—There were definitely projects commencing in 2004, but there were a very small number.

**Senator CHRIS EVANS**—Is the MOU a fairly standard document?

**Ms Winkler**—The MOU varies across the states but there are some common elements to it. The general MOU framework describes the funding of each project coming from the Commonwealth and the states. It identifies things like where there are capital infrastructure projects, funding with recipient contributions, return of funding, records and accounts, and the reporting mechanisms that the two parties agree to.

**Senator CHRIS EVANS**—Is there any objective assessment criteria or section about how you assess the success or otherwise of those projects?

**Ms Winkler**—When they are up and performing or in terms of selecting?

**Senator CHRIS EVANS**—Measuring the success.

**Ms Winkler**—Each project will have separate project outputs and they would be assessed against those. I can give you examples of—

**Senator CHRIS EVANS**—I will come back to that but there is no overarching thing in the memorandum?

**Ms Winkler**—No. It really depends on the type and nature of the projects that are agreed to.

**Senator CHRIS EVANS**—Does the MOU at the time of signing include all the projects or is it able to have appendixes added as you agree to programs?

**Ms Winkler**—It is basically an overarching document and then each new project would basically be an addendum to that process.

**Senator CHRIS EVANS**—So the MOU is an agreement how to proceed—it is not the full list of what you are going to fund.

**Ms Winkler**—Yes, because obviously there is still additional funding to be expended so we would not want to restrict ourselves in that way.

**Senator CHRIS EVANS**—That is what I thought; I just wanted to check. Are you able to give us a list of what has been funded in each state under the program?

**Mr Hazlehurst**—We are and, in fact, I think that was tabled by the Department of Prime Minister and Cabinet.

**Senator CHRIS EVANS**—Yes, it was a rather unhelpful document—all dates had been removed.

**Mr Hazlehurst**—So you would like some dates—

**Senator CHRIS EVANS**—Sorry, I am not saying they had been removed. It was interesting that the document after a day or so was presented, and it was beautiful, but it was not all that helpful in terms of telling you what is going on, because there were no dates of when the agreements were signed or whether any activity had occurred. So it was a very impressive list but you did not get any sense of whether projects had started or whether they had been approved yesterday, so it was not terribly helpful for assessing how the program was going. I have got a list of the projects. I guess what I would like you to add is what date you agreed to them and some sense of whether progress was being made.

**Mr Hazlehurst**—We can do that.

**Senator CHRIS EVANS**—I understand some of it was funding last financial year that may well not have flowed anywhere yet, for understandable reasons, and we will come to that later. Housing is a classic example. The fact that you fund a house does not mean the house is built tomorrow, but there was no information like that on the program. So I have got a list of the projects, but it does not tell you anything else basically.

**Mr Hazlehurst**—Perhaps we could take that question on notice.

**Senator CHRIS EVANS**—Sure. Does the list you have got include the dates or some sense of the timing of these things or not?

**Mr Hazlehurst**—We have lists that include all sorts of things, some of which will not particularly helpful but we can certainly construct a list for you that provides the dates.

**Senator CHRIS EVANS**—If you could give me something today it would be helpful. For instance, with some of these you did not sign the MOUs until September last year, but I also know that in the Northern Territory you had programs up and running six months before you signed the MOU. So for me to say you have done nothing in Tasmania may well be very unfair, and to suggest that you did not do anything in the Northern Territory until May is factually wrong, so not having the dates does not give me an assessment of what is happening. Are there projects up and running in each state?

**Ms Winkler**—All except for the ACT.

**Senator CHRIS EVANS**—Is it fair to say the memorandum of understanding has at least started around one project or you have got something in mind when you finally sign up to it?

**Mr Hazlehurst**—Do you mean in relation to the ACT?

**Senator CHRIS EVANS**—No, I mean the others.

**Mr Hazlehurst**—Yes, in general there were projects identified during the process of negotiating the memorandums.

**Senator CHRIS EVANS**—You got funding first for this in 2004-05.

**Mr Hazlehurst**—Yes.

**Senator CHRIS EVANS**—It was \$37.3 million over four years.

**Mr Hazlehurst**—Yes.

**Senator CHRIS EVANS**—Can you give me the breakdown for the years 2004-05 and onwards?

**Ms Winkler**—Yes. Are you happy to have rounded figures?

**Senator CHRIS EVANS**—Yes.

**Ms Winkler**—It was \$1.157 million 2004-05, \$15.23 million 2005-06, \$10.72 million 2006-07 and \$10.81 million for 2007-08.

**Senator CHRIS EVANS**—So obviously, given the timing of the announcement, you did not expect much to happen in 2004-05, but the big hit is in 2005-06 in terms of the funding. I presume that was to allow you to get the projects agreed and up and running.

**Mr Hazlehurst**—That is the current phasing for the funding. I believe there may have been some initial rephasing in 2005-06.

**Senator CHRIS EVANS**—I see, so the original figures for 2004-05 might have been higher, but because it was not spent they got rolled over the next year.

**Mr Hazlehurst**—Perhaps a little higher, but I think we would have expected most of the activity to be rolling out in 2005-06 and then 2006-07.

**Senator CHRIS EVANS**—Have you got the original figures there?

**Ms Winkler**—No.

**Senator CHRIS EVANS**—I can look them in the 2004-05 budget papers I guess. In terms of the expenditure for 2004-05, that is what you spent?

**Ms Winkler**—In 2004-05 we expended about \$858,000.

**Senator CHRIS EVANS**—What have we spent so far in 2005-06?

**Ms Winkler**—We have committed \$12.4 million and expended \$4.4 million.

**Senator CHRIS EVANS**—\$4.4 million in total?

**Ms Winkler**—Yes.

**Senator CHRIS EVANS**—So at some stage you thought you were going to expend \$12.4 million rather than the \$15 million, but you actually only spent \$4.4 million?

**Ms Winkler**—Yes. Part of the issue is that there is a range of expenditure that is still expected to go out.

**Senator CHRIS EVANS**—In this financial year?

**Ms Winkler**—In this financial year, and some of those projects related to scoping studies et cetera that needed to occur for significant amounts of money to be progressed, and with some of those we have been waiting for advice from the states. A number of projects have obviously been committed later in the financial year.

**Senator CHRIS EVANS**—What does your \$4.4 million figure take us up to—March or April?

**Mr Hazlehurst**—That is current.

**Senator CHRIS EVANS**—Today's date?

**Mr Hazlehurst**—Yes.

**Senator CHRIS EVANS**—That is very efficient of you. So what do you now expect to spend in the rest of the financial year—you have only got a month.

**Mr Hazlehurst**—We are still expecting to spend what has been committed.

**Senator CHRIS EVANS**—You are going to spend \$8 million in the next month?

**Mr Hazlehurst**—There is also a range of new projects that are close to having the funding agreements or schedules, if you like, to their memorandums agreed, and they will have initial payments made in respect of those as well.

**Senator CHRIS EVANS**—You are telling me that in the next 30 days you are going to spend \$8 million?

**Mr Hazlehurst**—We are certainly doing our level best to spend all of the funds committed in this year.

**Senator SIEWERT**—Where did those projects come from that you were just talking about funding? You did not advertise, as I understand it.

**Mr Hazlehurst**—Through negotiation with the states and territories and with the communities within that jurisdiction.

**Senator SIEWERT**—Which communities do you negotiate with—ones that put up their hand? How do they know to put up their hand?

**Mr Hazlehurst**—We work with the states and territories and through our state and territory office network and the Indigenous coordination centres as well to identify opportunities for supporting communities.

**Senator SIEWERT**—They go through the IPCs, is that what you are trying to say?

**Mr Hazlehurst**—Yes.

**Senator CHRIS EVANS**—When you say you have spent the money or are going to spend the money, what does that mean? Did you write to the territories, did you write the state and territory governments a cheque, or do you actually give it to a medical service, or a housing developer?

**Mr Hazlehurst**—The funding agreements are with the states and territories.

**Senator CHRIS EVANS**—So effectively you give them the cheque.

**Ms Winkler**—Yes.

**Senator CHRIS EVANS**—What is the trigger for you sending them the cheque?

**Ms Winkler**—The trigger is relative to each specific project, so if there is capital infrastructure involved that requires scoping that may need to occur before a significant payment amount. Some of the payments are quite large payments that need to be made, so each project would be specific.

**Senator CHRIS EVANS**—It is not cash in advance? If you agree, say, to do a housing project, when do you give them the money—when they start building or after they have built?

**Mr Hazlehurst**—It varies. It depends on what has been agreed.

**Senator CHRIS EVANS**—I want to get a sense of your logic. The Commonwealth for years has been concerned about writing cheques for the states and territories. That is why we have tied grants and we have quite strict agreements about those things, and I think history proves that is a very wise development. What are the principles that guide you when you are dealing with a state about allocating the money? I know they vary, but you must have some directions. I do not think Dr Harmer would let you run riot without feeling that you had some guidance.

**Mr Hazlehurst**—The best way I can answer that is to say that we agree on milestones that need to be achieved in relation to each project, and that the funding would flow in respect of achievement of those milestones. In some cases that would involve money being provided ahead of services actually being delivered in order to fund the delivery of those services. In some instances, as Ms Winkler pointed out, where there are capital dimensions to the project it may involve providing some funds up-front to actually get the project established.

**Senator CHRIS EVANS**—That is right, but effectively you do not hand the money over to the state and territory up-front—you have agreed milestones, some of which relate to when they are going to have to pay the builder or pay for the service effectively.



**Ms Winkler**—I can give you an example for one particular project. For example, they have had to provide us with a progress report in terms of appointing capacity building project officers, establishing their implementation teams, presenting the process of stage 1 to the community and negotiating the governance arrangements and establishing the local project group. Those milestones all needed to be met by September 2005. Then by December, they needed to recruit particular staff and the safe haven actually commenced. They present the process of stage 2 to the community and then they build the premises by June 2006, so there are particular points—

**Senator CHRIS EVANS**—You make a payment on each of those milestones?

**Ms Winkler**—We do not always make a payment on each milestone but on major milestones.

**Senator CHRIS EVANS**—But in terms of, say, they were going to employ people on salaries and that is the major part of the project, do you pay quarterly or six monthly on that, or do you just give them a lump sum?

**Ms Winkler**—Depending on the project, but obviously if they are going to employ staff they are going to need the available funds to be able to do that.

**Senator CHRIS EVANS**—But you do not effectively take any day-to-day involvement in the funding of the project. They meet the milestones and then they pay the costs of the project—is that how it is?

**Ms Winkler**—Yes.

**Senator CHRIS EVANS**—Can you tell us what you have actually funded so far as in providing the money? We have got the \$4.4 million this year so far, and we have got the \$1.157 million in 2004-05. Have you got a breakdown of where that money has gone?

**Mr Hazlehurst**—Sorry, what was the figure you quoted?

**Senator CHRIS EVANS**—I took the officer to say \$1.157 million, but I may have verbalised her. I wrote down \$1.157 million expenditure in 2004-05. Sorry, I tell a lie; that was the budgeted amount—\$858,000 wasn't it?

**Mr Hazlehurst**—Just to be clear in relation to 2004-05, the amount allocated in the appropriation was the amount committed and spent. There was an additional \$300,000 for departmental costs associated with that which, if you add the two together, you get the \$1.157 million.

**Senator CHRIS EVANS**—You do not have the original budget figure there for me.

**Mr Hazlehurst**—No, not the one you requested.

**Senator CHRIS EVANS**—Not what was in the 2004-05 budget papers?

**Ms Winkler**—No.

**Senator CHRIS EVANS**—I am just trying to make sure I have got the figure in the right column, as it were. You actually expended \$1.157 million in that year, \$300,000 of which was for department administered expenses.

**Ms Winkler**—I apologise; all the figures I gave you included the departmentals as totals.

**Senator CHRIS EVANS**—How much of the \$4.4 million was departmental expenses?

**Ms Winkler**—None of the \$4.4 million was departmental—that was just the actual expenditure.

**Senator CHRIS EVANS**—What has been budgeted for departmental expenses this year out of the \$15.23 million?

**Ms Winkler**—Five hundred thousand dollars.

**Senator CHRIS EVANS**—What does admin expenses mean? Is that the cost of running the programs?

**Ms Winkler**—The administered dollars are the dollars that actually go to the services.

**Mr Hazlehurst**—The departmental dollars are the ones that the department uses to manage the programs.

**Senator CHRIS EVANS**—The \$300,000 and the \$500,000 are your costs in managing the programs?

**Ms Winkler**—Yes.

**Senator CHRIS EVANS**—Of the \$858,000 spent in 2004-05, who did you give the cheque to?

**Ms Winkler**—Approximately \$503,000 went to the Northern Territory government, approximately \$315,000 went to the South Australian government and \$40,000 went to the Victorian government.

**Senator CHRIS EVANS**—Can you break down for me, say for the Northern Territory, what you funded out of that \$503,000?

**Ms Winkler**—Yes. Some funding went towards community patrols in the Northern Territory.

**Senator CHRIS EVANS**—How much?

**Ms Winkler**—That was \$100,000. Of that, \$54,545 were funds committed in 2005-06, so it was just \$100,000 in 2004-05 for community patrols.

**Senator CHRIS EVANS**—Then you gave another—

**Ms Winkler**—Then there is money in the out years for some of those projects.

**Senator CHRIS EVANS**—In 2005-06, have you got a figure for the community patrols?

**Ms Winkler**—For that particular project, \$54,545.

**Senator CHRIS EVANS**—Do you have the figures for the Northern Territory's contributions by program as well?

**Ms Winkler**—Yes, we do.

**Senator CHRIS EVANS**—What was the global figure first?

**Ms Winkler**—I have got them for each specific project.

**Senator CHRIS EVANS**—We can add them up at the end then.

**Ms Winkler**—We could provide a document.

**Senator CHRIS EVANS**—If there is only three or four projects, probably even I could add them up.

**Ms Winkler**—Because these projects go over a number of years we have got the total state contribution for the Northern Territory. We have not got it broken it down into each year.

**Senator CHRIS EVANS**—By financial year?

**Ms Winkler**—Yes.

**Senator CHRIS EVANS**—Your contribution of \$503,000 to the Northern Territory is for the year 2004-05?

**Ms Winkler**—Yes. So, for example, where \$100,000 was going to that particular project in 2004-05, the total value of that project from the Commonwealth was \$327,273 over the multiyear agreement.

**Senator CHRIS EVANS**—Over four years?

**Ms Winkler**—Yes, and the state contribution is \$455,454.

**Senator CHRIS EVANS**—So over the four years of the community patrol project, the Commonwealth is putting in \$327,000 and the Northern Territory is putting in \$455,000.

**Ms Winkler**—Yes.

**Senator CHRIS EVANS**—In the first year, what is the Northern Territory putting in?

**Ms Winkler**—They are the figures that I do not have in my table currently.

**Senator CHRIS EVANS**—So we have got the global figures. How many projects have you funded with the Northern Territory?

**Mr Hazlehurst**—Altogether or just in that year?

**Senator CHRIS EVANS**—We will start within that year I think.

**Ms Winkler**—Five within that year, 2004-05.

**Senator CHRIS EVANS**—So the community patrols amount was a total of \$327,000, and \$100,000 in the first year. What else have we got?

**Ms Winkler**—The program for empowering of Indigenous communities to identify, address and monitor family violence issues is \$20,000 in 2004-05.

**Senator CHRIS EVANS**—In 2005-06?

**Ms Winkler**—In 2005-06 it is \$15,909.

**Senator CHRIS EVANS**—And what is your total contribution on that?

**Ms Winkler**—Our total contribution is \$51,818 and the state's contribution is \$99,291.

**Senator CHRIS EVANS**—And the third program?

**Ms Winkler**—The third program is the interventions for children who have been exposed to domestic violence. That is a Katherine based project—the amount was \$26,765 in 2004-05.

**Senator CHRIS EVANS**—In 2005-06?

**Ms Winkler**—In 2005-06, the funds committed are \$128,773.

**Senator CHRIS EVANS**—So a much bigger build-up?

**Ms Winkler**—Yes.

**Senator CHRIS EVANS**—What is your total contribution?

**Ms Winkler**—The Commonwealth contribution is \$214,896 and the state contribution is \$105,353.

**Senator CHRIS EVANS**—Obviously in the out years that tails off a bit. You have spent \$156,000 already of \$214,000?

**Ms Winkler**—Yes, it is really a 2004-05, 2005-06 predominant project.

**Senator CHRIS EVANS**—That is in Katherine?

**Ms Winkler**—Yes.

**Senator CHRIS EVANS**—The fourth program?

**Ms Winkler**—Is a program called Peace at Home. The funds committed were \$295,195 in 2004-05 and \$212,820 in 2005-06.

**Senator CHRIS EVANS**—The total contribution?

**Ms Winkler**—The Commonwealth contribution is \$946,028 and the Northern Territory contribution is \$1.554 million.

**Senator CHRIS EVANS**—Your fifth program?

**Ms Winkler**—That is a program called Stop It Before It Starts. Funds committed were \$61,000 in 2004-05 and \$91,500 in 2005-06. The Commonwealth contribution is \$160,000 and the state contribution is \$40,000.

**Senator CHRIS EVANS**—Basically you have made all your contribution there effectively as well.

**Ms Winkler**—There is a very minimal amount in the following out years.

**Senator CHRIS EVANS**—Thank you for that. What is your total commitment to those five programs so far in the Northern Territory?

**Ms Winkler**—In which year?

**Senator CHRIS EVANS**—You have got \$503,000 in the first year; what is the second year's commitment?

**Ms Winkler**—I can tell you what is committed in total for the Northern Territory in 2005-06.

**Senator CHRIS EVANS**—Yes.

**Ms Winkler**—It is \$3.185 million.

**Senator CHRIS EVANS**—So it was \$503,000 in 2004-05 and \$3.185 million in 2005-06.

**Ms Winkler**—Yes.

**Senator CHRIS EVANS**—Have you got the totals for the out years as well in the Northern Territory?

**Ms Winkler**—Committed?

**Senator CHRIS EVANS**—Yes.

**Ms Winkler**—In 2006-07 currently the out year commitment is \$1.196 million and then \$600,000 in 2007-08.

**Senator CHRIS EVANS**—Is that because you envisage having more programs running?

**Ms Winkler**—That is because there are additional dollars to actually—

**Senator CHRIS EVANS**—Spread around.

**Ms Winkler**—Yes.

**Senator CHRIS EVANS**—Can you tell me a bit about the programs and the community patrols. I also understand that we fund some of the crime prevention programs in A-G's, but that is a different bucket. I do not expect you to answer questions like that but I gather it is not the only Commonwealth funding of community patrols as some money comes out of crime prevention.

**Mr Hazlehurst**—I am not sure.

**Senator CHRIS EVANS**—That was in PM&C's evidence to me. I think Senator Ellison was at the table at the time. He could tell you every dollar he was spending on it so that was all right. Where are these community patrols?

**Ms Winkler**—In the Northern Territory—you will have to excuse my pronunciation—at East Arnhem, Aputula, Belyuen and Mutitjulu.

**Senator CHRIS EVANS**—So you are funding four?

**Ms Winkler**—They are the broad areas, yes.

**Senator CHRIS EVANS**—The second program, Empowering Indigenous Families, is obviously very small. Is it?

**Ms Winkler**—Yes, that is the Tiwi Islands and the Nyirrungalung region.

**Senator CHRIS EVANS**—The intervention program referred to was at Katherine. The Peace at Home program is obviously a big one. What is that about?

**Ms Winkler**—That is Katherine and Borroloola.

**Senator CHRIS EVANS**—What is the nature of the program?

**Ms Winkler**—It is to develop and deliver therapeutic interventions for children exposed to family violence, and it is training shelter workers, school teachers and other service providers to assist these clients.

**Senator CHRIS EVANS**—So it is effectively a training focused model.

**Ms Winkler**—It is actually delivering therapeutic interventions to the clients as well as training individuals to assist in that process.

**Senator CHRIS EVANS**—That is in the Katherine region.

**Ms Winkler**—Yes.

**Senator CHRIS EVANS**—And the Stop It Before It Starts program?

**Ms Winkler**—That is meant to develop a train-the-trainer package. It is all of the NT school counsellors' training kit.

**Senator CHRIS EVANS**—How many projects are you funding in South Australia?

**Ms Winkler**—For which particular year?

**Senator CHRIS EVANS**—For 2004-05.

**Ms Winkler**—For 2004-05 there was one project funded.

**Senator CHRIS EVANS**—What was that?

**Ms Winkler**—That was the Aboriginal Family Wellbeing program, addressing underlying factors that contribute to family violence.

**Senator CHRIS EVANS**—What did you contribute to that?

**Ms Winkler**—In 2004-05 approximately \$315,000, with a further commitment of \$167,000 in 2005-06 and further in the out years. Our contribution is \$1.322 million and the state's contribution is \$375,000.

**Senator CHRIS EVANS**—Obviously there is quite large variance in what the territory puts in or what South Australia puts in per program. What is the logic there? Is it a sort of rough guide about federal-state responsibilities, or is it whether you send a good negotiator along? There is obviously huge variance. Sometimes you are paying two-thirds and at other times they are paying two-thirds or greater. Is there any logic underpinning it?

**Ms Winkler**—Each project is looked at on its merits when it is put on the table for discussion. Obviously some programs fit into the state or territory government responsibilities more substantially, and we are making a contribution to enhancing those programs. In other cases it may be that it is a project or program that they are wanting to get off the ground that is not necessarily part of anybody's core business. We would make a recommendation at the time to the minister about whether these particular programs should be supported in terms of the funding balance that is there.

**Senator CHRIS EVANS**—I will just drill that down a bit so that I understand. You decide you are going to pay \$51,722.33 and they decide they are going to spend \$99,426. Clearly, there has to be a logic and it is not just the first number you thought of. Do you say, 'We are going to fund the social worker salary for the year,' and that therefore is your \$52,000 contribution? Is it that sort of arrangement?

**Mr Hazlehurst**—Neither Ms Winkler nor I have been directly involved in these negotiations but we could get some further information.

**Senator CHRIS EVANS**—I do not want the detail, I just want to understand how you determine what the Commonwealth pays for and does not pay for, because it is clearly not a normal dollar for dollar or a one-third/two-thirds basis.

**Mr Hazlehurst**—Sure.

**Senator CHRIS EVANS**—Is there any understanding of what happens after the out years? You are running a Peace at Home program around the Katherine area, as you say, supporting therapeutic interventions. What happens when the funding runs out?

**Mr Hazlehurst**—Like all programs of this nature, it is a lapsing program. We will be undertaking a lapsing program review during 2006-07 with a view to providing the government with further advice about what to do with the program in future.

**Senator CHRIS EVANS**—It is called a lapsing program review. Is that its official title or is that how it is understood?

**Mr Hazlehurst**—That is how we commonly refer to it.

**Senator CHRIS EVANS**—Fair enough. Do you do that at the start of the last year of funding—is it that sort of time frame?

**Mr Hazlehurst**—It varies, but obviously it is desirable to do it in time for the government to make a decision in the budget prior to the program ending.

**Senator CHRIS EVANS**—What do you do? Do you do a formal assessment of the success or otherwise of the program?

**Mr Hazlehurst**—Again it varies in terms of the methodology but, yes, it is a formal assessment of the success or otherwise of the program.

**Senator CHRIS EVANS**—Is that done by departmental officers?

**Ms Winkler**—It can be. Often it is contracted to an external evaluator or consultant. In regard to this program, the Office of Order and Evaluation are conducting a process. We will be constructing our lapsing program review not to duplicate any of the work that is undertaken by the Office of Order and Evaluation but to make sure that it is complementary to that process.

**Mr Hazlehurst**—Inevitably, while we might contract out some of the work associated with that review, the review itself is something that is conducted and analysed within government and also is reviewed by the department of finance.

**Senator CHRIS EVANS**—When you reach the memorandum of understanding with a territory or state, what is the understanding about your formal negotiation with them? Obviously you have to work out whether you are going to fund it and they have to work out whether they are going to continue to fund it. I understand out of this that you have not got to that stage yet.

**Mr Hazlehurst**—Do you mean beyond the out years?

**Senator CHRIS EVANS**—Beyond the agreed four years, yes.

**Mr Hazlehurst**—As I understand it, the agreements that we have both in relation to the MOUs and the actual projects funded underneath those are for the period of the program. The issue of funding beyond there is yet to be determined.

**Senator CHRIS EVANS**—But effectively the MOU is ongoing. What it funds and the extent to which it funds is a negotiation.

**Mr Hazlehurst**—We could confirm that as I am not sure whether it is an ongoing MOU or it actually has a fixed life.

**Senator CHRIS EVANS**—Yes, if you wouldn't mind. I would like to know whether the MOU potentially lapses. I would have thought, as it is the main vehicle under the family violence framework, that it was ongoing. But I shouldn't make that assumption, I should ask the question.

**Ms Winkler**—If it does not lapse then it certainly should have been constructed in line with knowing that the funding was only available to a certain date at this point in time.

**Senator CHRIS EVANS**—In terms of the history of this, the Prime Minister announced a \$20 million down payment at the summit. Where did that feed into the funding—the wash-up of all this?

**Mr Hazlehurst**—It didn't. That was separate funding that was announced at that time. There was \$6.1 million provided by the department of health through the non-government organisation treatment grants program of the Tough on Drugs strategy, and that was for projects across Australia targeting alcohol and drug abuse in Indigenous communities.

**Senator CHRIS EVANS**—Were they over four years as well?

**Mr Hazlehurst**—I am not sure. I do not have the details of that.

**Senator CHRIS EVANS**—So that was the announcement the Prime Minister made following the roundtable?

**Mr Hazlehurst**—Yes, that is right.

**Senator CHRIS EVANS**—I think I have that list of initiatives somewhere. That did not feed into your programs at all?

**Mr Hazlehurst**—No.

**Senator CHRIS EVANS**—There was a Health one. What were the others?

**Mr Hazlehurst**—There was another Health one—\$10.5 million over four years under the Tough on Drugs Diversion Initiative towards a new community grants scheme called the Tough on Drugs Indigenous Community Initiative.

**Senator CHRIS EVANS**—Do you know if that is still running?

**Mr Hazlehurst**—I believe it would be because it was \$10.5 million over four years. It is being managed by the department of health. There was then an amount of \$3 million over two years for Communities in Crisis, which was managed by OIPC.

**Senator CHRIS EVANS**—That went straight to OIPC?

**Mr Hazlehurst**—I believe so. I have been reminded in fact that OIPC was not around at the time.

**Senator CHRIS EVANS**—That was my first reaction too.

**Mr Hazlehurst**—So it would have been to ATSIC and ATSSIS. And then a fourth initiative, which was community initiatives addressing sexual assault, committed \$400,000 to develop an Indigenous focus program under the National Initiative to Combat Sexual Assault. That



was to encourage discussion about the issue among young Indigenous people. That is now managed by the Office for Women.

**Senator CHRIS EVANS**—So they ended up with OIPC via ATSIC and ATISIS?

**Mr Hazlehurst**—The Communities in Crisis one did.

**Senator CHRIS EVANS**—What about the sexual assault discussion one?

**Mr Hazlehurst**—That is with the Office for Women.

**Senator CHRIS EVANS**—So of the four programs two went to Health, one to OIPC eventually and one to the Office for Women?

**Mr Hazlehurst**—Yes.

**Senator CHRIS EVANS**—So none of that money fed into your national framework per se? This would fit under your description of other programs—

**Mr Hazlehurst**—I do not believe that the national framework actually existed at that time.

**Senator CHRIS EVANS**—No, I am just saying it did not feed into that. This would fit into the description of other programs the federal government supports which also are directed at family violence and child abuse in Indigenous communities. Is that a fair summary?

**Mr Hazlehurst**—Yes.

**Senator CHRIS EVANS**—Is there any ongoing coordination between FaCS and these programs?

**Mr Hazlehurst**—Only to the extent at this stage that we are aware broadly of those programs being ongoing and with the relevant other departments.

**Mr Yates**—Senator, you asked a question about coordination. You also asked a question earlier about what other initiatives emerged from the roundtable, aside from the expansion of family violence prevention and legal services that related particularly to the FaCSIA portfolio. We have now dealt with the set of initiatives announced by the Prime Minister in August 2003. He announced those at the same time as releasing to the states and territories the working party report, which outlined a set of recommendations to both the Australian government and the states and territories. Whilst at that time he announced the \$20 million package, it is fair to say that that report was being used by the Australian government in the shaping of its forthcoming budget, in the shaping of the framework which was eventually considered, not in late 2003 but in 2004 by COAG, and indeed in subsequent budgets.

Whilst one would not want to draw a straight line between the recommendations and specific initiatives—because there are other developments coming on top of the roundtable itself and COAG's consideration of the matter, particularly the ministerial taskforce in Indigenous affairs, which has as one of its priorities supporting safer communities and addressing family violence, for example—it is possible to identify through the recommendations made by the working party in 2003 a broad range of initiatives which, in fact, we have seen some significant progress on across a range of portfolios. OIPC for its part has an ongoing coordination role in ensuring that we track and link the initiatives being promoted by the ministerial taskforce under its three key priorities, of which this is one.

In a full picture, alongside the detail provided by my colleagues with regard to the family violence programs that FaCSIA operates and the three particular initiatives announced by the Prime Minister, there is a wide range of other measures which I am happy to take you to if you would like. They illustrate, I think, quite an extensive array of measures which have been introduced since 2003-04, consistent with the working party's recommendations and the priority the ministerial taskforce has given to this matter.

**Senator CHRIS EVANS**—Thank you, Mr Yates. I was going to come to you but if you want to hand me up the list before we have a chat about it, I am happy to go through it with you line by line. I assumed that, as you are the whole-of-government people, you would be able to give me the whole-of-government list.

**Mr Yates**—I can make that available. I do not have it in a nice crisp, dated way as you would like to receive it, but I will take it on notice and ensure you get it.

**Senator CHRIS EVANS**—Are you able to give us something today? That would help me. I was going to come to you about such matters. I am just suggesting that, if we had the list together, it would certainly make progress quicker.

**Mr Yates**—I can run through it quickly orally because I do not have it in a form that I could easily table.

**Senator CHRIS EVANS**—I see. If we just finish with the family violence programs, I will come back to that.

**Mr Yates**—Certainly. I just thought I would mark this for you.

**Senator CHRIS EVANS**—That is fine. I want to go through those. I thought that, if you could provide the list and we could go through them, it would be helpful. Have a look at it and see what you can do, even if it is just a line about what the programs are, if not the fuller details. Is that working party report public?

**Mr Yates**—Yes. It was released by the Prime Minister in August 2003.

**Senator CHRIS EVANS**—Is that on your website?

**Mr Yates**—I believe the press release was on the Prime Minister's website. I am not sure if the attachment is still there, but we could make it available to you.

**Senator CHRIS EVANS**—I have not stumbled across that. It would be great if you had it, but if it is public I can find it. I just want to know where to look for it. I remember the publicity at the time. In terms of FaCSIA, are there any other programs relating to family violence and child abuse issues that you want to make me aware of, so that I have not done you a disservice?

**Mr Hazlehurst**—There are other programs that are relevant in the sense that they go to more broadly supporting families, particularly those families where there may be family violence or child abuse type issues. Child abuse prevention is, of course, the primary responsibility of the state and territory governments. But the Stronger Families and Communities Strategy and the REACH program are examples of programs that have a focus within them around similar sorts of issues to do with strengthening families and the wellbeing of families.

Similarly, the broader Family Relationships Services program, which we manage jointly with the Attorney-General's Department, has within it some specific family violence components and some more general components to do with supporting good family relationships. Indeed, within all of those that I have mentioned, there are significant areas where the Indigenous populations are quite high and there is significant support for family functioning within those communities.

**Senator CHRIS EVANS**—Are you able to break those out in any way?

**Mr Hazlehurst**—What do you mean?

**Senator CHRIS EVANS**—In terms of the impact on Indigenous families. If a program says stronger families in Perth, obviously some Indigenous families may be picked up. I just wondered whether you had any capacity to identify what programs you think were particularly impacting on Indigenous communities. They are largely project by project as well, aren't they?

**Mr Hazlehurst**—They are. By and large, though, those programs do not have specific projects focusing just on Indigenous families. Some of them have some components where you would say that was the case. But others would operate both as mainstream programs that have Indigenous families accessing them and, in some cases, in areas where there is quite significant Indigenous populations. So I am not sure that I could answer that quite the way you might be hoping, in terms of being able to single out dollars under each program that were specifically relating to Indigenous people.

**Senator CHRIS EVANS**—I am only asking whether you had some information available. I am not asking you to go and work it all out. As you offered it up as an example, I wondered whether you were also able to offer up any assessment of the impact on Indigenous families.

**Mr Hazlehurst**—I can point to some specific programs but, beyond naming them, I will not be able to provide you with too much detail. But I could give you some examples. There is a program called the Indigenous Children Program, with an appropriation of \$5.63 million in 2006-07, that emphasises early intervention and prevention approaches for supporting Indigenous families looking after their children.

**Senator CHRIS EVANS**—I suppose Mr Yates has gone—I was going to ask him whether it was on his list.

**Mr Hazlehurst**—He probably will not have these sorts of things on his list, but he might.

**Senator CHRIS EVANS**—As he has come back, I will ask him. Mr Yates, what is the answer to the question? Did you hear it?

**Mr Yates**—Yes, I have got you the key ones. There are supplementary ones for which I do not have the box and dice list and there certainly would be a very wide range of Australian government programs that touched on this issue because of its nature. And we have not sought to identify every dollar or program that may contribute usefully to this, simply because it would probably be a list longer than your arm. But certainly those supplementary activities that are part and parcel of the programs that Mr Hazlehurst was alluding to would all be relevant in any complete picture of Australian government activity in this realm.

**Senator CHRIS EVANS**—I guess I must have misunderstood. I thought that you were going to be able to provide us with that. You are telling me that a program called the Indigenous Children Program is not going to be on the list of whole-of-government programs that address issues to do with family violence and children and family support in Indigenous communities.

**Mr Yates**—I think just about every government program that impacts on Australians, including Indigenous Australians, could be seen as contributing to improving social and economic wellbeing. As such, our list is a more targeted one and, in particular, guided by the recommendations that originated from that roundtable in 2003.

**Dr Harmer**—Senator, there is a question about where you stop, as Mr Yates has said. For example, the Supported Accommodation Assistance Program which, as you know, is a joint Commonwealth-state program, provides funding to the states for crisis accommodation, refuges et cetera. That would be relevant as well but probably is not in Mr Yates's list as a mainstream program.

There are lots of programs, including mainstream programs, which would have a component or an element which would target, in some cases, Indigenous Australians who may have suffered domestic violence and which would provide accommodation for them. We would not have the specifics of that—it is money we give to the states. But there would be relevant expenditure, across particularly the northern states, from that program as well.

**Senator CHRIS EVANS**—Yes. I am not trying to be smart.

**Dr Harmer**—I was just trying to make sure that you understood that there—

**Senator CHRIS EVANS**—I do. Obviously Mr Yates could add Medicare and a whole range of things to the list. I was not suggesting that. But, equally, if there is a health program for improving the dental hygiene of Indigenous children, it seems to me that it ought to make the list. One of the selling points, and what I thought would be one of the advantages of the whole-of-government approach, is that we would get a better sense of what programs are run and how well they are coordinated. I thought that was going to be one of the positive outcomes of the whole-of-government approach. I am interested in that because it seems to me that that tells you a bit about how government works, how it delivers services to Indigenous communities and, I suspect, also highlights the fact that the services have not been all that well coordinated in the past.

For an Indigenous community trying to respond to government, there are an awful lot of programs being applied to them by an awful lot of departments, and maybe not necessarily in a coordinated way. Quite frankly, that is obviously part of the COAG charter and I thought a worthwhile exercise. I guess you are saying, Mr Yates, that you haven't got that far down the supply chain yet.

**Mr Yates**—The particular material I was going to touch on today was linked to the recommendations of the working party and key initiatives that have emerged over the last three or four years. As part of our other work, particularly around the ministerial taskforce priorities, we often do a mapping of the broader range of Commonwealth activity that bears on those matters.

If I delved into that particular database, knowing now that you are interested in the full sweep of things that may have been running for many years rather than just in more recent times, then I could probably provide you with a much longer list—if not in the next 24 hours then certainly in the time available to respond to questions on notice.

**Senator CHRIS EVANS**—I would appreciate that. I guess I will be greedy and say I will ask for both, because I think the longer and broader list is really important for the debate, to be frank. I think it would be appreciated by the committee and also by the parliament and the community. It would be a useful contribution to the debate and also to the task you have been given in the sense of coordination of whole-of-government approaches. I am happy to take the other document as well, in the sense that you really identify that as a response to the outcomes from the working party. Is that fair?

**Mr Yates**—As well as other things that have evolved around these issues since then.

**Senator CHRIS EVANS**—Going back to the Family Violence Partnership Program, you have given me information on, if you like, the state of play for this year and last year. Can you give me a sense of what you expect to spend next year, for instance? We obviously rolled some money over from the first year and you budgeted for \$15 million this year. You tell me you are going to spend \$12 million, although you have only spent \$4 million so far. Does that mean we are going to have a rollover of funds for the third year?

**Mr Hazlehurst**—It may do, yes.

**Senator CHRIS EVANS**—Is someone going to pocket the change otherwise, are they?

**Dr Harmer**—I think what Mr Hazlehurst is saying is that we may expend the money this year and if we don't, we will be able to roll it over.

**Senator CHRIS EVANS**—No. You have already told me that, at best, you are going to spend the \$12 million, not the \$15 million. So you have \$3 million up your sleeves, even if you got the rest of it out the door by 30 June. So I presume at least \$3 million and maybe more is going to roll over to next year. Is that a fair assumption?

**Mr Hazlehurst**—There is an amount of \$2.3 million there, I believe.

**Senator CHRIS EVANS**—Sorry?

**Mr Hazlehurst**—The difference between—was it \$14.7 million and—

**Senator CHRIS EVANS**—I had \$15.23 million and \$12.4 million.

**Mr Hazlehurst**—That includes the departmental amount in the appropriation.

**Senator CHRIS EVANS**—So you expect to roll over what?

**Mr Hazlehurst**—About \$2.3 million.

**Senator CHRIS EVANS**—And obviously if you do not spend all of the \$12.4 million this year, then some of that will roll over as well?

**Mr Hazlehurst**—Yes.

**Senator CHRIS EVANS**—At this stage, what do you expect to spend next year? I know you budgeted originally for \$10.72 million.

**Mr Hazlehurst**—We have about \$8.5 million committed. We will be aiming to spend what is appropriated in that year but, at this stage, subject to the agreement around new projects, we have committed around \$8.5 million.

**Senator CHRIS EVANS**—So in fact you may have \$4 million or more extra that is capable of being spent next year?

**Mr Hazlehurst**—Yes.

**Senator CHRIS EVANS**—What is the main reason for the slippage? Is it just the failure to get agreements in place or the fact that the projects have not been able to get started?

**Mr Hazlehurst**—It is primarily associated with the negotiations that occur with both the state and territory governments and the communities to agree on the projects to be funded.

**Senator CHRIS EVANS**—Do you suggest programs, or is that generally driven by the states and then you sort of scope them?

**Mr Hazlehurst**—No, I believe we come together with ideas on both sides. As I said before, we manage this process through our state and territory office network and in close consultation with the Indigenous coordination centres as well. I think it would be fair to say that both levels of government come together with ideas for funding.

**Senator CHRIS EVANS**—What is the mechanism for Indigenous involvement in that decision making process?

**Mr Hazlehurst**—The communities themselves are also part of the process of designing the programs.

**Senator CHRIS EVANS**—How do they do that?

**Mr Hazlehurst**—They are engaged through our state and territory office network and with the ICCs.

**Senator CHRIS EVANS**—But they are not at the negotiating table per se—you have had consultations with them previously?

**Mr Hazlehurst**—In the actual working out of how the projects are shaped up, they are involved, yes.

**Ms Winkler**—In the ongoing management of those processes they are often part of working groups or steering groups for the particular project.

**Senator CHRIS EVANS**—How do they get to be in that position—by virtue of offices they hold?

**Ms Winkler**—That is dependent on the community and which particular part of the community is most actively involved in it. So if it is a women's council, for example, which is an active participant in their location then there would be members of that council who form part of that steering committee.

**Senator CHRIS EVANS**—Most of the descriptions of the approved projects in the list seem not to talk about any particular local group or organisation. It says, 'It will be based in Alice Springs and it will do this.' Have you partnered with existing organisations?

**Mr Hazlehurst**—I think that is more a function of the descriptions than the actuality.

**Senator CHRIS EVANS**—That may be right and that is what I am trying to tease out. There is one that says it is the Kullari Indigenous Women's Aboriginal Corporation but a lot of them do not. I am just trying to get a sense of whether these are new organisations established or greenfields sites.

**Mr Hazlehurst**—Not generally, I do not believe.

**Senator CHRIS EVANS**—So generally you are partnering with an existing service of some sort?

**Mr Hazlehurst**—Or a council or a leadership group of some description.

**Senator CHRIS EVANS**—Then the state or territory governments negotiate out the finer details. Tell me about the assessment process. We talked about what will happen if we need to do a lapsing program review or what have you. What is the formal assessment procedure for projects approved under this program?

**Ms Winkler**—In terms of each project, obviously each project has to meet their project milestones. For each project there is generally then a set of performance indicators which the program would be assessed against. I can give you an example of the safe havens project that I was talking about earlier.

**Senator CHRIS EVANS**—That would be good.

**Ms Winkler**—One of the performance indicators is increased safety for children and young people affected by family violence. They look at the percentage of children and young people using the service who feel safer while in the safe haven, on leaving the safe haven and within three to six months of leaving the safe haven. They look at the percentage of cases where support services ensure a child is safe at home, the percentage of children and young people with an effective case plan where there is increased safety for them, the percentage of families where children and young people have returned home demonstrating reduced family violence over a three-month period and the percentage of cases where it is determined that the child is safe at home following an episode at the safe haven at points in time and with given circumstances. They have them across a range of different performance indicators for that specific program.

**Senator CHRIS EVANS**—Who does that assessment?

**Ms Winkler**—Obviously, in terms of this project we would be looking at a funding agreement. We would have set up arrangements with the states around how that data is going to be captured and how it is going to be assessed.

**Senator CHRIS EVANS**—Is the assessment made jointly by the state and the Commonwealth?

**Ms Winkler**—In relation to this specific project there is actually a steering committee across the project and then they have a project reference group as well. In a range of these projects we would have the capacity to link into those processes.

**Senator CHRIS EVANS**—What does that mean at the end of the day? Do you and the states sit down and agree it worked or it did not work? How do you decide in the end whether it was good value for money?

**Mr Hazlehurst**—We would sit down with the states and territories and look at those sorts of indicators and also whether the relevant milestones had been achieved on time or at all. It would be that combination of assessment of outputs and outcomes.

**Ms Winkler**—We would also use the formal process of evaluation being undertaken to look at the effectiveness of the program through the office of audit and evaluation, and we would also use the lapsing program review as a mechanism to assess more broadly whether the programs had been successful.

**Senator CHRIS EVANS**—To go back to the point I was following with Mr Yates, how do you get a broader assessment? You are running this program for a safe house. Is that one in Alice Springs?

**Ms Winkler**—These are Queensland projects across four communities, I think.

**Senator CHRIS EVANS**—Let us just say that you ran one program in Alice Springs, such as a safe house. You are also running a community patrol, so maybe there are three or four projects run by you or the Territory or together that are aimed at family violence. Do you just assess how each project went or do you do some overall assessment? Obviously they are designed to support each other, even if it is only in a very broad way. How do we work out whether the mix of programs is delivering results? After all, the safe house is doing good work in the sense that it has made it a bit safer but, if they go back into a violent community, it is only dealing with the symptoms and not the causes. How do you bring that together in some sort of assessment? Is there a method? The framework gives the impression that that is what it is about.

**Mr Hazlehurst**—I am not aware of the specific methodology that will be used, but I am confident that we will be sitting down with the states and territories—with each jurisdiction—and assessing the overall impact of the program and looking for ways in which we can improve that.

**Senator CHRIS EVANS**—I would like to share your confidence; that is why I am asking the question. The answer did not fill me with confidence, other than it seemed a bit general. How do you actually assess the family violence national framework? Is there an assessment of that? That is what I am really asking: is that as an overarching framework delivering results?

**Mr Hazlehurst**—Again, I do not believe we have a specific methodology for that but we will be looking to see the extent to which the partnership arrangements that we have both with the states and with the communities themselves are actually delivering on the ground. So it would be a combination of looking at indicators that relate to outcomes and outputs—whether we are actually ending up with cooperative arrangements on the ground that are delivering the sorts of services that were described in the framework.

**Senator CHRIS EVANS**—Thank you.

**Proceedings suspended from 10.58 am to 11.17 am**

**CHAIR**—The community affairs committee will now resume its hearings into the budget for the Families and Community Services and Indigenous Affairs portfolio. We are still dealing with outcome 1. We are dealing with output groups 1.1 and 1.2 together. I call on Senator Bartlett to ask questions.



**Senator BARTLETT**—Thank you. They are all mashed together, so we will see how we go—

**CHAIR**—1.1 and 1.2 are together. I do not know that we have 1.3 in there.

**Senator BARTLETT**—I want to ask about a couple of aspects to do with housing initiatives and the like that were announced in the budget. Firstly, there was an announcement in the budget about extra money for the construction of housing, as I understand it. I just want to clarify the details of that and how it would work. I know there is the ongoing Community Housing Infrastructure Program, but were new measures announced to do with extra funding for housing, kit homes or those sorts of things?

**Mr Knapp**—There was an announcement relating to home ownership on community title land which involves, among other things, the provision of 45 new houses earmarked for home ownership which are to be built on community land. Recently, there was the announcement of \$6 million for innovative housing solutions in remote Indigenous communities as well.

**Senator BARTLETT**—That \$6 million is on top of what was announced in the budget?

**Mr Knapp**—That was announced just recently by the Treasurer.

**Senator BARTLETT**—It is on top of what was in the budget?

**Mr Knapp**—Yes—that is right.

**Senator BARTLETT**—Partly out of curiosity, how does that work when we spend all that time figuring out what goes into the budget? How can you find another bunch of money a week later to go into a program?

**Mr Knapp**—Funding was agreed within the budget process and the Treasurer made his announcement when he was travelling to several remote regions.

**Senator BARTLETT**—So it was actually already contained in the forward estimates in the budget; it just had not been singled out and announced separately—is that what you are saying? Was an extra \$6 million thrown in, on top of what was in the budget papers?

**Mr Knapp**—No, the funding is included in the broader budget numbering.

**Senator BARTLETT**—I am just taking this from a news report—which is always a little bit worrying. It talked about funding 40 self-build kit houses at the cost of \$6 million. What does that mean in practice?

**Mr Knapp**—As it says, it is to look at using self-build type housing construction as a means of more cost-effective housing design and construction in remote communities. It is a reflection of concerns about the high cost of building houses in very remote communities and looking at innovative ways of trying to keep those costs lower so that more housing can be built with the funds available.

**Senator BARTLETT**—How is it going to be distributed?

**Mr Knapp**—It will be linked to broader strategies around working with Indigenous communities, which is part of the broader portfolio strategy on Indigenous communities.

**Mr Gibbons**—In reference to the \$6 million for the experimental kit homes, the decision has already been taken to offer a number of them to the Tiwi Islands as part of a package of measures to support the Tiwi Islands through a land reform program.

**Senator BARTLETT**—How much of that is going there?

**Mr Gibbons**—Of the 40, up to 12 houses are for Tiwi.

**Senator BARTLETT**—With the rest, what is the process going to be? Is it tied in with the expansion of the home ownership program or will it go to places as part of the home ownership program.

**Mr Gibbons**—The final decisions have not been taken, but there are negotiations occurring at the moment with several states.

**Senator BARTLETT**—Do they try and link the home ownership issue or not necessarily?

**Mr Gibbons**—We want to link the investment to a joint approach, so we are talking to a number of states about such a joint approach. Mornington Island is one possibility. We are talking to the Queensland government. We have not made decisions yet. We are also talking in Western Australia.

**Senator BARTLETT**—So will it be through state governments or in conjunction with state governments rather than directly with an Indigenous community council?

**Mr Gibbons**—The homes will not be made available through Indigenous communal organisations, they will be made available under different terms but will involve a package of measures—not just housing—provided, desirably, by both the Commonwealth and the state. In the context of the Tiwi Islands, there is a package of measures that have been pulled together that involve education, housing and land reform. In Mornington Island there is a package of measures that we are progressively pulling together with the Queensland government. We are talking about a similar approach in a location or locations in Western Australia, but we are not very advanced yet with that.

**Senator CROSSIN**—The amount of money for the kit homes is?

**Mr Knapp**—\$6 million.

**Senator CROSSIN**—For how many kit homes?

**Mr Gibbons**—The ex-factory price, I think, will be about \$150,000 per kit home.

**Senator CROSSIN**—So there is an expectation—they must be built to cyclone coding. Is that correct?

**Mr Gibbons**—Yes.

**Senator CROSSIN**—Does that \$6 million include money to get them certified through the building board in a place like the Northern Territory?

**Mr Gibbons**—No. It includes the purchase price of the kit, basically. We will find, from other sources, the cost of transportation, site preparation and direction.

**Senator CROSSIN**—Building compliance?

**Mr Gibbons**—Yes.

**Senator CROSSIN**—The Commonwealth is going to find that money from other sources?

**Mr Gibbons**—Yes.

**Senator CROSSIN**—From other Commonwealth sources, from private enterprise or state governments?

**Mr Gibbons**—In the one case where we have already made a commitment, it will be from Commonwealth sources. Until we have made a decision in other cases, I cannot say yet.

**Senator CROSSIN**—Are the kit homes adaptable for tropical living—if you are going to put them on the Tiwi Islands?

**Mr Gibbons**—We have not yet been out to tender to choose the supplier, but we know of kit homes that are being used, for example, in other parts of Australia—the Torres Strait, for example—that meet all of the building requirements in that area and are cyclone rated.

**Senator CROSSIN**—Thank you.

**Senator BARTLETT**—I know there is a review under way of the broader Community Housing Infrastructure Program at the moment. I am just wondering about the distribution of that as well. It says it is to supplement the efforts of state and territory governments through providing rental housing, including construction, purchase and the like. Is that funding through state and territory governments as well, or does it tend to go direct to local communities?

**Mr Knapp**—The majority of funding is through state and territory governments. As part of Indigenous housing and infrastructure agreements that we have with every state and territory, in some states the funds are what we call ‘fully pooled’. That means that all the funds from the Commonwealth join funds that are provided by the particular state or territory. Then it is up to the state or territory to actually use the funds to deliver housing infrastructure services, housing related services and so on. For example, in Western Australia it is a fully funded arrangement, and similarly in New South Wales. In other states, such as Queensland, the delivery responsibility is shared. So some funds we spend directly on Indigenous housing in that state, rather than pool the funds. It varies from state to state.

**Senator BARTLETT**—Is that on a year to year grant type of basis to state governments, or do you give them a block of money on the expectation they will deliver certain outcomes with it?

**Mr Knapp**—The funding is provided annually on the basis of an operational plan provided by each state as to how the funds that we will be providing will be used.

**Senator BARTLETT**—I had heard that the Queensland government had returned some funding they had not been able to spend in the housing area last year. Is that correct or have I been misadvised?

**Mr Knapp**—I am not aware of the Queensland government—

**Dr Harmer**—Are you speaking of the Community Housing Infrastructure Program or the Aboriginal Rental Housing Program?

**Senator SIEWERT**—Either.

**Dr Harmer**—It just depends. We dealt with the Commonwealth State Housing Agreement last night and I do not think I have that person—

**Senator BARTLETT**—It was for Indigenous housing, as I understand it.

**Mr Gibbons**—You may be referring to the return of some money that I think was made available to the Queensland government in the last months of AT SIS for self-built homes in the Cape York area. I think the Queensland government has approached us to either return the money or seek to have the money used for other purposes, but we can take that on notice and clarify it. That is the only situation I am aware of where money is being returned.

**Mr Knapp**—But certainly in terms of CHIP funding no funds have been returned from Queensland in this financial year and no CSHA funds—just to complete the circle on that question.

**Senator SIEWERT**—From Queensland or any other state? I would like to know if any states—

**Mr Knapp**—I am not aware of any funds being returned from any state or territory this financial year under either the CHIP or the CSHA funding arrangements.

**Senator BARTLETT**—It sounds like it probably is that from the imprecise information that I have.

**Mr Gibbons**—I do not think it is much; it is about half a million dollars.

**Senator BARTLETT**—How much it was, what it is going to be used for and where it is going to end up would be helpful to know, thank you. I asked about the Home Ownership on Indigenous Land Program last night. I presume that is intertwined with discussions with state governments about necessary changes to land tenure issues, at least in some states. Can you give the committee an idea of what progress has been made? As I understand it, those discussions are ongoing and this is some extra money to be pumped into that. How is that extra money going to be used as part of the broader activity that is already happening?

**Mr Knapp**—The program has not as yet formally started because the funds will be made available from 1 July 2006. We will enter into discussions with the states and territories about where best to look at using those funds, also working with our colleagues in OIPC in terms of discussions that are being held in terms of a whole of government approach to provision of services to communities as to where best it would be to invest the provision of these 45 houses. It also links in with the work that Indigenous Business Australia will also be doing in providing 460 affordable home loan packages. It is part of a broader strategy of funding Indigenous communities to enable them to have members of their communities own their own homes under a leaseback arrangement. It will be similar to how it works here in Canberra with the 99-year lease idea.

**Senator BARTLETT**—To be able to do that, that would require legislation change in most states as far as eligibility—

**Mr Knapp**—I am not sure about all states but it certainly will require the cooperation of the states and territories in terms of, if not requiring change, certainly encouraging local communities to agree to leaseback arrangements so that houses can be owned by members of the community.

**Senator BARTLETT**—Just using Queensland as an example because that is where I am from and am most familiar with, I had thought the Aboriginal coordinating council there, which covers all of the old DOGIT communities, had been floating this sort of idea since around the turn of the century. I noticed reports just overnight about a meeting in Yarrabah yesterday talking about the same sort of thing, a home ownership concept. The land title issues prevent Aboriginal people from buying in communities—I am just quoting from the mayor here. I would have thought that, in terms of the land title issues, that would be a state government issue in Queensland with the land rights act. So I guess part 1 of the question is: what is the federal government doing on that aspect? Or were you basically saying, ‘Well, there is this money here but you can’t access it until changes are made to the legislation’?

**Mr Gibbons**—It varies across jurisdictions, naturally, but several jurisdictions are interested. We are in discussion with them. For our part it is to facilitate an arrangement for the lease-purchase of a house by an individual. We would be seeking the jurisdiction’s support and action to ensure that that individual can lease the land for the house. So it is a move away from unzoned communal land to zoning to permit individual leasing. In some jurisdictions, I think, legislation is not required; in others it is. For example, in the Northern Territory it is. We have already announced jointly that we are going to facilitate legislative change with the Northern Territory government in respect of the Northern Territory land rights act.

**Senator BARNETT**—Do you know if it is required in Queensland?

**Mr Gibbons**—I am not sure whether it requires any further legislation or whether it requires actions by the new local government bodies that have been set up to replace the DOGITs to zone land for residential leasing.

**Senator BARTLETT**—This is the second aspect of that, assuming that can happen. This report from Yarrabah mentioned 150 houses were needed. There are about 3,000 residents and about nine per house. As I am sure you know, it is not one of the ones everyone is debating—far, remote, unviable communities; it is about three-quarters of an hour from Cairns. We have got Palm Island, of course, which is also very close to Townsville, so that is not part of the debate. But you have still got what seems to me to be quite a massive shortfall purely in housing requirements. Whilst the new measures are welcome, it does not seem it is going to go anywhere near what is needed to cover this. What is the approach in regard to that? Is it being seen as primarily the states’ responsibility to meet that shortfall, given their responsibility for housing, or is there going to be a need for further federal initiatives down the track?

**Mr Knapp**—Yarrabah is an example, I guess, of a number of communities where it is recognised that more needs to be done to both improve the housing that is there and also, in a number of communities, increase the housing. It is an issue of great interest and import to housing ministers and to our minister. Housing ministers will be meeting in Sydney on the 16th, and one of the key agendas will be that discussion about how best to progress the issue of meeting unmet need for housing and making sure that what housing is delivered is delivered cost effectively, that it is durable and that it deals with the issues of overcrowding and so on. So it is not just an issue of building houses but also an issue of improving the quality and durability of housing that is provided in a way that meets the needs of Indigenous Australians, particularly those living in very remote parts of Australia.

**Senator BARTLETT**—I appreciate the importance of that—and I am sure you will not forget it—but, as I said, Yarrabah and Palm Island are not particularly remote but they still have significant problems with the number of houses available. Finally, where is the Northern Territory government up to with the amendments it announced to the land rights act? It was announced quite a while ago, but I have not seen much movement since. I have not seen any legislation at the federal end. In this area, I am always wary of legislation appearing and then the Senate being told we have to push it through because it is very urgent. That is always problematic, particularly on an issue like this. Do you have any idea when the proposed legislative changes are likely to appear? I realise that the timetable is up to the government, but there is at least some prospect that there would be scope for—

**Mr Gibbons**—It is a matter for the government. I cannot comment on that at the moment.

**Senator BARTLETT**—I presume it is still progressing.

**Mr Gibbons**—Certainly.

**Senator BARTLETT**—Is it still proposed that some of the funding for making these new arrangements work in the Territory will come out of the Aboriginal benefit account?

**Mr Gibbons**—The minister, with the advice of the Aboriginal benefit account advisory board, has made several decisions this year to release money from the ABA for housing. Ten million dollars was released for the large remote community of Elcho Island—Galiwinku—and, more recently, \$10 million was released for hostel and short-term camping accommodation in Alice Springs.

**Senator BARTLETT**—I want to get a clarification on that. In the budget statements, under special appropriations, nearly \$35 million will come out of the ABA this financial year and \$67.3 million next year. Can you explain the size of that variation? Is that based around those sorts of decisions?

**Mr Gibbons**—I cannot give you the answer off the top of my head. I will ask if one of my colleagues can. We might have to take that on notice. I do not think it relates to the decision to release money from the ABA, but we will check that. I am advised that the lower figure is part-year funding because of the transfer of functional responsibility from the DIMA portfolio to the FaCSIA portfolio.

**Senator BARTLETT**—How do decisions like the ones you mentioned coming out of the ABA get made? Does the ABA have a board that meets to decide expenditure?

**Mr Gibbons**—It is a decision made under an enactment. It is the minister's decision and he may seek the advice of an advisory board which is established under that enactment. In the two cases that I mentioned, he did receive the advice of the board; he is not obliged to do that, but he did.

**Senator CROSSIN**—On what dates did he do that?

**Mr Gibbons**—At their regular meetings.

**Senator CROSSIN**—You are talking about the money for Elcho Island—

**Mr Gibbons**—And Alice Springs.

**Senator CROSSIN**—The Alice Springs town camp money?

**Mr Gibbons**—Yes.

**Senator CROSSIN**—Can you give me the dates of those meetings?

**Mr Gibbons**—I can take that on notice.

**Senator CROSSIN**—Are you telling us that the ABA advisory committee has met in the last three months?

**Mr Gibbons**—I think it was March this year.

**Senator CROSSIN**—When was the meeting prior to March this year?

**Mr Gibbons**—I cannot remember. We can get that for you.

**Senator SIEWERT**—I am interested in the Building a Better Future: Indigenous Housing to 2010 program. Is that still a relevant program?

**Mr Knapp**—Yes.

**Senator SIEWERT**—My understanding is that it was supposed to be reviewed in 2005. Is that a correct understanding?

**Mr Knapp**—It was supposed to be reviewed mid-term, which would have been 2006—so this year—and a review is happening. We are hoping to have the report available to be considered by ministers in, I think, September this year. I think there is a meeting of housing ministers around that time and I am pretty sure that is when it is going to be considered. So this is the mid-term review.

**Senator SIEWERT**—Who is undertaking that review?

**Mr Knapp**—It is being undertaken by the subcommittee on Indigenous housing, which is a group comprising Commonwealth and state officials which is part of what is called the Housing Ministers Advisory Committee. The actual review itself is being managed by the Commonwealth government using an organisation called Quantum. That is the consulting firm that is conducting the review.

**Senator SIEWERT**—So you do have an independent audit?

**Mr Knapp**—Consultant.

**Senator SIEWERT**—Consultant.

**Mr Knapp**—Yes, we have a consultant who was selected through a tender process to conduct the review, and that review is happening. It is nearly complete and we hope to have it ready for housing ministers to consider in the third quarter of this year.

**Senator SIEWERT**—Is the brief for the consultant that outlines what they are going to be reviewing a public document?

**Mr Knapp**—I will have to check. We will get back to you on that one.

**Senator SIEWERT**—If it is—I have been caught this way before—can I have a copy, please.

**Mr Knapp**—We will check.

**Senator SIEWERT**—Yesterday I asked for something and they said, ‘Yes, it’s available,’ and then they did not provide it. So I have learnt.

**Mr Knapp**—That is why, before I make that commitment, I want to check.

**Senator SIEWERT**—Just in case it is not public, is the full extent of the program being reviewed so that it looks at community housing organisations, infrastructure et cetera? Are all the things covered in the agreement and the program going to be reviewed?

**Mr Knapp**—It is more a strategic review rather than a look at individual programs that are being delivered, so it is focusing more on the actual strategies. I assume you have seen the *Building a better future* document that was produced? Yes. As you can see, it is more a series of strategies, directions and priorities than specific spending proposals and so on. So it is meant to provide a direction for the Commonwealth and for the states and territories on how to address issues relating to housing and housing infrastructure.

The review is about evaluating whether those strategies are being fully implemented and whether there have been any changes in the environment or issues that have arisen—after all, it is five years since the strategy was put in place—which mean that the BBF has not been able to be implemented effectively. It also looks at whether we are on track to deliver the sorts of outcomes, given that it was a 10-year plan, that were considered when the plan was approved by housing ministers back in 2001.

**Senator SIEWERT**—Can I ask about specific examples. One of the strategies in here was to:

Maximise opportunities for Indigenous people to be involved in housing construction and maintenance ...

Is that specifically going to be reviewed? I know of specific examples where Aboriginal people are not being involved in housing construction, and I think that needs to be fixed now rather than waiting until 2010.

**Mr Knapp**—It is not so much that it has to wait until 2010; it is more about whether the strategy is actually achieving better outcomes in that particular measure and whether there has been an increase in Indigenous involvement in the construction and maintenance of housing and so on. We are aware that there are plenty of examples where that is happening, but is that sufficient to meet the targets that housing ministers had in mind, is it happening quickly enough and what can be done to facilitate an increase in that? Those are the sorts of issues that will be considered.

**Senator SIEWERT**—Is that document going to be made public after it goes to the ministers? I appreciate the rules about it not being made public before that, but will it be published afterwards?

**Mr Knapp**—It will be up to ministers to decide whether they wish to release the report, so I cannot pre-empt their consideration of that.

**Senator SIEWERT**—So it has not been determined yet?

**Mr Knapp**—No, it has not. It is a report for ministers. It is their decision as to what they would like to do with the report.



**Senator SIEWERT**—Have all states signed Indigenous housing and infrastructure agreements?

**Mr Knapp**—All the states other than Queensland have actually signed. Although we have reached agreement with Queensland on an Indigenous housing infrastructure agreement at the level of officials, it is still awaiting final signature by ministers.

**Senator SIEWERT**—When will those agreements be reviewed?

**Mr Knapp**—They go through until June 2008 and, therefore, in the lead-up to that deadline, we would be looking at how those agreements have worked and whether the outcomes that were included in those agreements have been achieved, including the transition to the states and territories taking responsibility for the delivery of Indigenous housing as part of the adoption of the COAG principles.

**Senator SIEWERT**—I want to look at the CHIP review. CHIP is currently being reviewed now—is that right?

**Mr Knapp**—That is correct, yes.

**Senator SIEWERT**—The issues paper asks a lot of questions, but it does not actually provide a lot of detail about how effective you think the program has been in meeting its objectives.

**Mr Knapp**—I guess that was part of a deliberate strategy to seek the views of interested parties as to what they think rather than have some preordained views as to what we think the program has achieved. The purpose of the review recognises that CHIP needs to change; it recognises that there have been a lot of changes in Indigenous policy and in the way Indigenous programs have been delivered overall in the last few years. We are keen to make sure that CHIP responds effectively to the environment in which it now has to operate. We have really come in with the use of questions because we have an open mind about what information people would like to provide as to where we should be going. So, through the 38 questions that we have in the document, we are generally seeking input into the way forward for CHIP.

**Senator SIEWERT**—Sometimes it is a bit hard, though, for people to make comment when they have not actually seen an evaluation of the program and an evaluation of the outcomes.

**Mr Knapp**—I guess a lot of the people who we will be talking to or who will be interested in providing submissions will be familiar with the program. Certainly, if any people want to know more, there is information available on our internet site. Also, we have a secretariat that can provide information if people want to know a bit more about the program. Certainly, to date I am not aware of any particular organisations that feel they do not know enough to be able to provide some feedback. We are hopeful that the consultation process that is now well under way will provide some very useful feedback and views for the consultants, who are conducting the review, to advise us on.

**Senator SIEWERT**—For example, how can people comment so much on the involvement of Aboriginal communities in construction and maintenance if there is no hard and fast data

about which communities have been involved, where it has happened, how many houses have been involved et cetera? Have you done such an evaluation?

**Mr Knapp**—Not that I am aware of.

**Senator SIEWERT**—So how are you going to make decisions on that and evaluate the effectiveness of the program if you do not actually know that and are not collecting those figures?

**Mr Knapp**—We have some information through what is called the national reporting framework and also information that is provided by states and territories, but we have not done a specific evaluation of the uptake of Indigenous employees in the provision of housing and related infrastructure. We get some data on that sort of information as part of the national reporting framework.

**Senator SIEWERT**—You say that you get some data. What is ‘some data’?

**Ms Freudenstein**—We fund the programs directly to state and territory governments and they give us annual reports. In those reports they are able to give an indication of the level of engagement of Indigenous staff in employment through the program. Also, through our National Aboriginal Health Strategy, which is a directly funded program that we have, we can give some report of involvement. So there are a number of ways that we can get some data. I guess our challenge is to have rigorous and conclusive data.

**Senator SIEWERT**—If I understand what you are saying, there is no systematic approach to actually providing data on that.

**Ms Freudenstein**—The national reporting framework is one mechanism for doing that and the states report through that, but there has not been an evaluation of issues such as: how many Indigenous people are engaged in the construction of how many houses?

**Senator SIEWERT**—In the community housing organisations, has there been an evaluation of the effectiveness of the organisations and the obstacles they face in trying to actually manage those programs?

**Mr Knapp**—Not so much an evaluation of that, but we recognise that one of the challenges that Indigenous community housing organisations face is actually managing what is a complex process of maintaining houses, tenancy arrangements, repairs and so on. In the last budget, in 2005-06, over \$100 million was provided by the Australian government to fund a series of measures to help improve governance arrangements for, amongst other groups, Indigenous community housing organisations. Funds have been allocated to all the states to enable them to deliver those sorts of programs. It is recognised that governance arrangements are not working as well as they should be, and that is why funding has been put into seeing what can be done to improve that.

**Senator SIEWERT**—It is my understanding, particularly on this sort of program, that it is not just about governance; it is about the fact that they are remote, the fact that it is hard to get materials, the fact that it is so expensive et cetera. That is not about governance; that is about a whole lot of other factors. Have you done an evaluation of those issues? And, if you have, how are you dealing with it?

**Dr Harmer**—That is what the CHIP review will look at. The consultant will be asked to collect a lot of information, including through consultation with Indigenous housing organisations, the states, us, others who perhaps are contracting et cetera. They will be seeking a wide range of information to properly evaluate the program. It will be a multifaceted approach. They will be looking at the elements you were talking about as well.

**Mr Knapp**—If I could just respond to an earlier question that you asked about the BBF review, the tender documents are public and we will arrange to get them to you.

**Senator SIEWERT**—Thank you very much. Is the tender document for CHIP public as well?

**Mr Knapp**—It was a public tender, so we will—

**Dr Harmer**—We will take that on notice. I am not sure—

**Mr Knapp**—Like the other one, if we can get information back, we will.

**Senator SIEWERT**—If I can have a copy, that would be appreciated.

**Mr Knapp**—As I said, we will arrange for you to have a copy of the BBF review.

**Senator SIEWERT**—On the CHIP review, as I understand it, a consultant is doing a review.

**Mr Knapp**—That is correct.

**Senator SIEWERT**—The issues paper has gone out, and I will ask where it has gone in a minute. Who deals with the input from the issues paper that has gone out? Does that go to the consultant or does it come to you?

**Mr Knapp**—It goes to the consultants. They are charged with collecting and analysing the responses that we get. They are also conducting consultancies—talking to different parties—as well as awaiting submissions. As far as I am aware, this document is going to be distributed. It is also available—and you have it there—on our internet site, so it is available for people to access easily.

**Senator SIEWERT**—Who have you sent it to?

**Mr Knapp**—I will ask Mr Mann to respond to that.

**Mr Mann**—The document has gone to state governments at all levels. The consultants are doing a range of consultations, starting with governments, including community organisations, people in industry and people who are involved in the provision of housing to Indigenous communities. It is a fairly wide circulation.

**Senator SIEWERT**—I presume it has gone to the community housing organisations?

**Mr Mann**—There are five or six hundred of these, so no. The consultant will be visiting some of them, but it is a bit hard to get them out to all of them.

**Senator SIEWERT**—Do the states normally correspond with community housing organisations?

**Mr Mann**—Certainly through the states, through our own networks, through ICCs, we will be doing it but we do not have a foolproof way of getting to everybody.

**Senator SIEWERT**—Can you confirm the time line for the CHIP review? My understanding is that submissions close at the end of June.

**Mr Knapp**—That is correct, 30 June.

**Senator SIEWERT**—What happens after that?

**Mr Knapp**—A report will be presented to the minister in early September.

**Senator SIEWERT**—Is that going to the housing ministers as well?

**Mr Knapp**—No, it is a report for our minister.

**Senator SIEWERT**—What is the process for considering the CHIP review in the light of the Building a Better Future process?

**Mr Knapp**—It is not directly linked to that. This review is more a reflection of this government's desire to look at whether the CHIP program is working effectively. It is not specifically connected to the BBF.

**Senator SIEWERT**—Doesn't the CHIP program deliver parts of BBF?

**Mr Knapp**—Yes. It obviously will have implications in terms of the Commonwealth's role in the broader delivery of housing programs, but it is not a result of the BBF process that we are doing this. There are a whole range of factors that have led to the minister's decision that there should be a review of CHIP.

**Senator SIEWERT**—The results of the review go to the minister. Is that going to be released publicly?

**Mr Knapp**—That will be up to the minister.

**Senator SIEWERT**—Is it then going to be released to the other ministers? I appreciate you have just answered the question about the meeting but, nevertheless, is it going to be released to the other housing ministers?

**Mr Knapp**—Again, it will be up to the minister as to what he wishes to do with the report and with the findings and recommendations of the report.

**Senator SIEWERT**—In terms of infrastructure—water, electricity and sewerage—when you are funding housing to the states, do you ensure that that is going to be provided as well?

**Mr Knapp**—We work with the states and territories. I spoke earlier about operational plans. It is in documents such as that that we get a direction from the states and territories about how they wish to use not only the funds they provide but also the funds we provide in a sensible way to achieve best outcomes for Indigenous communities, which includes making sure that if housing is going to be built in a particular area that the land is being serviced and that there is availability of appropriate utilities to support the housing that is being provided there. It is an important issue that there is a coordinated approach to the delivery of both housing and infrastructure in communities and that is recognised in the operational plans that we get to see.

**Senator SIEWERT**—I have a few more questions but I will put them on notice.

**Senator ADAMS**—I have one question, and I do not know whether it has been asked because I was away. Regarding the tender documents for Indigenous housing, is there any

clause within the current ones that a certain percentage of Indigenous people are to be employed by whoever is the successful tenderer?

**Ms Freudenstein**—Do you mean the review documents that we were just talking about?

**Senator ADAMS**—No, just general tender documents as far as the Indigenous housing at the current time is concerned. Is there a clause that states that the successful tenderer should employ Indigenous people on that particular tender?

**Ms Freudenstein**—My understanding is that in our Indigenous housing and infrastructure agreements, where the states tender out for construction of Indigenous housing, there is a clause in each of the states' agreements for the successful tenderer to engage and train Indigenous people.

**Senator ADAMS**—The reason I ask is that this committee has currently been doing a petrol sniffing inquiry. So we have certainly been travelling around a large number of Indigenous communities. This is a question I have asked wherever I have gone, and the answer is no—the builders do not have to and they will not, because that holds up their building contract. They are up there for a specific time and the faster they can get the job done the better. I am really worried about that. I would like you to go back—perhaps take this as a question on notice—just to see if the states are complying, if you are saying that is part of it. That is very important because we are not going to get anywhere if that is the attitude. I can see that from the contractor's point of view, but it is also very difficult for the government to be able to push programs through like this and really try to do something that is going to be helpful to those communities.

Just looking at the overcrowding in a lot of these communities, the homes are very basic with three bedrooms and one bathroom—one toilet and one shower. Is there any way, because these people tend to like to have extended family living under the same roof, that you are considering building bigger homes with more bedrooms and more bathroom facilities, because there are major issues for female members of those families with the present type of construction that has been put up?

**Mr Knapp**—We recognise the need to have flexible housing design for reasons such as that. We are doing some work through the governance funding and are looking at better housing design models for Indigenous communities. We are also going to be exploring through the CHIP review what suggestions people would like to put forward about how we can come up with better design models. We have a housing design manual which I think is being reviewed—guidelines. They are used by the states and territories when they use our funding. That sets out some standards about the design and construction of housing. I am pretty sure it has quite a range of different housing types that we would recommend and support.

**Senator MOORE**—How long has that been around?

**Mr Knapp**—The guidelines have been around for quite a while, as far as I am aware.

**Senator MOORE**—Can we get an answer on notice as to how long that guideline manual has been around?

**Mr Knapp**—I think it is about the third edition.

**Senator MOORE**—I think so, but I would like to have it on record that we have had this process of having a manual with guidelines, just how long it has been around and how many reviews have been done.

**Dr Harmer**—As Mr Knapp said, there is a housing ministers conference coming up shortly. I know that Mr Brough, the new minister, has taken a keen interest in housing. I fully expect that he will be talking about reforms to Indigenous housing at the housing ministers conference. I would be very surprised, given the discussions we have had, if he does not raise some issues about the nature and suitability of housing and innovative design.

**Senator MOORE**—It is a very important issue, as you are aware.

**Senator CROSSIN**—My understanding is that the tender documents talk about it being highly desirable that Indigenous people are engaged and trained, or should be, but it does not say 'must' or that a percentage of the contractors must be Indigenous. Can you provide the wording of that to the committee? I am pretty certain that last time I saw it it mentioned that it was highly desirable, but I got the impression that it was not mandatory that Indigenous people were employed.

**Mr Knapp**—We will check that.

**Senator CHRIS EVANS**—It is certainly not happening now.

**Senator CROSSIN**—That is right—it is not happening.

**Mr Gibbons**—Can I answer an earlier question from Senator Crossin about meeting dates for the ABA? The ABA met in December 2005 and March 2006, and it was at the March 2006 meeting that the committee considered the matter of release of funds for housing in the northern and southern parts of the Northern Territory.

**Senator CHRIS EVANS**—What was the decision?

**Mr Gibbons**—To support the release of \$20 million for housing—\$10 million in the north and \$10 million in the south.

**Senator CHRIS EVANS**—From ABA funds?

**Mr Gibbons**—From ABA funds.

**Senator CROSSIN**—Was that a face-to-face meeting?

**Mr Gibbons**—Do you mean where the committee came together?

**Senator CROSSIN**—Yes, as opposed to by telephone.

**Mr Gibbons**—Yes.

**Senator CHRIS EVANS**—But this is separate from the programs administered by FaCS?

**Mr Gibbons**—Yes.

**Senator CHRIS EVANS**—Have they made any detailed plans about location or the programs they are going to run, beyond the broad allocation?

**Mr Gibbons**—No. As I recall, Galiwinku was in the briefing papers that they considered, but basically they decided to support the release of \$10 million for housing in the Northern Land Council area and \$10 million for housing in the Central Land Council land area.

**Senator CHRIS EVANS**—What was the source of those funds?

**Mr Gibbons**—The Aboriginal Benefits Account.

**Senator CHRIS EVANS**—Chair, can I ask some questions about the COAG trial?

**CHAIR**—Yes, we are still in general areas.

**Senator CHRIS EVANS**—Has the department received the assessment of the trial that was commissioned? I am looking for the word that we have been using to describe the form of that assessment.

**Dr Harmer**—Before we get into that, I have a lot of people here for the various components of output 1, 2 et cetera. Can I get a sense of where the questions are to see whether I can let some go, or do I need to keep them all here?

**Senator CHRIS EVANS**—I have a series of questions about the COAG trial then a whole range on SRAs, electricity charging guidelines, OIPC, ICCs, petrol sniffing and *Bringing them home*. It is a fairly wide-ranging set of issues. I do not know what that means for you.

**Dr Harmer**—What about the Indigenous children's program or Indigenous Parenting and Family Wellbeing, for example?

**Senator CHRIS EVANS**—We are certainly going to have a discussion about all the Indigenous programs that you run, but I think we have pretty well covered that.

**Senator CROSSIN**—I do not know—we just go by the outcome and out groups. I do not think anyone can go just yet, Dr Harmer.

**Dr Harmer**—That is fine.

**Senator SIEWERT**—It was a good try.

**Dr Harmer**—I do not like having people tied up.

**Senator BARTLETT**—A few people could go for a long break though.

**Senator CHRIS EVANS**—Equally, I think it is difficult to necessarily predict where the committee will go as a whole. I have trouble predicting where I will go as a whole. I think we will be on the trial for a while if anyone wants to take an early lunch and they have nothing to do with the trial.

**CHAIR**—I assume we are still looking at outcome 1 here. If there are questions specifically and clearly relevant to outcome 2, we should leave those till after lunch. We have plenty of a general nature under outcome 1 to be going on with, haven't we, Senator Evans?

**Senator CHRIS EVANS**—I do not think there is any chance of us getting to outcome 2 until the late afternoon at the earliest. I think we have enough to keep outcome 1 officers busy for a while.

**Dr Harmer**—Then I suggest that outcome 2 people need not be here until—

**Senator CHRIS EVANS**—Not until four at the earliest, I suspect—unless you are going to give us all the answers we want in summary form quickly.

**Dr Harmer**—We will do our best.

**Senator CHRIS EVANS**—You have a quaint term that you use for the first round of COAG trial assessments, which I cannot remember. Anyway, you know what I mean. The first stage of your assessment project of the COAG trial was, I think, due to be done by the end of last year. Last time we had a chat it was about to be done. Has that been done?

**Ms Bryant**—We have commenced evaluating all the COAG trial sites. We have finalised the evaluations for the ACT and South Australia. We have draft reports for a number of others.

**Senator CHRIS EVANS**—I want to start with the FaCSIA trial site. You are not responsible for that, are you? OIPC does the whole of government aspect, is that right?

**Ms Bryant**—That is right. We have commissioned the evaluation of the Wadeye trial site, though.

**Mr Yates**—The COAG trials are all being undertaken by OIPC on behalf of the lead agencies who have had oversight of the trials.

**Senator CHRIS EVANS**—You mean the assessment?

**Mr Yates**—The evaluations.

**Senator CHRIS EVANS**—Yes, sorry. It sounded like you had taken them all over, so I was just checking that I had not missed that. Where are we at with FaCSIA's responsibility for the Wadeye COAG trial?

**Ms Bryant**—Bill Gray was selected as a consultant on the Wadeye trial and he has provided a draft report which is currently being considered by the three trial partners—the Australian government, the Northern Territory government and the Thamarrurr council. It is expected to be finalised very shortly.

**Senator CHRIS EVANS**—So you consider the draft and get feedback before you finalise it, do you?

**Ms Bryant**—We have asked the consultant to include additional information in relation to two things. I am not clear what the other parties may or may not ask by way of clarification.

**Senator CHRIS EVANS**—But you are not editing it. Is it fair to say you have asked him to include some extra information rather than commentary?

**Ms Bryant**—That is correct; we are not editing it.

**Senator CHRIS EVANS**—So the report remains the consultant's?

**Ms Bryant**—The report remains the consultant's.

**Senator CHRIS EVANS**—In terms of the authorship and ownership of the assessment?

**Ms Bryant**—That is correct.

**Senator CHRIS EVANS**—When can we expect to see the final report?

**Ms Bryant**—I expect that would certainly be in June.

**Senator CHRIS EVANS**—Will that be made public?

**Ms Bryant**—That is a matter to be considered by the three parties to the evaluation.



**Senator CHRIS EVANS**—I would have thought that, given the media and public interest in Wadeye, holding onto it is going to be pretty difficult. But that decision has not been made?

**Ms Bryant**—That decision has not been made.

**Senator CHRIS EVANS**—I am told the draft report is pretty critical. Is that fair?

**Ms Bryant**—It is a draft report. I think it would be inappropriate for me to comment.

**Senator CHRIS EVANS**—After all we know about Wadeye from the last few weeks it would be counterintuitive to think it would be a highly complimentary report. That is not a criticism. If the minister is, quite rightly, seriously concerned about the state of affairs there—violence, abuse at cetera—and that is one of the eight sites where we have been trialling the new arrangements, it would be counterintuitive to think the report would be complimentary about the success of the programs. So you are not able to share with us any conclusions we could draw as to the assessment made?

**Ms Bryant**—The report is under consideration by the three parties to the trial and I think it would be inappropriate for me to comment.

**Senator CHRIS EVANS**—Fair enough. So the draft has gone to the three parties—the Wadeye community, the Northern Territory government and the Commonwealth government?

**Ms Bryant**—It has.

**Senator CROSSIN**—Ms Bryant, did you use the baseline data from John Taylor's work as the basis for the evaluation of the COAG trial?

**Ms Bryant**—The baseline data from the Taylor work was certainly available to the consultant. The issues that the consultant looked at went to the objectives of the trial and the processes and so on that he was looking at and not necessarily to the range of demographic data and other things that were in the Taylor study, but that was certainly material that was available to the consultant.

**Senator CHRIS EVANS**—Has there been any other assessment done by FaCSIA or OIPC? There has been talk of other interventions in Wadeye in recent weeks. That is obviously not based on the Gray assessment alone. Has there been another assessment? The minister has been talking about not doing this until the violence is tackled.

**Dr Harmer**—The minister has, as you know, Senator, had some discussions with the Northern Territory Chief Minister and certainly Wadeye, given that it is a trial site between the Northern Territory government, the Commonwealth government and the Thamarrurr council, has been discussed. Both the Chief Minister and our minister have made some public comments about their view that the trial in Wadeye has not been nearly as successful as it could have been. They have their views about why that is so.

**Senator CHRIS EVANS**—I am trying to understand the basis for those views, apart from the bleeding obvious. I am trying to find out if you have provided any other briefing or assessment to the minister, whether any advice has been provided for the minister on the assessment of the situation in Wadeye.

**Mr Gibbons**—As you are aware, the minister visited Wadeye three weeks ago to have a look for himself and to meet with the council. He has also met on three occasions with the

Chief Minister and the relevant Northern Territory government officials. He has had a fairly comprehensive briefing from OIPC on the environment there and he has made some public statements.

**Senator CHRIS EVANS**—Yes. One of those is that you are not going to invest any more in housing until the minister is satisfied about law and order issues. How have you actioned that announcement?

**Dr Harmer**—The minister is very concerned about safety on the streets and the street violence, which has led to considerable disruption of the community and destruction of infrastructure, including housing. In that context, it is not very wise to continue to put a lot of money in if the infrastructure or the structures or whatever that we are funding are going to be damaged by the gangs and street violence. So he has made it very clear that he does not want more money going in until we have the situation with the street violence under control and the community can feel safe and get on with their business.

**Senator CHRIS EVANS**—I appreciate that and I share the concern, but the question is: what does that mean? The minister has made a lot of public pronouncements. You are obviously responsible for enacting his public pronouncements. In response to his public pronouncements that you will not be funding anything until he is satisfied about the state of civil society at Wadeye, I am asking you: what have you done to implement that? What have you cut off? What action have you taken to make sure that what he says publicly is turned into policy or action?

**Dr Harmer**—We have not stopped any programs that are under way, but we are certainly telling our colleagues in other departments that making new commitments of expenditure in Wadeye for the moment needs to wait until we are confident that there is safety on the streets and that the money will not be either wasted or destroyed by the violence.

**Senator CHRIS EVANS**—So you have not actually stopped any programs that you are currently operating inside Wadeye?

**Dr Harmer**—I would need to check that, but I do not think we have stopped any.

**Mr Gibbons**—There are a number of commitments involving infrastructure and housing which we are not proceeding with until the minister or the government is satisfied that law and order is under control.

**Senator CHRIS EVANS**—That was my question. What commitments have been stopped?

**Dr Harmer**—We will not be building any more houses, for example.

**Senator CHRIS EVANS**—No, but I am trying to move from the general to the specific. What is it that you are not doing today that you were doing yesterday, and how has that happened?

**Mr Gibbons**—We had made a commitment in this current financial year to fund housing and related infrastructure. The money is available and we had given authority to the NT and the council to proceed. That authority has been suspended, pending the government's satisfaction that law and order is sufficient to protect the wellbeing of individuals and the assets of the community.

**Senator CHRIS EVANS**—Is that the only suspension of a program?

**Mr Gibbons**—We have not stopped programs that are about protecting health, basic services and entitlements; they are still running. But the major ones are the big investment programs around housing and infrastructure.

**Senator CHRIS EVANS**—So the answer is, ‘Yes, that is the only program’?

**Mr Gibbons**—I believe so.

**Dr Harmer**—It is the only one we are aware of from the Commonwealth end; we are not sure whether the Northern Territory government, who are also concerned about street violence and safety in Wadeye, may have also taken some action to wait for law and order. I do not know whether they have or not.

**Senator CHRIS EVANS**—Surely, under the COAG trial, you would know that. Isn’t that the whole idea of the whole-of-government approach?

**Dr Harmer**—Indeed. We know from the Commonwealth end, but there are three parties to COAG trials—the Northern Territory government, the Commonwealth and the council.

**Senator CHRIS EVANS**—So you have stopped any housing program or infrastructure program until the minister is satisfied about civil order in Wadeye, and that has arisen out of a concern for damage. Have you done an analysis of the damage that was caused to Commonwealth assets?

**Dr Harmer**—Over the last few months, a number of Commonwealth officials have been visiting Wadeye. They have been able to make some assessments and talk with the council and others about what has been happening as a result of the street violence. We probably have some figures around the number of houses that have been damaged in the last three or four months. It is quite a substantial number. I am not sure we would be able to tell you chapter and verse about the damage to each house. A report that we have had recently says around 28 houses have been substantially damaged in the last three months.

**Mr Gibbons**—Our information is that 28 houses were seriously damaged over the past three months as a result of the violence. I do not have a dollar figures on that, but that is the number I have.

**Senator CHRIS EVANS**—Do you have any understanding of what ‘seriously’ means?

**Mr Gibbons**—It means that they cannot be occupied, because electrical and plumbing fittings have been ripped out or rendered unsafe, windows have been removed or doors have been smashed out.

**Senator CHRIS EVANS**—Does ‘cannot be occupied’ mean they are not occupied?

**Mr Gibbons**—My understanding—and I will correct this is I am wrong—is that they are not occupied because they cannot be occupied.

**Senator CHRIS EVANS**—As you know, a whole range of housing stock that is not habitable has a lot of people living in it. I am just wondering whether it fits into that category.

**Mr Gibbons**—I think the violence has been a contributing factor to discourage people from occupying uninhabitable buildings.

**Senator CHRIS EVANS**—The housing has been suspended pending the government's satisfaction regarding civil order, but all other programs are still being made available to the community. Can I just take you to this housing question? I got some questions on notice back—I think some of them were actually Senator Crossin's questions. Over the last couple of estimates rounds I have tried to understand what FaCSIA's commitment to the Wadeye trial site has meant in practice and, to be honest, it seems to me that there are some minor discrepancies in the funding provided under the National Aboriginal Health Strategy for housing. It may just be they have been expressed in slightly different ways, so I just wanted someone to take me through that expenditure.

**Mr Knapp**—There were 35 houses built under NAHS 1 and 2 between 1997 and 2004. They were built using funds from NAHS.

**Senator CHRIS EVANS**—From the?

**Mr Knapp**—From the National Aboriginal Health Strategy, NAHS. They were built over that time period. I will try to break it up in terms of where the funding came from. Maybe I can just summarise what actually has been spent on housing and related infrastructure over the period and then we can work through that. The \$9.5 million was allocated in 2005-06 for the provision of 25 houses.

**Senator CHRIS EVANS**—Sorry, the figures you have provided to me actually had \$9,500,000 in 2004-05.

**Mr Knapp**—No, the information was that there has been expenditure up to 2004-05 of \$9.6 million on funding for houses in that community.

**Senator CHRIS EVANS**—That was one answer—and this is where the confusion is; the other answer says, 'FaCS administrative funding in Wadeye to date \$9.5 million 2004-05, \$9.5 million 2005-06.'

**Mr Knapp**—Yes, there are two amounts. Up to June 2004, \$9.6 million was spent through the NAHS program.

**Senator CHRIS EVANS**—Yes, but that means you did not spend \$9.5 million in 2004-05.

**Dr Harmer**—Up to then.

**Senator CHRIS EVANS**—No. You have given me a table that has a blank for the money you spent in 2003-04—not on other items but on this item. In another table in answer to question—

**Dr Harmer**—Can I correct the record, then, if you have—

**Mr Knapp**—It sounds like we need to correct—

**Senator CHRIS EVANS**—It is the answer to question 074. The table is blank for 2003-04, there is \$9.5 million in 2004-05 and \$9.5 million in 2005-06. An answer to another question does not have \$9.5 million in 2004-05.

**Mr Knapp**—There was \$9.6 million spent up to June 2004 through the NAHS program.

**Senator CHRIS EVANS**—Where was the budget allocation for that money represented? What year did you allocate the money for that?

**Mr Knapp**—The expenditure of that money was over a number of years.

**Ms Freudenstein**—It was in—

**Mr Knapp**—It was in 1997 to my understanding.

**Ms Freudenstein**—1996-97

**Senator CHRIS EVANS**—I understand that; you are telling me that it was from 1997-2004—I got that. But where did you get the money from and when did you get it?

**Mr Knapp**—The money was committed using the National Aboriginal Health Strategy over a number of years so it would have been individual projects over that time period that were used for the construction of housing. I do not have the actual dates that commitments were made. Because NAHS is a capital funding program, funds are committed and then spent over a number of years as the infrastructure is put in place and the houses are built.

**Senator CHRIS EVANS**—So there is no separate bucket of money for Wadeye houses, in effect.

**Mr Knapp**—No, there is not. It would have been part of a broader allocation on a needs basis of funding under that particular program to the Northern Territory over a number of years of which the \$9.6 million was allocated for housing and associated in infrastructure in Wadeye.

**Senator CHRIS EVANS**—Do you know when most of that money was actually spent? When did you provide the infrastructure?

**Mr Knapp**—In 1996-97 there was \$1.685 million provided for Wadeye under the National Aboriginal Health Strategy. That \$1.685 million allowed 12 houses to be built, which were handed over in October 1998. In 1997-98, \$2.79 million was committed, leading to nine renovations of houses completed in March 1999. In 1998-99, \$1.575 million was committed, with handover dates between June 1999 and June 2000 involving nine houses, five renovations and associated infrastructure. The commitments from those three financial years, which were completed by June 2000, totalled \$6.050 million, leading to 21 new houses and 14 renovations. So that is the summary of that period. That was under what was called the first NAHS program.

Then NAHS 2 started in 2000-01. \$2.6 million was allocated in that financial year, with a handover date of December 2001 involving six new houses. In 2001-02, \$1.3 million was spent, with a July 2002 handover. That was primarily subdivision work, so site preparation. Then in 2002-03 it was \$170,000, which was used to complete a number of houses and further infrastructure.

**Senator CHRIS EVANS**—Sorry, to complete houses or for renovations?

**Mr Knapp**—The total funding for that period of \$3.63 million led to the construction of 13 houses. While the money was allocated in those particular breaks, it led to the construction, under the NAHS 2 program, of 13 houses using total funds of \$3.63 million.

**Senator CHRIS EVANS**—You are telling me that that 13 includes the six you previously mentioned—is that fair?

**Mr Knapp**—Yes, that is right. In summary, for NAHS 1, which ran between 1996 and 1999, we had 21 houses and 14 renovations; NAHS 2, which ran between 2000 and 2003, led to 13 houses. The sum of those two amounts gives you the \$9.6 million that I was referring to earlier. The final handover—

**Senator CHRIS EVANS**—That is a grand total of?

**Mr Knapp**—\$9.68 million.

**Senator CHRIS EVANS**—Sorry, 34 houses and 14 renovations—is that right?

**Mr Knapp**—34 houses and 14 renovations.

**Senator CHRIS EVANS**—That is a fair description of NAHS effort between 1997 and 2004 in Wadeye?

**Mr Knapp**—That is right. The last handover occurred in July 2004. Obviously there is the lead time between when the funds are committed and the final outcome. Therefore, that is where we get the 34 houses and 14 renovations. Subsequently, in 2005-06, \$9.5 million was allocated to Wadeye, and the intention—

**Senator CHRIS EVANS**—That is also out of the NAHS budget?

**Mr Knapp**—That is right; this is now NAHS 3. So that funding is ready to roll and, as has been indicated, activity in that area is currently suspended.

**Senator CROSSIN**—Can I just clarify that then? So the \$9.5 million that was allocated in the 2004-05 budget—

**Senator CHRIS EVANS**—No, there was nothing in 2004-05. That answer was wrong.

**Mr Knapp**—I have corrected the record there. What I have told you now is my correction of the record. I apologise for that error, but the information I have now read out to you is a correct statement of what happened with the expenditure—

**Senator CROSSIN**—So my answer 074 is incorrect, is that right?

**Senator CHRIS EVANS**—Yes, the \$9½ million listed as being spent in 2004-05 is not right. There was no money at NAHS in that—

**Dr Harmer**—It was shown in 2004-05, but that was the completion of that—

**Mr Knapp**—It was meant to be ‘up to that year’, and unfortunately that ‘up to’ got lost somewhere. That is why I wanted to correct the record by going through in detail, explaining—

**Senator CROSSIN**—So this is not right? In August 2005, \$9.5 million was provided under NAHS—

**Mr Knapp**—No, that is correct.

**Senator CROSSIN**—That says this funding is ‘in addition to’—

**Mr Knapp**—That is correct.

**Senator CROSSIN**—So it is not ‘in addition to’; in fact it is not there at all. There is only one lot of \$9.5 million, is that correct?

**Senator CHRIS EVANS**—There is only one lot of \$9.5 million, but it was allocated in the 2005-06 budget, and the \$9.6 million was in the years 1997 to 2004—

**Dr Harmer**—Ending in 2004-05.

**Senator CHRIS EVANS**—The item that claims to have spent \$9.5 million in 2004-05 is wrong and a mistake.

**Mr Knapp**—That is correct.

**Senator CROSSIN**—And none of the 2005-06 housing money has been spent yet?

**Mr Knapp**—Funds have been allocated for some of the planning and preparation work. That was already happening prior to the recent events in Wadeye. That was in preparation, because no actual on-the-ground work could happen during the wet season, but nonetheless a lot of preparation work was being done for plans to build a number of houses during the current dry season. But that will now be on hold for the time being.

**Senator CROSSIN**—What is the amount of money in the 2005-06 budget?

**Mr Knapp**—At this stage we are looking at about \$3 million being allocated for the preparation for the construction of those houses.

**Senator CHRIS EVANS**—How much have you spent already?

**Mr Knapp**—About \$3 million.

**Ms Freudenstein**—Three million dollars have been moved from the allocation into the account. None of it has actually been expended yet; it is just waiting. It was moved out of the allocation ready for work to commence.

**Senator CHRIS EVANS**—So we actually have not spent any money yet?

**Ms Freudenstein**—None has been spent on the ground.

**Senator CHRIS EVANS**—Was it originally planned that the \$9.5 million be spent in that financial year?

**Ms Freudenstein**—No, over a period of years.

**Mr Knapp**—I think it was over three financial years including 2005-06.

**Senator CHRIS EVANS**—Did you break it up or was it—

**Mr Knapp**—The intention was that we would look at having six houses built by the end of 2006, with a further seven in 2007 and a further 12 up to the end of 2008.

**Senator CHRIS EVANS**—Are you talking financial years there?

**Mr Knapp**—Sorry, I will just clarify that. Up to November 2006 we were looking at six houses, with a further seven houses during 2007—working it again that the construction will actually happen during the dry season, so—

**Senator CHRIS EVANS**—When you say 2006, 2007 and 2008, do you mean calendar years now, not financial years?

**Mr Knapp**—Yes; because construction can only occur during the dry season you are effectively having houses built between April and October of that particular year. So I cannot be precise about which financial year—

**Senator CHRIS EVANS**—I am just trying to understand what you are telling me. So you are telling me that it is a calendar year for the target for the houses.

**Mr Knapp**—That is right.

**Senator CHRIS EVANS**—You expected to build six houses in 2006?

**Mr Knapp**—That is right—during the dry season.

**Senator CHRIS EVANS**—Where were you up to before the suspension?

**Mr Knapp**—We were up to preparation for the construction of those houses, but constructions have not commenced.

**Senator CHRIS EVANS**—Were they going to commence in 2006, or had they been delayed?

**Mr Knapp**—No, they were to commence in 2006—this calendar year. That was the intention.

**Senator CHRIS EVANS**—I know, but when did you realise that was not going to happen?

**Mr Knapp**—Planning was in place for construction to start prior to the violence occurring, so I cannot be precise about what dates we would have actually—

**Senator CHRIS EVANS**—No, I am just asking: were you going to get them built in 2006 before this?

**Mr Knapp**—It was my understanding that we were—

**Dr Harmer**—That was the intention before.

**Senator CHRIS EVANS**—I know there was early intention of it. Where had you got up to with the reality of life before this latest issue arose?

**Ms Freudenstein**—There had been quite a bit of consultation between the program manager, the community council and the NT government around the proposed sites where the housing would go. There was quite a bit of discussion about the actual placement of the houses. Much of that discussion and negotiation had gone on.

**Senator CHRIS EVANS**—Had you let the contracts to the builder?

**Ms Freudenstein**—I do not think so. I will have to check on that.

**Senator CHRIS EVANS**—Effectively, the \$9.5 million was to build you 25 new houses?

**Ms Freudenstein**—Up to 25 new houses.

**Senator CHRIS EVANS**—Six and seven and 12 makes 25. What is the qualification of ‘up to’?

**Ms Freudenstein**—I am adding ‘up to’ because that would depend on the negotiations in the community. My understanding is that there are discussions within the community of what and where the houses would be and so forth, so we have said, ‘Up to 25 houses.’



**Mr Knapp**—A company called Qantec McWilliam have been engaged as the project manager, and they have been in consultation with the council about developing the detailed work scope.

**Senator CHRIS EVANS**—At this stage we have built under NAHS 2, 2003, 13 houses since 2000. We now have up to a further 25 that will come on stream over the next three years prior to the suspension of the program. Are there renovations in this last package or is it purely new houses?

**Ms Freudenstein**—I would have to check, but my understanding is that it is new houses.

**Senator CHRIS EVANS**—Obviously you have some costs for subdivisions and things like that, but effectively it is all directed at the housing development. Under NAHS is there any territory input to this, or is it purely run by you under the NAHS program?

**Mr Knapp**—We work closely with the Northern Territory as part of the transition strategy with the Northern Territory government. We are working closely on how the funds are being spent in Wadeye.

**Senator CHRIS EVANS**—Are they kicking into this pool of money?

**Ms Freudenstein**—No, not into the NAHS pool.

**Mr Knapp**—But, using funds that we have provided through our pooled arrangements, the Northern Territory has been building some houses in Wadeye as well—about two a year in the last two financial years, and they have plans for a further two this year.

**Senator CHRIS EVANS**—In addition to the houses you have been building they have been putting in about two a year. Has that been a coordinated effort in terms of a joint contract?

**Mr Knapp**—It is not a joint contract, but we have been working together.

**Senator CHRIS EVANS**—Are you using the same builder?

**Mr Knapp**—I will look that up for you.

**Senator CHRIS EVANS**—I am just trying to get a sense of whether this is the housing building program in Wadeye that is run by both of you or whether they are building their lot and you are building your lot.

**Mr Knapp**—That is why we are looking at the NAHS funding being part of the pool from the next financial year in the Northern Territory, when the Northern Territory will in fact have the responsibility for coordinating all housing expenditure throughout the Northern Territory. So instead of the situation where we have been developing our strategies in consultation with the Northern Territory but delivering them directly ourselves, we will actually be delivering all housing in the Northern Territory through the Northern Territory government.

**Senator CHRIS EVANS**—So NAHS will not effectively operate in the Northern Territory from next year?

**Mr Knapp**—This particular project will continue but overall the funds that were allocated per annum for NAHS will be pooled with other funds provided to the Northern Territory.

**Ms Freudenstein**—I will just clarify that. Under the overarching agreement that was signed last year the NAHS housing funds have been transferred to the Northern Territory government as of the beginning of July 2006, but the government have not taken over the NAHS infrastructure funding, so we will still be doing some infrastructure direct delivering. Just to clarify, Wadeye is one of the major communities serviced by the NT government, so we contribute to the housing through the pooled funding that is provided under the Indigenous Housing and Infrastructure Agreement. The NAHS is over and above what we are already providing through that Indigenous Housing and Infrastructure Agreement.

**Senator CHRIS EVANS**—When you talk about the overarching agreement, are you talking about the national Indigenous housing agreement?

**Ms Freudenstein**—No. Sorry, I have confused you. The overarching agreement is one that was signed by the Prime Minister and the Chief Minister—

**Senator CHRIS EVANS**—The bilateral agreement?

**Ms Freudenstein**—That is right.

**Senator CHRIS EVANS**—That is the bilateral and then—

**Ms Freudenstein**—Then underneath that, as a schedule to that almost, is the Indigenous Housing and Infrastructure Agreement, which was signed in December last year.

**Senator CROSSIN**—It was the fourth schedule to be signed. It is my understanding there are four schedules now to the overarching agreement.

**Senator CHRIS EVANS**—You will continue to do the infrastructure, but they will do the housing?

**Ms Freudenstein**—We are not responsible for infrastructure in Wadeye per se because that is one of the major 72 communities. We do still have a responsibility for NAHS in the Northern Territory with infrastructure funding.

**Senator CHRIS EVANS**—That has made it all simpler, both in explanation and administration.

**Senator MOORE**—Why is one executive overlooking NAHS and not the other?

**Mr Gibbons**—As you may recall, at the COAG meeting in April 2004 it was agreed that the Commonwealth, states and territories would work to remove overlap and duplication. As part of that we negotiated in the bilateral agreement a commitment for the Commonwealth to get out of the direct administration of housing, to contribute the money to the Northern Territory and to agree on the conditions but to leave it to the Northern Territory to deliver. That is happening, but it is being staged. As you have just heard, the housing funding is going from the beginning of the next financial year. Infrastructure housing and infrastructure money is yet to be scheduled.

**Senator CHRIS EVANS**—But you will complete the projects that you have already funded, which I presume go beyond Wadeye?

**Mr Knapp**—Correct.

**Senator CHRIS EVANS**—Do you have other housing projects you have already allocated funding to?

**Mr Knapp**—Under NAHS, yes. We will complete those, but in terms of any new funding for NAHS for housing, it will be given to the Northern Territory from 1 July 2006.

**Senator CHRIS EVANS**—How does that work, though, if you are already spending that money for 2006, 2007 and 2008? What are they going to be given?

**Mr Knapp**—We have a transition strategy, and Wadeye is a good example of where funds were allocated in 2005-06 but will be spent over the future financial years. We are working closely with the Northern Territory there. They were a party to our decision about spending funds in Wadeye for the 25 houses. We are working closely together on—

**Senator CHRIS EVANS**—When you say that by next year you will hand over the funds, it seems to me that in Wadeye you are not going to be handing over funds because you are spending them, perfectly appropriately, on decisions you have already made.

**Mr Knapp**—That is correct.

**Senator CHRIS EVANS**—So what does it mean in reality?

**Mr Knapp**—It is like the first charge. The money that we are actually going to spend in Wadeye in 2006-07 will be part of the funds that now will be the responsibility of the Northern Territory. It is part of that transition because of the multiyear nature of NAHS expenditure. We made the commitment, and the actual expenditure—the cash—will flow over a number of years.

**Senator CHRIS EVANS**—I understand that. That is why I am asking what you are giving them next year if you have already committed the cash.

**Dr Harmer**—There is more than the \$9.5 million.

**Mr Knapp**—That is right. It would be \$22 million minus what funds are going to be spent on Wadeye.

**Senator CHRIS EVANS**—Is Wadeye the only community where you have provided housing funds for the next couple of years?

**Ms Freudenstein**—In the Northern Territory, yes.

**Senator CHRIS EVANS**—Is Wadeye the only ongoing project you have?

**Mr Knapp**—Yes. The remaining funds will be provided to the Northern Territory as part of the pool for them to allocate based on their analysis of—

**Senator CHRIS EVANS**—Next year you have a budget of \$22 million allocated for NAHS in the Northern Territory?

**Mr Knapp**—That is right, of which the Wadeye amount has been committed.

**Senator CHRIS EVANS**—You are going to take off what you have committed for that.

**Mr Knapp**—Yes.

**Senator CHRIS EVANS**—Is that the full \$9 million or just the bits—

**Ms Freudenstein**—The \$6 million.

**Senator CHRIS EVANS**—So the \$15 million or whatever is leftover will go to them to administer on Indigenous housing?

**Mr Knapp**—The \$16 million, yes.

**Senator CHRIS EVANS**—Effectively, by the end of 2008, when you have built your last 12 houses, you are out of the Northern Territory housing and construction business.

**Mr Knapp**—On the housing side. The infrastructure side is still being negotiated.

**Senator CHRIS EVANS**—So you are in a phased withdrawal, effectively. Are the figures you gave me for the NAHS funding for the out years in the budget papers?

**Mr Knapp**—It is part of CHIP, so it does not appear as a separate line in the budget papers.

**Senator CHRIS EVANS**—Can you give me the figures for the NAHS for the out years?

**Ms Freudenstein**—For NAHS as a whole?

**Senator CHRIS EVANS**—Yes. Where do you spend on NAHS, apart from in the Northern Territory?

**Mr Knapp**—In Queensland.

**Ms Freudenstein**—Some is in New South Wales.

**Senator CHRIS EVANS**—I was just wondering whether you went into all the states.

**Mr Knapp**—No, not all the states.

**Ms Freudenstein**—In NAHS 3, which is the one that is just about to come on-stream, there will be funding of up to \$1.47 million over two years, which will be used in construction of housing and essential services and central infrastructure and projects located in the NT.

**Senator CHRIS EVANS**—\$1.47 million?

**Ms Freudenstein**—I am sorry—it is \$147 million; there is no decimal point.

**Senator CHRIS EVANS**—Is that for 2005-06 or 2006-07?

**Ms Freudenstein**—The next two years, for Queensland, South Australia and New South Wales. Western Australia does not have NAHS funding, because it is already pooled.

**Mr Knapp**—Most of the money, we expect, will be going to the Northern Territory.

**Senator CHRIS EVANS**—When you say ‘the next two years’ do you mean 2006-07 and 2007-08?

**Mr Knapp**—That is correct.

**Senator CHRIS EVANS**—Do you have a break down between the years, or is it just \$147 million over the two years?

**Ms Freudenstein**—I do not have a break down.

**Senator CHRIS EVANS**—But there is one, is there?

**Mr Knapp**—It still has to be negotiated with the states as to how the funds will be allocated.

**Senator CHRIS EVANS**—Do you have a notional allocation per year or just a notional bucket of money for those two years?

**Ms Freudenstein**—At this stage, it is the bucket of money for the two years. We are still finalising agreements and arrangements for NAHS 3.

**Senator CHRIS EVANS**—So WA has already pooled. Has anyone else already pooled?

**Mr Knapp**—New South Wales is already pooled.

**Ms Freudenstein**—There is one project in New South Wales, I think, that has been completed. There is no NAHS in Victoria, Tasmania or the ACT.

**Senator CHRIS EVANS**—You have pooled WA, so your expenditure is going to be in New South Wales, Northern Territory—

**Mr Knapp**—Queensland and South Australia.

**Senator CHRIS EVANS**—Do they get phased out from 1 July as well?

**Ms Freudenstein**—It depends on the individual agreements. NAHS is still operating in New South Wales but it is uncertain how long that will continue. That is being discussed between the New South Wales government and ourselves.

**Senator CHRIS EVANS**—Are you moving to pooling on a common date or is it state by state?

**Ms Freudenstein**—The New South Wales agreement is pooled, except for NAHS. Whether or not NAHS goes over there is something that is still under negotiation.

**Senator CHRIS EVANS**—This whole-of-government stuff is really great, isn't it? It makes it all clear and transparent. I am more confused than when I started.

**Mr Gibbons**—The states were involved in bilateral discussions. That means that each arrangement is different with each jurisdiction. We have accommodated their preferences for timing.

**Mr Knapp**—But the intention would be that by June 2008 all the transitional arrangements should be finished. By that time period it will all become much more straightforward.

**Senator CHRIS EVANS**—I will mark that on the *Hansard*.

**Mr Knapp**—That is the intention.

**Senator CHRIS EVANS**—Yes. I suspect you will have transferred out somewhere else by the time that comes around.

**Mr Gibbons**—Senator, just so you are not confused, in the context of the Northern Territory, as we mentioned earlier this morning, there is some funding for experimental housing in the Tiwis—the flat-packed housing. That will probably be managed by a contractor organised through Indigenous Business Australia.

**Senator CHRIS EVANS**—Where is the bucket of money for that from?

**Mr Gibbons**—That was provided in the budget. It was part of the \$6 million. There is also \$10 million for housing for Elcho Island, subject to conditions that are yet to be negotiated and agreed. That was focusing on new housing arrangements, including lease purchase

arrangements, and that will probably be organised for us through Indigenous Business Australia. And there is the Alice Springs hostel and short-term camping accommodation, again, probably to be organised for us through Indigenous Business Australia.

**Senator CHRIS EVANS**—Where is the money for that coming from?

**Mr Gibbons**—Alice Springs and Galiwinku are from the Aboriginal Benefits Account. That is the \$20 million that was released from that account.

**Senator CHRIS EVANS**—That is to give effect to Minister Brough's foray into the Alice Springs housing issues?

**Mr Gibbons**—That is part of our contribution to the request from the Northern Territory government for assistance in Alice Springs.

**Senator CHRIS EVANS**—So the ABA is the federal government's contribution?

**Mr Gibbons**—No, there is \$10 million from the CHIP funding to upgrade essential infrastructure in the town camps themselves. We are putting in \$10 million from the ABA for hostel and camping accommodation and probably a rehabilitation centre for alcohol dependent persons. That is coming from the ABA and other flexible funding pool funds.

**Senator CHRIS EVANS**—I do not want to ask this question—I have been putting it off for ages—but is the CHIP funding different from the NAHS funding? You were describing for me the NAHS, which I gather is a subset of CHIP, but what CHIP funding is going in in addition to what you told me about NAHS?

**Mr Gibbons**—Are you talking about Alice Springs?

**Senator CHRIS EVANS**—No, more generally.

**Dr Harmer**—Across the Northern Territory?

**Senator CHRIS EVANS**—Yes.

**Dr Harmer**—It may simplify it if I tell you that, under the Aboriginal Rental Housing Program, which is part of the CSHA, in 2005-06, for example, we provide about \$19.9 million to the Northern Territory for housing and about \$22 million in 2005-06 under the CHIP program. So the total for housing under the two big mainstream housing programs for the Northern Territory in 2005-06 is between \$41.9 and \$42 million. This is on top of the two elements that Mr Gibbons has just referred to.

**Senator CHRIS EVANS**—The \$40 million is the figure the minister has been using, is it? There have been a few press releases. I think we had \$40 million mentioned in them. I could never quite work out which bucket that was.

**Dr Harmer**—I do not think the minister has talked about \$40 million for housing. He has been talking about commitments and expenditure in Wadeye over the trial period. I think that is what you are referring to.

**Senator CHRIS EVANS**—We will come back to that. You are telling me that your investment—

**Dr Harmer**—The two big housing programs for Aboriginal rental housing are the Commonwealth-State Aboriginal Rental Housing Program and the CHIP program. Combined, for this financial year, 2005-06, the Northern Territory gets \$41.9 million.

**Senator CHRIS EVANS**—That is \$25 million from CHIP and \$19.9 million—

**Dr Harmer**—It is \$22 million from CHIP and \$19.9 million from—

**Senator CHRIS EVANS**—When you say ‘the two big programs’, you do not include NAHS?

**Dr Harmer**—NAHS is part of CHIP, isn’t it?

**Senator CHRIS EVANS**—Is that a subset of the CHIP figure, is it?

**Dr Harmer**—Yes.

**Senator CHRIS EVANS**—So I do not add NAHS to that; I take NAHS off to find out what the rest of the CHIP funds are? That is for—

**Dr Harmer**—That is for 2005-06.

**Senator CHRIS EVANS**—What did we agree the figure for NAHS for 2005-06 in the Northern Territory was?

**Mr Knapp**—It was \$22 million for housing and then there are additional funds for infrastructure, which—

**Senator CHRIS EVANS**—Is this the 2005-06 figure?

**Ms Freudenstein**—In 2005-06 we have a figure of \$33,327,000 for NAHS in the Northern Territory, of which—

**Senator CHRIS EVANS**—How can it be a subset of CHIP when CHIP is \$22 million?

**Mr Knapp**—When you include infrastructure, we are looking at about \$76 million for CHIP. We have \$34 million for the housing and infrastructure component. Then there is NAHS, \$33 million, and then there are municipal services as well.

**Dr Harmer**—Why don’t we provide you with a table just to clarify that?

**Senator CHRIS EVANS**—Yes, I think that would be very helpful. You just told me the total for CHIP was \$22 million and then you told me the NAHS component was \$33 million.

**Dr Harmer**—By the end of this session we will give you the table.

**Mr Knapp**—The problem was that we were talking about housing most of the time, about new housing and whatever else, so we are giving you the numbers just for housing. But, if you want total expenditure through the CHIP program for housing infrastructure and municipal services, then you get a much larger number. Then if you include the Aboriginal Rental Housing Program, which is part of CSHA, it all adds up to around \$96 million to the Northern Territory in 2005-06.

**Senator CHRIS EVANS**—For housing.

**Mr Knapp**—For housing and infrastructure.

**Senator CHRIS EVANS**—And municipal services.

**Mr Knapp**—Yes.

**Senator CHRIS EVANS**—Do you have a breakdown by the three categories?

**Dr Harmer**—We will break that down, rather than confuse you more, and give it to you.

**Senator CHRIS EVANS**—I do not think you could confuse me any more.

**CHAIR**—I think we might suspend at that point for lunch, until 2 pm, when we will continue with output groups 1.1 and 1.2. Thank you.

**Proceedings suspended from 1.06 pm to 2.06 pm**

**CHAIR**—Before lunch we were on output groups 1.1 and 1.2, more generally on outcome 1. We will now proceed with questions in that area. At this point do you want to put on the table any matters that have been taken on notice?

**Dr Harmer**—We are producing a table for Senator Evans, but it is still in production.

**CHAIR**—We will get that later on.

**Senator CHRIS EVANS**—It has been confirmed for me that anybody watching was totally confused as well! It was not just me.

**Dr Harmer**—It is actually quite a complicated picture because the funding streams are both housing and community housing and infrastructure. Some is housing and some is infrastructure. Within that stream there are a number of substreams. So it is quite a complicated story. I do not want to give you a table now without getting it right.

**Senator CHRIS EVANS**—I appreciate that. I want to ask more broadly about the spending. Given the table we got in response to a question on notice was actually factually wrong, I want to double-check whether the authenticity of the rest of it is confirmed.

**Dr Harmer**—Senator, specifically what is your question?

**Senator CHRIS EVANS**—We found an error in the table that was produced in answer to the question on notice about the Commonwealth's funding in Wadeye. I think that has been drawn to your attention. I do not know whether you knew before today that that was the case.

**Dr Harmer**—No. In relation to the figure that was shown—\$9.6 million, I think, in 2004-05—it has only just been discovered that that was not for that year; it was in relation to up until that year.

**Senator CHRIS EVANS**—It was actually \$9.5 million.

**Dr Harmer**—Yes.

**Senator CHRIS EVANS**—That is why it did not add up when there were a couple of statements by the minister about funding money. So we have corrected that. The table in answer to the question listed other expenditure by FaCS in terms of its responsibilities as the host department for COAG. What I am asking you is: is the rest of the table accurate?

**Dr Harmer**—Without seeing the table, I am not sure.

**Senator CHRIS EVANS**—It is a table you gave to me.

**Dr Harmer**—Indeed. The reason it may have changed slightly is that I think there is 2005-06, which is not yet completed. As we, in our lead agency role, have been reviewing



expenditure by other departments and our own FaCSIA department's programs, the spending and commitment this year change. As we move closer to the end of the financial year 2005-06, we need to constantly update the figures for spending in each of the programs as opposed to what was committed. We now have a table, which is accurate to this point, which outlines not only the spending under FaCSIA programs but also, because we are the coordinating agency, the spending under other Commonwealth government programs in Wadeye for the three years of the trial. Would that be a helpful table?

**Senator CHRIS EVANS**—That would be very helpful.

**Dr Harmer**—I will just check that it is the most up-to-date figure.

**Senator CHRIS EVANS**—You have promised it to me now. You cannot go back!

**Dr Harmer**—Indeed, and I can provide you with that table. The bottom line figure is that total FaCSIA expenditure in Wadeye over the period of the trial until the end of 2005-6 is \$8.087 million, and a further \$6.9 million is committed.

**Senator CHRIS EVANS**—\$0.69 million?

**Dr Harmer**—Let us say \$8.1 million of total FaCSIA spending between 2003-04 and 2005-6, and a further \$6.9 million—so, nearly \$7 million—committed.

**Senator CHRIS EVANS**—For 2006-07?

**Dr Harmer**—Will have been committed in 2005-06.

**Mr Hunter**—Committed for the years beyond 2005-06.

**Dr Harmer**—For the years beyond. So it is commitments made for spending beyond 2005-06.

**Senator CHRIS EVANS**—So 2006-07 and beyond?

**Dr Harmer**—Yes. The total for other agencies is \$11.3 million spent between 2003-04 and 2005-06, and a further \$8.3 million committed. This is Health, DEST, DEWR, DOTARS et cetera.

**Senator CHRIS EVANS**—Do you have the Northern Territory contributions as well?

**Dr Harmer**—No, we do not. But the figures either spent or committed by just the Commonwealth for the trial period add up to just over \$40 million.

**Senator CHRIS EVANS**—That is the figure the minister has been using, is it?

**Dr Harmer**—Yes. The minister has used a figure of \$40 million. It was quite a conservative figure because he has said it was either spent or committed by the Australian or Northern Territory governments. In fact, the figure the Australian government spent or committed is over \$40 million. The figure the Northern Territory government spent or committed would be in addition to that.

**Senator CHRIS EVANS**—FaCSIA has currently spent \$8 million. So what has been spent in FaCSIA is almost about half and half so far?

**Dr Harmer**—A bit more than half spent.

**Senator CHRIS EVANS**—But \$8 million to \$7 million; that sort of thing.

**Dr Harmer**—Yes.

**Senator CHRIS EVANS**—I am not trying to misrepresent the figures.

**Dr Harmer**—That excludes the OIPC money. So FaCSIA's total would go up by \$1.8 million.

**Senator CHRIS EVANS**—I love the rhetoric of 'whole-of-government'. Even your own department figures are in two sets.

**Dr Harmer**—We have tried to produce the tables so it is very clear what is FaCSIA's and what is OIPC's.

**Senator CHRIS EVANS**—So OIPC is spending, what, \$1.8 million this year?

**Mr Gibbons**—No.

**Dr Harmer**—In the three years.

**Senator CHRIS EVANS**—Do we have a year-by-year for that?

**Mr Gibbons**—The OIPC, when it made those expenses, was not part of FaCSIA. It spent, for example, \$1 million in 2003-04, half a million dollars in 2004-05 and \$306,000 in 2005-06 before coming into the FaCSIA portfolio.

**Senator CHRIS EVANS**—Were these on SRAs?

**Mr Gibbons**—Some of them were. Some were outside that.

**Senator CHRIS EVANS**—What else do you—

**Mr Gibbons**—Some of them predated the new arrangements.

**Senator CHRIS EVANS**—I thought the SRA was signed before the—

**Mr Gibbons**—There are contributions to a number of things. We can get the details, but they were from the flexible funding pool.

**Senator MOORE**—Will OIPC's funding continue be shown separately even though you are now part of FaCSIA?

**Mr Gibbons**—We have a flexible funding pool.

**Senator MOORE**—And that will continue to be shown separately?

**Mr Gibbons**—It has to be identified separately, along with other agencies that contribute to the flexible funding pool.

**Senator MOORE**—Your explanation as to why it was different was that that money had been spent before you came into FaCSIA. You are now in FaCSIA, but that line item will continue to appear separately so we can actually see exactly what has come.

**Senator CHRIS EVANS**—What is OIPC's flexible funding pool for the next year?

**Mr Gibbons**—The next financial year is \$35 million.

**Senator CHRIS EVANS**—The other departments are actually using current funding to make their contributions to SRAs, aren't they?

**Mr Gibbons**—Other relevant agencies must contribute a proportion of their mainstream funding to flexible funding pools. The amount set for this coming financial year is about \$18 million—\$75 million over four years.

**Senator CHRIS EVANS**—Are they told a particular percentage? I was talking to A-G's, I think, about the million dollars they put in for crime prevention or whatever—don't quote me. They had chosen to make that figure. What sort of direction is given to them as to what money they allocate for SRA contributions?

**Mr Yates**—All of the agencies involved are earmarking a minimum amount as a contribution to SRA and agreement making from both mainstream and Indigenous-specific programs that they have under their wing.

**Senator CHRIS EVANS**—You have said to me that it is \$75 million over four years. How do you work that out? How does DEST know what its part of the \$75 million is?

**Mr Yates**—That is broken up by agency. We can give you that.

**Senator CHRIS EVANS**—If you would not mind taking it on notice. It is not a set percentage?

**Mr Yates**—No.

**Senator CHRIS EVANS**—It is by negotiation?

**Mr Yates**—It is guided by the share of the total Indigenous spend that the different departments have. DEWR, for example, which has very substantial Indigenous-specific programs with CDEP and the like, has a higher commitment than other departments.

**Senator CHRIS EVANS**—So it is broadly representative as a proportion of the spend, is it?

**Mr Yates**—Yes. I can give you those numbers now, if you would like. They are in the budget kit.

**Senator CHRIS EVANS**—I will find them in there; that is fine. I am drowning in numbers. I am just not sure they are the right ones. Where are we at with the Wadeye—

**Dr Harmer**—About 10 minutes away, Senator.

**Senator CHRIS EVANS**—We talked about the housing issue. I do not want to go back over the figures; you are going to give those to me because we did get a little lost. I note you have suspended the housing program in Wadeye, but you also tell me that 28 houses have become uninhabitable. So that is 28 homes that used to house people but where they can no longer live. I have heard reports of 300 or 400 people in Wadeye being homeless. If we have suspended any sorts of programs directed at Indigenous housing, what are we doing to provide shelter for those who no longer have shelter?

**Dr Harmer**—I would like to get Mr Knapp, if he is around, because I am reasonably confident that we and the Northern Territory together have agreed some funds for some temporary shelter, but I do not know the details of it.

**Senator CHRIS EVANS**—I think the officer has joined us.

**Dr Harmer**—The housing project of course would not gear up sufficiently to have houses completed to provide shelter for the homeless in the short term.

**Senator CHRIS EVANS**—No, but we have also suspended the repairs as part of the housing program. I understand that. You have explained what has happened. The question is: what do we do now? The housing program has been suspended, but quite clearly six houses this year were not going to meet the estimated \$52 million shortfall in housing in Wadeye, which I think is the figure from the report you got done. The \$25 million over three years was not going to fix that. Sure, that has been suspended, but you have also told me 28 houses are no longer habitable. There was a housing crisis before that. It seems to me the housing crisis in Wadeye must have got worse. As I say, I have reports that 300 or 400 people are homeless. I want to know how you, as the lead agency in Wadeye, are dealing with that.

**Dr Harmer**—We are the lead Commonwealth agency, but we do not have full responsibility for anything that happens in Wadeye. The Northern Territory government have more of the responsibility for the infrastructure, housing, policing and various other things. So, as you can appreciate, they are taking the lead role. But we are working with them.

**Senator CHRIS EVANS**—I think your minister has taken the lead role in highlighting the problem.

**Dr Harmer**—Yes.

**Senator CHRIS EVANS**—He has taken the role in suspending the program, and he has said he will not do anything with FaCS programs—he will not make any investment in there—until he thinks the Northern Territory government have addressed law and order. That is all on the public record.

**Dr Harmer**—That is right.

**Senator CHRIS EVANS**—I want to know what we are doing about the people who do not have anywhere to live.

**Mr Gibbons**—The Northern Territory government have appointed a senior coordinator to take charge of all of the Northern Territory government's activities in Wadeye. He was formerly the head of the local government department; he recently retired. In the short term they have taken responsibility for the provision of emergency equipment, tents and the like to help in the circumstances that exist there. Minister Brough has made it clear that we are not walking away from Wadeye but, until law and order is restored, we are not going to continue to invest there. In the meantime, we are due to talk with the Northern Territory government on Monday about the future.

**Senator CHRIS EVANS**—I appreciate that, but I go back to my question: what are we doing to assist in the current crisis situation in Wadeye in terms of housing and shelter? What is the Commonwealth's role in that?

**Mr Gibbons**—As of today, we are doing nothing to provide shelter or housing. We are continuing to provide support through the range of Centrelink programs and services. We have not turned off funding that contributes to the medical support that is provided there. It is basically a state, or in this case a territory, responsibility. It is not the Commonwealth's responsibility.

**Senator CHRIS EVANS**—When did it stop being your responsibility? You are all care and no responsibility?

**Mr Gibbons**—We invest in housing as part of a long-term strategy to improve the circumstances of the community. We do not provide emergency assistance.

**Senator CHRIS EVANS**—I do not know about that, Mr Gibbons. That has not been my experience of FaCS's role. I know FaCS has certainly been involved in a whole range of emergency assistance/disaster relief programs. I know Australia is committed to disaster relief in Indonesia, we are committed to assisting people in East Timor, all of which I thoroughly support and the Australian people support. But when I ask you about Wadeye you tell me it is not your problem, when your minister is the one who highlighted the problem. I accept what he said on the public record. But, if we have a shelter and housing crisis in Wadeye, law and order cannot be enforced successfully if people do not have any anywhere to live or do not have shelter. So clearly it is part of the solution. I do not think anyone would deny that. I have heard up hill and down dale about the whole-of-government approach. Are you honestly saying to me that it is not your responsibility and you are taking no action at all and are not involved in the effort?

**Mr Gibbons**—No. I am saying the Northern Territory government are making emergency provision in Wadeye, and we are preparing to talk to them about the longer term. But a condition of the longer term is that law and order be addressed in the Territory.

**Senator CHRIS EVANS**—That is all on the public record. But you are telling me that you are not going to do anything to assist with the housing crisis in Wadeye until you are convinced that law and order is restored, and that those people have to just wait for that to occur?

**Mr Gibbons**—Assistance in the short term with housing is an emergency provision that is the responsibility of the Territory government. They have provided the tents. They are looking after the circumstances on the ground.

**Senator CHRIS EVANS**—Is the COAG trial still operating?

**Mr Gibbons**—That does not alter the responsibilities of the respective jurisdictions.

**Senator CHRIS EVANS**—No. What are the objects of the COAG trial? One of them is providing safety for families, and the other is about housing, as I understood it.

**Dr Harmer**—The COAG trial is still operating. There was a meeting yesterday between the three parties. The Commonwealth was represented by Mr Brian Stacey, who is head of the Office of Indigenous Policy Coordination in the Northern Territory. He met with a Northern Territory government representative and some representatives from the Thamarrurr council. That is where they discussed the issues that Mr Gibbons just referred to about the Northern Territory government's response to the emergency by appointing Mr David Coles to coordinate the Territory's input. The three parties discussed approaches to the housing of those who have been displaced because of the rioting and the destruction of the houses. The Northern Territory government are working on temporary provision through tents. They are also working on removing some people from the town to some of the out-stations et cetera, trying to provide for people in various ways.

Our person, while not directly responsible, has been involved in those discussions and would respond to requests for emergency assistance. I am not aware that we have been asked for it yet. But, to the extent we were, we would no doubt respond appropriately to that but not in terms of any significant new infrastructure until law and order has been established.

**Senator CHRIS EVANS**—Frankly, I am quite shocked about that. This situation, as I understand it, worsened when Minister Brough was in town in, what, early May? I am trying to find the date. Anyway, I will find the date. Clearly the minister has been central to the debate. Are you now saying to me that, apart from sending an official there to talk to people, that is your only role in helping to alleviate the impact on the victims? These are the people who had to leave their homes. These are not the perpetrators.

**Mr Gibbons**—In some cases they are.

**Senator CHRIS EVANS**—Mr Gibbons, you are always quick to cast that sort of negativity on Indigenous people, and quite frankly it is beginning to get up my nose.

**Senator Kemp**—Mr Chairman, I do not think that is a fair comment.

**CHAIR**—I think that should be withdrawn, Senator.

**Senator Kemp**—That is a political point.

**Senator CHRIS EVANS**—It is not a political point.

**Senator Kemp**—I have been listening carefully to the officer. He has been responding fairly to your questions. I do not think it is in any way correct to draw an inference like that.

**CHAIR**—I will uphold that comment, Senator Evans. I think you should refrain from those comments, please.

**Senator CHRIS EVANS**—I will withdraw it if I reacted emotively, Mr Chairman. I take your guidance. I apologise, Mr Gibbons. But I am concerned when we immediately seek to add, ‘The victims are not necessarily all victims. They may be perpetrators.’ It seems to me that the balance of sympathy and the balance of concern are not right. A lot of these people are women and children who your minister says have been abused and who need protection.

I now hear that basically it is a Northern Territory problem in terms of the emergency relief. When I then put to you that these people are actually out of their homes as a result of the conditions at which you, Minister, and the department express concern, you add, ‘Some of them are the perpetrators.’ Some of them may be the perpetrators but a lot of them are just innocent victims, as I think you would acknowledge. It seems to me, given the spirit of a whole-of-government approach and the spirit of FaCSIA having direct responsibility for Commonwealth involvement in this community, that to give me the answer, ‘It is not our problem; it is the Northern Territory’s problem,’ is just shocking.

**Mr Gibbons**—I did not say it is not our problem. I said the responsibility for the emergency provision in the context of tents et cetera in the immediate circumstances on the ground is the Northern Territory’s. I am not aware that they have asked for additional assistance. They are certainly looking to us in the future to provide substantial aid to rebuild. The minister has made it very clear that we are not about to rebuild unless law and order is

secured in Wadeye. We built 20-odd houses last year; 28 were destroyed. He does not want to see—

**Senator CHRIS EVANS**—You did not build 20-odd houses last year. That is factually incorrect.

**Mr Gibbons**—In the last—

**Senator CHRIS EVANS**—In the last nine years.

**Senator Kemp**—Mr Chairman, I do not think Senator Evans's comment that he regards it as shocking can go unchallenged. I think most of the community would regard it as shocking that the Northern Territory government has allowed the situation to develop in the way it has when it has key responsibilities in this area. I think we should restrain ourselves from attempting to make political points. This is a very serious issue.

**Senator CHRIS EVANS**—You have just made a political point. You blamed it all on the Northern Territory government.

**Senator Kemp**—I made the political point in response to the point that you made, Senator Evans.

**Senator CHRIS EVANS**—Which is not a political point at all.

**Senator Kemp**—I think it has to go on record that the performance of the Northern Territory government has been fairly poor in key areas in these townships. We have officers at the table and they are not here to be involved in political debate. It is for you and me to involve ourselves in political debate.

**Senator CHRIS EVANS**—Not at estimates, it is not.

**Senator Kemp**—What I would do is try to get the facts from the officers. We are trying to help you. But I think it would help the tone of the meeting if we could restrain from attempts at political point scoring.

**Senator CHRIS EVANS**—Minister, what you have highlighted is exactly the problem that the COAG trial was supposed to overcome. There are supposed to be whole-of-government partnerships, and that is why I was shocked when I was told, 'It's not our problem.' FaCSIA are the home department, the sponsor of the COAG trial. We have heard evidence that they are not going to continue their housing programs, building homes, because of the difficulties there. I think that is not an unreasonable decision to take. I have not disputed that. But I do want to know what the Commonwealth government is doing to assist those people who are now homeless.

**Dr Harmer**—As Mr Gibbons said, the primary responsibility for the emergency assistance on the ground in Wadeye lies with the Northern Territory government. As far as I am aware, they have not disputed that. We attended a meeting yesterday as part of the tripartite steering committee, which is set up under the COAG trial. We participated in that meeting with the head of our OIPC unit in the Northern Territory; he went along. A Northern Territory department—I think the Premier's department—the Thamarrurr council and our person from OIPC discussed the situation and had a report from the council.

The Northern Territory government advised the other two members of the tripartite steering committee of the actions that they were taking. They sought, I am assuming, some agreement from us to spend some of the IHANT money that was set aside for the repair and maintenance of tents. That was money that we provided to the Northern Territory government and it was provided through to Wadeye. I am assuming—I am not clear; I would need to check this—that our person at the meeting agreed to that diversion of resources from the repair and maintenance of tents.

We were also told by the Northern Territory government of their plans to take some other action in relation to dealing with people who are in an emergency situation. They have requested that we take up a couple of other issues which I need to double check. Our person has fed that information back through to us. So Mr Gibbons is right. It is not our primary responsibility but, under the COAG trial, we are involved with the Northern Territory government and the Thamarrurr council in dealing with the issue. But, going to the point of the success of the trial, the issue is that we were making quite good progress on the trial until the violence became quite significant towards the end of last year. As a result of that violence, it has been very difficult to make real progress.

**Senator CHRIS EVANS**—So everything was going swimmingly until the end of last year?

**Dr Harmer**—It was a trial. We had learnt a number of things. We had done some things well. We had invested in some innovative projects with the Northern Territory government. But the truth is, as the minister has made it very clear, in a town like Wadeye, unless you have the women and children feeling safe and secure, it is very difficult to get people back into the schools. It is very difficult to get the kids educated if the women are not feeling secure about feeding the children at night, and then making sure their kids are going to school.

It is very difficult to have achievements in housing if the rioting destroys a number of houses. So it is really difficult, as the minister has made it clear, to make any progress in some of these communities unless we have basic safety, security and law and order established, which is what he has been saying. In fact, the truth is that Wadeye as a trial has basically proved the point, it seems to me.

**Senator CHRIS EVANS**—Wadeye has proved the point of what—how successful the trial has been? Am I on a different planet to you?

**Dr Harmer**—It makes the point that it is very difficult to make progress unless you have the basics of safety, security and law and order.

**Senator CHRIS EVANS**—That was one of your objectives of the trial. One of your objectives was women, families, youth, housing and construction. That was what the trial was about. That is what you were going to deliver to Wadeye.

**Dr Harmer**—Not us; jointly between the council, the Northern Territory government and the Commonwealth.

**Senator CHRIS EVANS**—That is better than saying it is all the Northern Territory's fault. But it is right that you signed up to the agreement and one of the focuses were women,



families and youth, and the other was housing and construction. We have been through the housing and construction record and the problems associated with that.

Now you tell me that it is very hard to provide security for women and children in the community. I accept it is hard. I do not have to hear Mal Brough tell me that. I actually knew there were problems in communities 20 years ago. I think every other Australian had too. I am glad the minister has taken an interest in the issue early in his term. But it is not news to most people. It is not news to you either because that is why FaCSIA is there. That is why we are having the COAG trial. For it to be argued that somehow this is proof of the success of the COAG trial just leaves me dumbfounded.

**Dr Harmer**—I was not arguing that it proves the success of the COAG trial.

**Senator CHRIS EVANS**—That seemed to be the implication.

**Dr Harmer**—I said that the most recent period of the COAG trial has proved the point that it is very difficult to make progress unless you have basic law and order and safety. That was the point I was making.

**Senator Kemp**—I think, Mr Chairman, the *Hansard* would show that that was the point that was made.

**Senator CHRIS EVANS**—I am not trying to misrepresent what Dr Harmer said.

**Senator Kemp**—I think in fairness, Senator Evans, the *Hansard* record would show exactly what Dr Harmer said.

**Senator CHRIS EVANS**—I am sure it will, Minister. I am actually not into nitpicking and point scoring about who said what to whom. What I am trying to ascertain from Dr Harmer is whether he really believes that the COAG trial has been a success.

**Senator Kemp**—He has explained to you twice now what he meant, and then he repeated what he said the first time and it was perfectly clear.

**Senator SIEWERT**—Senator Kemp, he said that up until recently—I think it was the end of the year—the trial was going well.

**Dr Harmer**—We were making progress.

**Senator SIEWERT**—I would like to know what indicators and what milestones you have to show that. It seems to me that things were not going well if all of a sudden they tipped over at the end of the year. I fail to see how you can say it was going well if all of a sudden things tipped over.

**Dr Harmer**—I would not say it was going well. We were making progress. Remember it was a trial, Senator. It was a trial agreed between the Northern Territory government, the Thamarrurr council and the Commonwealth. In fact, if I go back to the original rationale—

**Senator CHRIS EVANS**—This is the COAG objectives for Wadeye?

**Dr Harmer**—Yes; it states:

to trial new approaches to service delivery to Indigenous communities through a whole-of-government cooperative approach with the aim of improving social and economic outcomes.

The strategy that COAG agreed was that, with the lead agency role, there would be better coordination of the funding and effort going into Indigenous communities by the state and the Commonwealth. On that, I think we could not claim great success. I think we have a long way to go in terms of breaking down some of the silos between programs and simplifying it all for the community. That is what I think Bill Gray's report is likely to suggest, and I think he is probably right on that.

One of the difficulties in coordinating and making it easier to deliver services to communities like Wadeye and other remote communities is that we have particular programs designed in the big federal and state departments for mainstream Australia which do not necessarily fit the remote communities. The trial has discovered that, even with goodwill between the various Commonwealth departments and the various state departments, the barriers provided by those silo boundaries still remain relatively insurmountable in that the council has been required to fill in forms and provide accountability for a range of different programs across the boundaries. That has tied them up and some of them have not proceeded because of resourcing.

The most recent budget, the single Indigenous budget submission, provides a significant boost for—Mr Gibbons has already referred to it—a flexible funding pool which will allow us to respond much more flexibly in remote communities to the needs without tying the particular community up in applying for funds and the acquittal of funds et cetera in quite the same way. The community themselves would admit, I think, that, initially when they set the priorities or we set the priorities, women and children and youth were probably a surrogate for what they identified very early on as priorities for the Wadeye community, which were safety and law and order. In fact, at a recent meeting in Darwin convened by Mr Gray when he was doing his review, the priorities for the COAG trial site changed from those first established a couple of years ago to safety and land.

**Senator CHRIS EVANS**—When did that change occur?

**Dr Harmer**—There was a meeting on 19 April in Darwin, which I attended and was convened by Mr Gray, of the three parties to the—

**Senator CHRIS EVANS**—This was before he was appointed by the Northern Territory government?

**Dr Harmer**—Mr Gray, the reviewer who was doing the review.

**Senator SIEWERT**—So that changed in April this year?

**Dr Harmer**—Yes. It was agreed that the priorities really should be safety, land and better coordination.

**Senator CHRIS EVANS**—You amended the COAG agreement?

**Dr Harmer**—We jointly agreed. The three parties to the COAG trial agreed that it was a better reflection of the priorities going forward.

**Senator CHRIS EVANS**—When had safety become a priority? What had driven that?

**Dr Harmer**—The community, particularly the women who were present at the meeting, felt very strongly that it was virtually impossible to make progress on many of the other things that we were trying to do in the community unless there was basic community safety.

**Senator CHRIS EVANS**—This was an issue well before Minister Brough visited the site on 5 May? You had cottoned on to this being a major concern and changed the agreement on 19 April?

**Dr Harmer**—The meeting I am talking about was on 19 April.

**Senator CHRIS EVANS**—Yes. Minister Brough went on 5 May. All I am saying is you had actually identified the issue of community safety and made it one of the two key objectives for COAG as of 19 April.

**Dr Harmer**—We did not. The community did. We agreed to it.

**Senator CHRIS EVANS**—One minute you tell me it is a tripartite meeting and then you tell me they did it. Didn't the three of you do it?

**Dr Harmer**—We did. But we let the community, who were well represented at that meeting, take the lead in articulating what they now believe were the priorities.

**Senator CHRIS EVANS**—When was the first you had heard from them that that was a priority? When you formally changed the agreement on 19 April, was that the first time you had heard from the women of Wadeye that it was a major problem of theirs?

**Dr Harmer**—We had been hearing about security and safety for some time, and we had been pressing the Northern Territory for some additional resources.

**Senator CHRIS EVANS**—What had changed in your approach over that period, in terms of FaCSIA being the lead agency on the site when this community safety concern emerged some time well before April? I understand it was last year. I do not know whether you can confirm that for me, but my information was that these issues were being raised last year as to concerns about community safety.

**Dr Harmer**—Yes. They have been raised for some time. Because Wadeye is built on the land of one clan and it is not the land of others inhabiting the town, there have been spikes of violence often in the wet season for many years. When the COAG trial was established, the community, with the two parties, agreed the priorities as being women and children, youth and housing. We started working on those. What I was saying earlier was that it became clear during the trial that, unless we sorted out the community safety and law and order, it was going to be very difficult to make progress on the other issues.

**Senator CHRIS EVANS**—When did you reach that realisation?

**Dr Harmer**—Because FaCSIA is only one party to the agreement—

**Senator CHRIS EVANS**—I am asking about your knowledge.

**Dr Harmer**—I had probably come to the conclusion by the end of last year that it was going to be very difficult, but it was not up to me to change those things. We needed the proper forum to work with the community and the Northern Territory government to make that shift.

**Senator CHRIS EVANS**—That was not able to be arranged until April?

**Dr Harmer**—I am not sure about how many tripartite steering committees or what discussions there were. I was not able to go to many of those. But they were formally endorsed as new priorities on 19 April, yes.

**Senator CHRIS EVANS**—Is it true that in November the Indigenous women in Wadeye made an application to the Attorney-General's Department for crime prevention and family violence funding?

**Dr Harmer**—I would need to check that. I am not sure. It is possible.

**Senator CHRIS EVANS**—Wouldn't you know?

**Dr Harmer**—I could very quickly find out.

**Senator CHRIS EVANS**—I thought you would, given you are responsible for everything that happens in Wadeye. My information was they actually sought some funding in November, that being the latest, to deal with family violence and have not heard back.

**Dr Harmer**—From memory, I think that was one of issues that were raised yesterday and, as the coordinating agency, our person was asked to take it up with A-G's.

**Senator CHRIS EVANS**—Can you confirm for me that late last year the Indigenous women in Wadeye sought assistance to deal with family violence and violence and security issues and sought Commonwealth funding for that?

**Dr Harmer**—I will take that on notice.

**Senator CHRIS EVANS**—Is there someone who can come to the table and help us?

**Dr Harmer**—I do not think there is, no.

**Senator CHRIS EVANS**—Are you seriously suggesting to me that, even though you are the lead agency, you have had discussions about these issues and you say you amended the COAG—I did not realise that had happened. Was that made public?

**Dr Harmer**—I do not think it was. It was part of the tripartite steering committee.

**Senator CHRIS EVANS**—Anyway, you amended the objectives of COAG in April to make safety one of the key objectives, along with land, as a result of concern about safety being expressed from late last year or some time last year—we have not been able to set the date. I have been told that the community, and the women in particular, sought assistance for family violence and violence problems in the community by formal application to the Commonwealth government in November last year. Are you telling me no-one in the responsible—

**Dr Harmer**—There will be people listening. If we can find that out, I will get it for you. I do not have it to hand right now. I should correct the record. The meeting on 19 April of the tripartite steering committee, which was hosted by Mr Gray, who was doing the review, agreed to amend the priorities for the COAG trial, but I do not think we have actually formally signed the agreement yet. I should make that correction.

**Senator CHRIS EVANS**—Are you able to tell me when that was first discussed? Was this issue of safety discussed earlier at other meetings of the tripartite steering committee? Had this question of safety and violence been on the agenda before?

**Dr Harmer**—I would need to check with my state manager in the Northern Territory, who would have attended those meetings.

**Senator CHRIS EVANS**—Clearly you were aware last year of the concerns being raised. You have said that on the record already. Can someone now assist me with the question of—

**Dr Harmer**—We are trying to get you the answer to the question. Senator, can I just clarify: you are asking about an approach to the Attorney-General's Department?

**Senator CHRIS EVANS**—I think it was to Attorney-General's. Obviously I could ask them, but they have gone.

**Dr Harmer**—We will try to get the answer for you.

**Senator CHRIS EVANS**—As I understand it, you are facilitating their relationships with the Commonwealth government.

**Dr Harmer**—We would most likely be aware of that, yes. In this big folder I have here at the moment, I do not have the detail.

**Senator CHRIS EVANS**—That is what I want to check. They tell me that they were seeking some help with this problem and sought some Commonwealth funding. You now tell me that in fact you were alerted to this some time last year and you have responded by changing one of the key objectives of the trial, which is all news to me and I think news to the community more generally.

**Dr Harmer**—We have not formally agreed it, but it was discussed at the 19 April meeting.

**Senator CHRIS EVANS**—You have agreed. You just have not done the paperwork; is that fair?

**Dr Harmer**—Yes, that is reasonable.

**Senator CHRIS EVANS**—That is not unreasonable. There has clearly been a growing issue of safety and civil order in the community. I am now trying to understand whether or not these issues were raised late last year and how people have responded to them. I think it was the National Crime Prevention Program.

**Dr Harmer**—Senator, we are still trying to get the information for you about the application to the Attorney-General's Department. We will try to get that to you this afternoon.

**Senator CHRIS EVANS**—Can you also see what you can find out about whether these issues were on the tripartite steering committee's agenda over the months leading up to April. How often do they meet?

**Dr Harmer**—Every couple of months. I think there was a meeting in October when a group of women attended. I think there was another meeting in December. I have not got the record of those meetings. I did not attend, so I need to be very careful about the issues.

**Senator CHRIS EVANS**—My understanding was that at the meeting in October those women expressed concerns about violence and safety in the community, that they were encouraged by one of the officers there to apply for funding under the Crime Prevention Program to assist them meet the challenges of family violence and civil disorder in the community and that that application was duly made under the National Crime Prevention Program to A-G's. I am also told they never heard back. That may or may not be true.

**Dr Harmer**—Rather than operate without the information—

**Senator CHRIS EVANS**—Anyway, I am also keen to know when you knew it was a problem. As you say, the original COAG trial was designed to concentrate on women and young people anyway. What does that mean?

**Dr Harmer**—That was part of the problem. The specification of the priorities was quite general.

**Senator CHRIS EVANS**—Housing was obviously specific, but I wondered what women and young people—

**Dr Harmer**—My feeling, having been to the community, is that the topics of families and children and youth were really a surrogate for the things they were most concerned about, which were safety in the streets et cetera.

**Senator SIEWERT**—Which is why I would like to know what indicators you have been using for the trials. Surely, if these trials were being carried out, you had a set of indicators about how things were improving. Did you have that, were they being monitored and were they used to also provide feedback on the issues that we have been talking about?

**Dr Harmer**—There was a shared responsibility agreement between the Commonwealth, the council and the state at the beginning of the trial which set out the starting point, the agreement between the three parties and what would be done.

**Senator SIEWERT**—I understand that. But what I want to know is what were the indicators for success and on what basis, therefore, did you make the statement earlier that up until these troubles at the end of last year the trials were successful.

**Senator Kemp**—Progress was being made. It is quite a different thing; some progress was being made. That is what was said.

**Senator SIEWERT**—I do not think Dr Harmer used the words 'progress was being made'.

**Senator Kemp**—We can all check the *Hansard*, Senator, but your formulation was entirely wrong.

**Senator SIEWERT**—The point was being made that it was going okay until the end of last year. I want to know the indicators to that.

**Dr Harmer**—Let me give you some indication, Senator, as to why I thought progress was being made. We had quite a surge in school enrolments on the back of suggesting that schooling was important and some additional resources, I think—

**Senator CHRIS EVANS**—They also told you that you could not actually cope with the kids when they turned up. You did not have classrooms or facilities to cope with them.

**Senator SIEWERT**—Or high school.

**Dr Harmer**—Indeed. But we are not responsible for the resourcing of the school body. That is a Northern Territory government responsibility. They have committed community resources to it.

**Senator CHRIS EVANS**—Every success is yours; every failure is theirs.

**Dr Harmer**—Not at all. We are working well with the Northern Territory government—

**Senator CHRIS EVANS**—I am sorry; I interrupted you. As I say, if success is going to be kids turning up to school when you know they will not be able to cope with the number of kids who turn up or provide facilities—

**CHAIR**—We can make points once we have heard what the answer is. Let us hear the answer.

**Dr Harmer**—Let me give you an indication of the sorts of things that I was referring to when I said we felt some elements of the trial were making progress. School attendance had gone up significantly. A large community pool had been established. In my visit there and on information available to us, some significant improvements to eye health and skin health were made because of the pool. A local construction workshop had been set up and a business development opportunity around housing had been established. We had given some significant resources to the community to assist them with some capacity building and working within the community. Child care and other family health services have been applied, and the council is working with both levels of government on those. So there was quite significant progress made. But, as I said earlier, it is difficult to make progress in many of those areas if the women and children are not feeling safe at night and not feeling that the streets are safe.

**Senator SIEWERT**—While I am not saying that those things you are talking about are not important, a lot of them are outputs rather than outcomes. I see the improvement in eye health as an outcome, whereas providing the facilities is an output. Were there outcomes? Was that built into the trial or was that information collected subsequently?

**Dr Harmer**—The trial, as I mentioned earlier, was primarily to trial a better way of working between the Commonwealth, the state and the community—to trial whether a lead agency concept would not better coordinate services from both the Commonwealth and the state into the community. It was made quite clear at the beginning of the trials that there ought to be no presumption that significant additional money would go in. This was about coordinating the money that was going in. It was about making better use of the funds that were allocated, reducing some of the burden on the community.

**Senator SIEWERT**—I get that. I still thought the reason that was being done was so that you would get better outcomes for the community.

**Dr Harmer**—Yes.

**Senator SIEWERT**—What is the point of agencies working together better if you are not getting a better outcome on the ground? That is why I am asking about outcomes, not outputs.

**Dr Harmer**—Indeed.

**Senator SIEWERT**—It is also being used as the new way of doing things better, the quiet revolution and all those sorts of things, which is why we are all so interested in knowing what the outcomes were.

**Dr Harmer**—In a sense, even though it has been going for three years, it is very early days in terms of outcomes. As you would know in relation to Indigenous communities like Wadeye, which have been in existence for many years and have been troubled communities for many years, the idea that a COAG trial could make a huge difference to outcomes in a very short period would be unrealistic. We were making progress, we hoped, with school attendance, with housing and in a range of other areas. The second phase of the trial, which will be evaluated in a couple of years time, will focus on what outcomes have been achieved. The first phase, which Senator Evans has already referred to in terms of Mr Gray's first stage evaluation, was about the processes and the coordination.

**Senator SIEWERT**—Did you have a set of indicators for that?

**Dr Harmer**—The shared responsibility agreement spelt out the areas of activity, and Mr Gray's report will look at that first stage coordination. Senator, can I go back to your question about the October meeting of the tripartite steering committee which the women attended. I am told the women did make a number of points about safety et cetera. We are checking whether at that meeting they foreshadowed an application to the Attorney-General's Department. But what they definitely did at that meeting was make it clear that the highest priority was that there should be more police in Wadeye.

**Senator CHRIS EVANS**—What were the outcomes of that meeting? What action was taken by you and the Northern Territory government?

**Dr Harmer**—I know the Northern Territory government have made some recent commitments to increase the policing. I am not sure whether they made a commitment which they delivered on between October and the commitment they made recently. Someone may know, but I do not.

**Senator CHRIS EVANS**—Did any action on your part come out of that October meeting?

**Dr Harmer**—I would need to check.

**Senator MOORE**—In terms of the October meeting, was the only outcome of that the cry for more police? Were there other actions that came out of that meeting?

**Dr Harmer**—I would need to check that. I was not present, so I do not know.

**Senator MOORE**—I would be surprised if that were the only action item.

**Dr Harmer**—Indeed. That was a critical one, but there almost certainly would have been other issues discussed, because the three parties get together every couple of months, talk about how the progress is going and talk about the issues that have come up et cetera. Policing certainly came up when the women were there in October. I am not sure what else.

**Senator MOORE**—I have a specific question about the resources that FaCSIA has on the ground in Wadeye. We have heard about the money that went in. Your comment about not having any expectation of extra money interested me after we just heard how much money



had gone in since it started. Nonetheless, in terms of your staffing resources, how many are on the ground in Wadeye?

**Dr Harmer**—I do not think we have any permanent staffing on the ground in Wadeye. I stand to be corrected.

**Senator MOORE**—Do they actually visit?

**Dr Harmer**—We have resources in Darwin that manage the trial.

**Senator MOORE**—At the ICC in Darwin?

**Dr Harmer**—Yes. There were people in the old FaCS state office who were managing it as well. I can get you the numbers of staff involved, Senator.

**Senator CHRIS EVANS**—In terms of the COAG trial, have you ever had permanent staff in Wadeye?

**Dr Harmer**—I do not think FaCS has had staff. No, we have not.

**Senator MOORE**—One of the things we heard a lot about when it was set up was the pool that was built in the community. Has that been untouched by the vandalism that has gone on?

**Dr Harmer**—I am not aware that it has been damaged.

**Mr Gibbons**—When I saw it two weeks ago it looked in good condition.

**Senator MOORE**—I am interested because of the way vandalism operates in communities. Key areas tend to be focused on, and the community waited for that pool for a long time. It has been relatively untouched?

**Mr Gibbons**—And it is fenced.

**Senator MOORE**—That usually is not enough.

**Mr Gibbons**—We jointly funded with the Northern Territory government a community development coordinator who works for us on the ground in Wadeye full time.

**Senator MOORE**—Is that for you, or do they have a special title? It is just half funded for you?

**Mr Gibbons**—Jointly funded. He works for both the Commonwealth and the Northern Territory governments.

**Senator MOORE**—Has that person been focused on in the violence? In terms of the personal safety of people in areas, has the staff member involved had any particular issues?

**Mr Gibbons**—I have not been involved, so I personally do not know. I do not know whether my colleagues do.

**Senator CHRIS EVANS**—Is this an OIPC sponsored position or a FaCS sponsored position?

**Mr Gibbons**—It was a position that was funded, along with community development coordinators in eight or nine other communities in the Northern Territory, as part of the bilateral arrangements.

**Senator CHRIS EVANS**—It is not specifically linked to the COAG trial?

**Mr Gibbons**—No, but we included Wadeye in it.

**Senator CHRIS EVANS**—It is a community development program, and that is one of the locations?

**Mr Gibbons**—It is one of the locations we agreed—

**Senator CHRIS EVANS**—I had the mind-set that it was a COAG trial position.

**Mr Gibbons**—No.

**Senator CHRIS EVANS**—It is a community development position as part of the broader program. Who do they report to? What are the lines of reporting on that program?

**Mr Gibbons**—Jointly to the Northern Territory and to the Commonwealth. On the Commonwealth's part it is the ICC in Darwin.

**Senator MOORE**—Is housing provided as part of that job?

**Mr Gibbons**—I am just reminded that in the case of the person in Wadeye their first line of reporting is to a unit in one Northern Territory government department. I think it is the department of local government.

**Senator MOORE**—The jobs that you have under that particular title across your placements all have varying reporting mechanisms, don't they? That one goes to the Northern Territory. Some of the others might go to you. There is no model.

**Mr Gibbons**—No, I think from memory we agreed, for convenience, that the Northern Territory would take them on their establishment. They were jointly funded. We have a joint interest in tasking the individuals.

**Senator MOORE**—For the sake of their employment, they are Northern Territory public sector workers?

**Mr Gibbons**—I think that is correct. If I am wrong, I will correct it.

**Senator MOORE**—Do they get housing as part of their package?

**Mr Gibbons**—I believe they do.

**Senator CHRIS EVANS**—In terms of Senator Siewert's questions, we have the CAEPR information on Wadeye which I think will be useful. Hopefully, we will have the evaluation report within a matter of weeks which will allow us to make an objective assessment of the success or otherwise of the trial. Part of the funding on that table you gave me included an allocation for emergency relief funding. Could someone tell me what that is?

**Mr Hunter**—I will check this for you, Senator, but emergency relief is a mainstream program which is made available throughout Australia by FaCSIA. It is generally provided through non-government organisations. It provides support to people in particularly difficult circumstances. It might provide support in the way of food or blankets. That program has been running in Wadeye, as it has been in communities all over Australia, during the period of the trial.

**Senator CHRIS EVANS**—So you do have an emergency relief role?

**Mr Hunter**—It is an emergency relief role in terms of providing support to individuals. It is an emergency relief role which is played throughout Australia.

**Senator CHRIS EVANS**—Yes. Wadeye was in Australia last time I looked.

**Mr Hunter**—Yes.

**Senator CHRIS EVANS**—You have already been providing emergency relief in Wadeye. My question earlier was why we were not now providing some emergency relief, given the crisis that has occurred. It sounds to me like you were already providing some emergency relief on an ongoing basis—as you said, blankets and other things for people in difficulty. When I asked earlier why we were not providing any emergency relief, we were told it is the Northern Territory's problem.

**Mr Hunter**—This is a national program which is available to all communities in Australia.

**Senator CHRIS EVANS**—But it does not bar Indigenous people.

**Mr Hunter**—It is not there responding to a particular situation, and that was the point I was making.

**Senator CHRIS EVANS**—Sorry—'it is not there responding to a particular situation'?

**Mr Hunter**—What I mean is that we find individuals in need of the kind of assistance this program provides throughout Australia. It is not as if it is a program which is deployed in response to particular incidents. It is ongoing funding for emergency relief.

**Senator CHRIS EVANS**—But I do not see why, just because there is more than one person in need of relief, they ought to be barred from a mainstream program.

**Mr Hunter**—I was not suggesting that. I was simply pointing out it is part of a mainstream program which is delivered throughout Australia.

**Senator CHRIS EVANS**—Who administers the mainstream program?

**Mr Hunter**—I do not know who actually delivers it in Wadeye. I would need to find that out.

**Senator CHRIS EVANS**—Which department administers the program funds?

**Mr Hunter**—FaCSIA does.

**Senator CHRIS EVANS**—So you run what you call an emergency relief program?

**Mr Hunter**—That is correct.

**Senator CHRIS EVANS**—Is that the name of the program?

**Mr Hunter**—That is correct.

**Senator CHRIS EVANS**—Has any thought been given by FaCSIA to providing emergency relief under that program to the hundreds of people made homeless at Wadeye?

**Mr Hunter**—I am not aware of the answer to that question, Senator. I could find that out for you.

**Senator CHRIS EVANS**—Could you ask someone, please.

**Dr Harmer**—Senator, could I just go back to the question you asked about the application from the Thamarrurr council to the National Community Crime Prevention Program.

**Senator CHRIS EVANS**—Yes.

**Dr Harmer**—I understand that they have applied to the Attorney-General's Department. That application is currently under consideration by the Attorney-General. I understand also that my people have been in contact with the Attorney-General's Department about the importance of that, but that is where we are at the moment.

**Senator CHRIS EVANS**—This is an application they made in November?

**Dr Harmer**—Yes.

**Senator CHRIS EVANS**—They applied in November for some funding under the National Community Crime Prevention Program. Can you help me with what exactly they were after?

**Dr Harmer**—I would need to take that question on notice. I do not have the details. They have applied, and it is under consideration by the Attorney-General's Department.

**Senator CHRIS EVANS**—Is the officer not the right person to ask? She seemed to know a bit about it a minute ago.

**Dr Harmer**—I do not know how much detail she would have on the application itself.

**Senator CHRIS EVANS**—Would you do me the favour of asking her?

**Dr Harmer**—I will. All we know is that the council was asking for a long-term law and justice strategy, but we do not know the details of the application.

**Senator CHRIS EVANS**—So the women of Wadeye asked for a long-term law and justice strategy in an application to A-G's in November under the National Community Crime Prevention Program. Did your officers facilitate them making the application?

**Dr Harmer**—I would need to check that.

**Senator CHRIS EVANS**—They were certainly at the meeting in October when the need was identified by those women.

**Dr Harmer**—Yes, they would have been and they would have been aware of it. As I mentioned before, the women raised a couple of issues in relation to security and safety. One was the need for an immediate response to law and order through police. The second was a longer term approach to—

**Senator CHRIS EVANS**—That is right. So they raised those concerns. My information was that they got some facilitation. I thought it might have been from your officers, being members of the lead agency and being present at the meeting.

**Dr Harmer**—It is quite possible.

**Senator CHRIS EVANS**—As the women were seeking federal government funds and because we are keen to let people access the mainstream and have a whole-of-government approach, I figured you would have got the job to help them make sure it happened.

**Dr Harmer**—I have no doubt that, if my people were there and were asked to, they would have. As lead agency, we would have helped.

**Senator CHRIS EVANS**—When you say you have been in contact with the A-G's Department to see how the application is going, was that as a result of the meeting the other day or was it prior to that?

**Dr Harmer**—I am not sure when it was. I have just been told that we had been in contact with them and we understand that it is under consideration by the Attorney.

**Senator CHRIS EVANS**—Could you find out for me whether that was just in the last couple of days as a result of your meeting or whether they had been trying to get it out of the A-G's earlier?

**Dr Harmer**—Sure.

**Senator CHRIS EVANS**—How are we going with our list on the housing funds?

**Dr Harmer**—I am not sure, but I have the table on the funds into Wadeye from the Australian government, both spent and committed—from FaCSIA and from the other portfolios. The housing table is still being prepared, I am sure.

**Senator CHRIS EVANS**—Going back to the emergency relief funding, I notice you put \$3,000 aside each year. Is it a program where you can seek committed funding in advance, is it?

**Mr Hunter**—Normally what occurs with the program—and I am assuming that it is occurring in Wadeye—is that we provide non-government service providers with an amount each year to provide for emergency relief demands that may be made upon them. I am assuming from looking at this that the amount has increased in 2005-06, but that is the amount we have been providing each year: \$3,000, \$3,000 and \$6,000.

**Senator CHRIS EVANS**—You said the amount has been increased in 2005-06.

**Mr Hunter**—I am looking at the table that you have in front of you, Senator, which shows that in 2003-04 it was \$3,000, in 2004-05 it was \$3,000 and in 2005-06 it was \$6,000.

**Senator CHRIS EVANS**—Here we go again! The one you gave me said \$3,000 in 2005-06.

**Mr Hunter**—I have a different table.

**Dr Harmer**—It is updated.

**Senator CHRIS EVANS**—That is why I asked Dr Harmer whether he had any confidence in the table, and he wisely said, 'I will get you a new table.'

**Dr Harmer**—If you recall, Senator, I mentioned in particular 2005-06 because we are not at the end of it yet. We will not be 100 per cent confident of the 2005-06 figures until the end of the financial year.

**Senator CHRIS EVANS**—I thought these were budgeted figures, not expended figures.

**Dr Harmer**—We have not made a separate budget allocation for many of the programs that we are talking about in Wadeye. We have made a commitment, some of which is spent in the years—

**Senator CHRIS EVANS**—You gave me a figure of \$9½ million for housing, and we have not spent any of that. It was a budgeted figure, wasn't it, not an expended figure?

**Dr Harmer**—This is a budgeted figure.

**Mr Hunter**—The tables you have there, Senator, show expenditure in 2003-04, 2004-05, 2005-06, and the total for those three years, and then the additional funds committed but yet to be spent are shown in the right-hand column.

**Senator CHRIS EVANS**—I have a different table from you. That is not the answer you gave to the question on notice.

**Mr Hunter**—I was just coming back to that. I was looking at a different table from yours, correctly, about emergency relief funding. That table tells me that, for emergency relief funding, which is a mainstream program, in Wadeye, FaCSIA spent \$3,000 in 2003-04, \$3,000 in 2004-05 and \$6,000 in 2005-06—a total, therefore, over those three years, of \$12,000.

**Senator CHRIS EVANS**—That is spent?

**Mr Hunter**—Correct.

**Senator CHRIS EVANS**—Was there an allocation? Was there a budget or was this just accessed and spent? Do you have a figure for 2006-07 budgeted?

**Mr Hunter**—No, I do not have one shown there. I would need to find out whether that represented a budget and expenditure or was simply a draw-down based on demand.

**Senator CHRIS EVANS**—Perhaps you could get that for me, because I think what you are saying now to me is that it is sort of an on-demand payment rather than a—

**Dr Harmer**—It is. It is a cash—

**Senator CHRIS EVANS**—You obviously allocate it to a non-government agency. But do you allocate them \$3,000 at the start of the year saying, 'That will do you,' or do you have them come to you periodically during the year and say, 'We need some more money'?

**Mr Hunter**—Adjustments can be made. That does occur on occasion.

**Senator CHRIS EVANS**—The figures you gave me originally had \$3,000. You say you have spent \$6,000. I would like to know whether you budgeted a figure or you are meeting demands as they arise. You keep saying it is a mainstream program, but of course the whole idea of the COAG trial is to allow Aboriginal people to access the mainstream, isn't it?

**Mr Hunter**—Yes. That was my point.

**Senator CHRIS EVANS**—Can you take me through this table you have just submitted? We will call it 'Wadeye facts and figures'.

**Dr Harmer**—Yes. It is the most up-to-date information that we have for FaCSIA expenditure and the expenditure of other Commonwealth agencies in Wadeye in the trial period.

**Senator CHRIS EVANS**—This is actual expenditure versus budgeted expenditure?

**Dr Harmer**—Yes.

**Senator CHRIS EVANS**—The ‘additional funds committed’ column does not necessarily mean funds for this coming financial year but in the out years?

**Dr Harmer**—Some time in the out years. Most of it will probably be 2006-07, but there will be out years as well.

**Senator CHRIS EVANS**—This adds up to about \$45,000 for FaCSIA.

**Dr Harmer**—Are you referring to the bottom figure, Senator?

**Senator CHRIS EVANS**—No, I was referring to FaCSIA spent and committed—\$25,417 for the total spent; \$19,430 for additional funds committed. Is it fair to say that FaCSIA’s commitment to the Wadey COAG trial currently stands at about \$44 million?

**Dr Harmer**—That is the total Australian government commitment.

**Mr Hunter**—That is FaCSIA and the total of all other agencies. The bottom line is the total of other agencies.

**Senator CHRIS EVANS**—Sorry, I thought that was the second table. I am misreading it.

**Dr Harmer**—The second table splits up the last—

**Senator CHRIS EVANS**—Okay. I was looking at that as if it were another table.

**Senator MOORE**—So you give around \$15,000?

**Dr Harmer**—Yes.

**Senator CHRIS EVANS**—What is A-G’s contribution to the joint NT and Australian government IHANT program?

**Mr Hunter**—IHANT stands for the Indigenous Housing Authority of the Northern Territory. That row of figures shows the contribution which is attributable to activity at Wadey that the Australian government makes in the pooled housing arrangements for the Northern Territory. That is a calculation of our contribution to the Wadey area.

**Senator CHRIS EVANS**—That is money you give to the Northern Territory?

**Dr Harmer**—Yes.

**Senator CHRIS EVANS**—That they administer?

**Dr Harmer**—Yes, and is spent in Wadey.

**Senator CHRIS EVANS**—You have attempted to break down what—

**Dr Harmer**—That is our share of what is spent in Wadey.

**Mr Hunter**—Overall, under that program, the Australian government contributes about 90.7 per cent and the Northern Territory government contributes 9.3 per cent. Those figures take into account that relative contribution.

**Senator CHRIS EVANS**—You have worked out what they spend in Wadey and then worked out your contribution. Thanks for that. I think that is clear. I will disregard all earlier advice!

**Dr Harmer**—This table is now the most up-to-date table. What could still change—and it might need to be made clear in case we come back to this table at the next estimates—are the final figures in terms of expenditure for 2005-06.

**Senator CHRIS EVANS**—Sure. You gave me a figure for the family violence funding for Wadey in the original table—which I now treat with extreme caution, as I am batting nought from two in questions on that—which says that you funded a social worker to investigate service delivery models for family wellbeing issues. The table you gave me had for 2003-04, \$21,649; for 2004-05, \$50,000; and for 2005-06, nil. Is that correct?

**Mr Hunter**—I think we will need to get the right officer at the table.

**Senator CHRIS EVANS**—That would come under FaCSIA's budget contribution, wouldn't it?

**Dr Harmer**—Yes, it would.

**Senator CHRIS EVANS**—That would come under the line 'FaCSIA family and community assistance'?

**Dr Harmer**—Yes, it would. Senator, do you have a question about that line?

**Senator CHRIS EVANS**—Yes. Are those figures in the earlier answer right? It seems to indicate that the social worker position in Wadey has not been continued to be funded in 2005-06. Can someone tell me what has happened?

**Mr Hazlehurst**—There were two separate projects. The funding for 2003-04 was for a scoping study around a family wellbeing strategy in the area. That was completed. There was subsequently a further project under the regional activities program—I will just turn to my notes on that—which was for the establishment of a community patrol. That was \$50,000 in 2004-05. Those funds have been provided to the regional council in 2004-05, have not been spent in that financial year and have been rephased into this financial year, 2005-06.

**Senator CHRIS EVANS**—I am lost again. You gave me a document in answer to a question on notice that said 'family violence funding to support the employment of a social worker by Thamarrurr council to investigate social service delivery models for family wellbeing issues'.

**Mr Hazlehurst**—Yes.

**Senator CHRIS EVANS**—Did you spend \$21,000 on that project in 2003-04?

**Mr Hazlehurst**—Yes.

**Senator CHRIS EVANS**—Did you spend \$50,000 on that project in 2004-05?

**Mr Hazlehurst**—No, it is not the same project.

**Senator CHRIS EVANS**—Do you want to explain why it is in the same column in the information you provided to the committee and the parliament?

**Mr Hazlehurst**—I am not sure what table you have in front of you, Senator. I apologise.

**Dr Harmer**—It could be that it is part of the family violence program and the description describes only one element of it, I suspect.



**Senator CHRIS EVANS**—What did you spend in 2004-05 on the support or the employment of the social worker?

**Mr Hazlehurst**—That project had been completed.

**Senator CHRIS EVANS**—The \$21,000 in 2003-04, was it?

**Mr Hazlehurst**—For that project, yes.

**Senator CHRIS EVANS**—What came out of that project—some family wellbeing initiative, I thought you said?

**Mr Hazlehurst**—There was a report that the social worker produced. I think the name of it was the *Family wellbeing department social model concept*, which does not sound quite right to me. It was a report about models for supporting family wellbeing in the region and had a range of recommendations for the council itself.

**Senator CHRIS EVANS**—For the council itself?

**Mr Hazlehurst**—The project was the council's project.

**Senator CHRIS EVANS**—Do you know whether anything came of it?

**Mr Hazlehurst**—I would have to take that on notice.

**Senator CHRIS EVANS**—If you would not mind. The \$50,000 under family violence funding for the next year is in fact the first stage of the program which I was taken through earlier, which was the community patrol, is it?

**Mr Hazlehurst**—No, it is a different community patrol from the one Ms Winkler referred to earlier, which I believe was in a different location from Wadeye. I do not recall exactly where it was. It might have been Katherine.

**Senator CHRIS EVANS**—That is right—apologies.

**Mr Hazlehurst**—This was for a community patrol in Wadeye. As I say, those funds have been committed and provided—

**Senator CHRIS EVANS**—So nothing happened in 2004-05?

**Mr Hazlehurst**—That is right.

**Senator CHRIS EVANS**—There was no expenditure in 2004-05.

**Mr Hazlehurst**—I believe the money has been expended by the department, but it is being held by the council now.

**Senator CHRIS EVANS**—FaCSIA allocated a budget of \$50,000 for expenditure on a community patrol in Wadeye for the financial year 2004-05. Do I take it that that did not eventuate during that financial year and therefore the money was not spent?

**Mr Hazlehurst**—Not spent by the council, that is right.

**Senator CHRIS EVANS**—So you gave the council the money.

**Mr Hazlehurst**—I believe so.

**Senator CHRIS EVANS**—When did you give them the money?

**Mr Hazlehurst**—I do not have that in front of me, but in 2004-05.

**Senator CHRIS EVANS**—In that financial year?

**Dr Harmer**—Yes.

**Senator CHRIS EVANS**—What happened to the community patrol?

**Mr Hazlehurst**—The council did not organise it.

**Senator CHRIS EVANS**—The council did not organise the community patrol. Did they send you your cheque back?

**Mr Hazlehurst**—No. We agreed to roll over the money in 2005-06.

**Senator CHRIS EVANS**—Did you get the community patrol in 2005-06?

**Mr Hazlehurst**—I do not believe the community patrol has started yet. I have been passed some additional information about the \$50,000. Apparently it was initially allocated as a follow-up in relation to the family wellbeing project, which is why it would have been reflected that way in the table that you had in front of you. But it was agreed at the request of the community to have the money spent on a community patrol.

**Senator CHRIS EVANS**—When you allocated the money in 2004-05, you are telling me it was for the follow-up of the report you had spent \$20,000 on in the year before?

**Mr Hazlehurst**—Yes.

**Senator CHRIS EVANS**—But that was then cancelled and in its place you entered an agreement to use that money to fund a community patrol?

**Mr Hazlehurst**—Yes.

**Senator CHRIS EVANS**—That community patrol never eventuated in that financial year.

**Mr Hazlehurst**—That is right.

**Senator CHRIS EVANS**—You then rolled the money over to the following financial year?

**Mr Hazlehurst**—Yes.

**Senator CHRIS EVANS**—You did not roll it over; you had given them the money anyway. But on your books you rolled it over?

**Mr Hazlehurst**—Yes. The money is still to be acquitted.

**Senator CHRIS EVANS**—You do not have any acquittal on the money you allocated in 2004-05. You expected a community patrol would commence in 2005-06, but that has not happened either.

**Mr Hazlehurst**—Correct.

**Senator CHRIS EVANS**—Are you checking the letterbox waiting for the cheque to come back, or is there a new plan?

**Mr Hazlehurst**—I am sorry, Senator: would you mind repeating that last question for me, please?

**Senator CHRIS EVANS**—What happened to the dollars? You gave it to them in 2004-05 for a different purpose. Then you changed the purpose. You tell me it has not been spent. Where is the money? What is happening?

**Mr Hazlehurst**—The money is still held by the council.

**Senator CHRIS EVANS**—Why hasn't it been acquitted and why haven't we got any family violence program to show for it?

**Mr Hazlehurst**—As I understand it, we in effect rolled that over into 2005-06. We are still in 2005-06 and we are still waiting for the council to expense the money.

**Senator CHRIS EVANS**—So we have terrible family violence problems, but we have had the money sitting in the bank, I presume—I hope—for the last two years and none of the initiatives have come to pass.

**Dr Harmer**—I am not sure about the detail, but I expect that we have given it to the council, who fully intend to set up a community patrol. We continue to hope they do because we know the need for it, but it is not something that we can do from outside. It has to be done by the community, and we are expecting that they will get it started.

**Senator CHRIS EVANS**—But you are there as community facilitators, aren't you, representing the whole-of-government approach? I am not saying it is solely your responsibility, but you have given them a cheque, it is two years on, you identified it as the major issue confronting the community and you now say you cannot spend any money there because of the problems of violence. You are telling me you are powerless to make sure that the purpose for which you allocated the money is instituted. I am trying to make sense of all this.

**Dr Harmer**—I would need to check what the council have been telling us, but I assume that they have been saying that they continue to intend to start up the community patrol.

**Mr Hazlehurst**—That is right. They are still planning to do it.

**Dr Harmer**—Otherwise, we would have taken the money back. So it is not the sort of thing that in the current climate you would want to take back if they are still telling us that they want to set it up.

**Senator CHRIS EVANS**—No, but equally, on the basis of the answer you gave me, we spent \$50,000 on preventing family violence in Wadeye in 2004-05 and that is obviously complete nonsense. We actually have not spent a dollar, and neither of the two goes we had at directing that money at programs have eventuated.

**Dr Harmer**—We have committed it and allocated it but, yes, it has not been spent.

**Senator MOORE**—Can it be acquitted? In terms of the financial trail, it has been planned and allocated, but can it be acquitted before it has been spent for the purpose you wanted?

**Mr Hazlehurst**—It has been expensed by the department, so it is beyond committed. It has actually been expensed but not yet acquitted.

**Senator MOORE**—I do not know that term 'expensed' but I like it. But it has not been acquitted.

**Mr Hazlehurst**—The funds have left the department, so they are not just sitting there committed but not yet out of our bank account.

**Senator MOORE**—So it is unacquitted funding.

**Mr Hazlehurst**—That is true.

**Senator MOORE**—While Senator Evans is checking something there, can I ask: was the social work a one-off project? The social worker position was funded to write the report and then there was no request for further funding and that was just the end of it?

**Mr Hazlehurst**—I am not sure. That would be my understanding, given that the request was then to use the remaining \$50,000 that was allocated for a community patrol.

**Senator MOORE**—Do you know whether the community patrol was one of the recommendations of the social work project?

**Mr Hazlehurst**—No, I do not know the answer to that.

**Senator MOORE**—Can you check that just in terms of the sequence. It would just be useful—it is a personal thing—to know whether, if you had actually expended the original funding to have modelling done for effective responses in the community, the next round under the same funding heading was for another project. I am just interested to know whether that followed through.

**Mr Hazlehurst**—Certainly.

**Senator CHRIS EVANS**—I appreciate the figure you have given me on the total expenditure on Wadeye, Dr Harmer. Can we get a breakdown of the FaCSIA expenditure? That is what I thought you purported to give us months ago, and it is just plain wrong basically?

**Dr Harmer**—In the same way that we have updated the one I have just given you, we can update this detailed one for you and we will.

**Senator CHRIS EVANS**—I do not want it updated; I want it corrected.

**Dr Harmer**—As I mentioned before, the reason I call it updated is that, until we get to the end of 2005-06, it will be an update for 2005-06.

**Senator CHRIS EVANS**—I know but, quite frankly—

**Dr Harmer**—We will give you the—

**Senator CHRIS EVANS**—the previous table has proved to be incorrect on at least three occasions, and I have not checked the others yet.

**Dr Harmer**—We will give you a new table.

**Senator CHRIS EVANS**—In fact, I am not sure that I will waste my time. I think I will wait for the new table. What was the purpose of the community patrol in Wadeye—the plan?

**Mr Hazlehurst**—As far as I know, simply to act as a community based approach to providing increased safety in the community. I am not sure what you are—

**Senator CHRIS EVANS**—I know how they work in other locations. You funded them; you gave them \$50,000. I just want to check what you funded them for.

**Mr Hazlehurst**—I am not aware of there being anything special about this community patrol.

**Senator CHRIS EVANS**—So it is one's normal understanding, as you say, about helping provide a community's safety through local initiatives and local people contributing to that, in addition to any policing that occurs.

**Mr Hazlehurst**—Yes.

**Senator MOORE**—Is there any common expenditure on community patrols? We realise it is a common request in communities when something has been identified regularly as a workable model. Is \$50,000 for a community patrol around the going rate?

**Mr Hazlehurst**—I do not know. I think they would vary, depending on the size of the community—

**Senator MOORE**—They should not vary too much.

**Mr Hazlehurst**—the nature of the community involvement, whether there is a need conceivably for the purchase of a vehicle.

**Senator MOORE**—Vehicle, hours of work. It is usually the vehicle—

**Senator CHRIS EVANS**—The other ones seem to be around \$100,000.

**Senator MOORE**—I thought it was a bit cheap.

**Senator CHRIS EVANS**—Some are smaller, but Wadeye is one of the biggest population centres in the Northern Territory, isn't it? Is it the third biggest?

**Dr Harmer**—It is the sixth biggest town, I think, but the biggest Indigenous.

**Senator CHRIS EVANS**—It is certainly a sizeable centre. I know Senator Carr is busting to have a go, but I just wanted to see how we were going with the things that are outstanding. Perhaps I can wrap those up before we move to Senator Carr and some of his housing issues.

**Senator CARR**—I have some matters on Indigenous questions, Senator Evans, if that would be of assistance to you.

**Senator CHRIS EVANS**—No, I just wanted to see if I could wrap up Wadeye before we—

**Senator CARR**—I am just saying we could return to other matters that are outstanding if the department is having trouble finding this information.

**Dr Harmer**—Senator, I have the table for you on housing.

**Senator CHRIS EVANS**—Thank you.

**Senator CARR**—Dr Harmer, there is just one other matter before we go on to these questions. Last night I asked some questions about a consultant's review into the CRA and your officers told me that I could not have that review because participants were told that the discussions were to be kept confidential. In fact, what has occurred since that time is that two of the persons consulted have contacted me independently—as you know, people do follow these proceedings quite carefully—and they have advised me that, rather than being told that there would be a confidential discussion about these matters, the participants were told not to discuss these matters with other people, 'so as to not alarm CRA recipients that there might be change'. That is a very different proposition to what I was told.

Furthermore, I am also advised that a summary of proceedings was distributed to those who did participate in the consultation rounds—and they were of course marked ‘highly confidential’—but they did not identify the interest groups from which the comments had come, let alone individuals who had made particular comments. It was only in the form of ‘the focus group said’ or ‘participants raised’—they were the various terms used—and the only identifying information was a list of participants at the beginning of the document.

Both of these people who have contacted me have said that they had to sign a confidentiality agreement before they could even participate saying that they would not reveal what was discussed, which they have not. So they have not broken confidentiality, but they are strongly disputing the advice that has been tendered to this committee. In light of these comments—perhaps I can address this to Mr Knapp, who I think was one of the officers who last night advised me that these were the proceedings, and remember I did ask for the specific details of the contract—

**Dr Harmer**—Are you talking about the focus groups? I think it was the report on focus group discussions that you were talking about last night.

**Senator CARR**—Yes. I wanted a copy of the consultant’s report and I was told I could not have that because it was all top secret. People were told that they could make these comments and they would never be reported. I am saying to you, Mr Knapp, that that information is now being directly contradicted by participants in those meetings. I asked for a copy of the contract, which you obviously have not said that you will not provide. I take it there is a standard clause in these contracts that you cannot have confidentiality agreements of this type. But I also maintain, given what I have been told, that that was not what was actually told to the participants before they participated. Mr Knapp, I think your briefing papers are in error on this matter, so I would ask you: given the statements made last night, can you demonstrate to the committee that there is anything in writing which says that the participants should be or could be told that their views would be kept confidential?

**Mr Knapp**—The information that Clare Wall and I provided last night was based on our understanding of what occurred. I will follow up and get back to you on that, but certainly that information was given in good faith last night.

**Senator CARR**—I am not making any claim to the contrary. I am putting to you that it is possible that your briefing notes are in error, that other officers may well have misunderstood this—I take it you do not prepare the briefing notes for these committees on your own—and that your advice to this committee is being directly contradicted by participants.

**Mr Knapp**—I will certainly follow it up as soon as I can.

**Senator CARR**—Thank you. I turn now to the Yumba-Meta inns estate elders village project. I understand that this was a matter that your officers had been advised that we were going to raise. Ms Freudenstein, can you tell me if you are in a position to provide a brief chronology of the Commonwealth’s involvement in the discussions on this project both since FaCSIA has had the program and, if relevant, through the ATSSIS or ATSSIC stage. Do you have that information?

**Ms Freudenstein**—I have some brief information. My colleague from the Queensland office may be able to help me if I do not have enough. My understanding is that in 2001 the

Yumba-Meta Housing Association purchased some land in Townsville with ATSI funding for a housing estate for elderly Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people for the purpose of building seniors units and to move some elderly people from the corporation houses thereby freeing up some of the houses for families. There was an estimate that the project would involve funding of some \$3.7 million. I understand that this amount has now been revised upward to approximately \$5 million. Since 2001 the organisation has sought funding to construct the units on the property. I understand that in 2003-04, ATSI earmarked \$200,000 for the project pending involvement of other Australian government and state government agencies in the project. However, that additional support was not forthcoming and so the purpose of the funding was changed to allow the organisation to purchase a house for community rental, and that was done. I understand that the organisation also applied for funding in a successive round but again was not successful. Yumba-Meta has applied in the current round for funding but that is currently being considered by the government.

**Senator CARR**—So there is an application currently before the government?

**Ms Freudenstein**—Yes.

**Senator CARR**—How much is the application for?

**Ms Freudenstein**—I do not know.

**Senator CARR**—I visited the association. I am advised that Yumba-Meta is highly successful; it is an award winning association. Is that your understanding?

**Ms Freudenstein**—Yes. I have no information to the contrary, that is for sure.

**Senator CARR**—Mr Gibbons, do you have any information that would contradict my statement that Yumba-Meta is one of the leading Aboriginal housing associations in Queensland?

**Mr Gibbons**—Which organisation?

**Senator CARR**—Yumba-Meta in Townsville.

**Mr Gibbons**—I do not have any information one way or the other.

**Ms Freudenstein**—My briefing notes say that Yumba-Meta is a well managed organisation.

**Senator CARR**—I would put it more strongly than that. It is a national leader in Indigenous housing in its management of housing stock, client base and rental collections. It is one of those organisations, I would have thought, that, if you wanted to, you could highlight as an outstanding success. That was the view that was put to me. I am therefore disturbed that it is taking so long to have funding arrangements made for this organisation. I am told that the sticking point is that the association needs to be able to make at least a 20 per cent contribution to the project to be considered for funding through the Queensland Department of Housing's affordable housing grants program for community housing. Is that correct?

**Ms Freudenstein**—Yes. That is my advice too.

**Senator CARR**—However, one reason it cannot currently meet this is because it does not own the land; the department owns the land.

**Ms Freudenstein**—We have a caveat on the land.

**Senator CARR**—You have a caveat on the land; is that right?

**Ms Freudenstein**—Yes.

**Senator CARR**—So they actually own the land but you have a caveat on it?

**Ms Freudenstein**—Yes. Currently, the Commonwealth has a caveat on the land.

**Senator CARR**—Which the department is currently responsible for; is that right?

**Mr Knapp**—My understanding was that the caveat could be lifted and replaced by a separate mortgage by the Queensland Department of Housing.

**Senator CARR**—But the caveat is actually managed by your officers, by the housing branch. Is that right?

**Mr Knapp**—The caveat is held by the Commonwealth government.

**Senator CARR**—Yes. So how can the Queensland government lift the caveat if you actually hold—

**Mr Knapp**—No, we could lift it.

**Senator CARR**—So you could lift it.

**Mr Knapp**—Yes.

**Ms Freudenstein**—There could be approval sought to have the caveat lifted and replaced with—

**Senator CARR**—Yes, it could be.

**Ms Freudenstein**—And those discussions are going on—

**Senator CARR**—How long have they been going on?

**Ms Freudenstein**—I am advised that there were discussions just in the last month between our—

**Senator CARR**—But how long have they been going on? I have correspondence here that implies that this is an issue that goes back some considerable time. In fact, it went back to ATSIC days. When the land transfers occurred as part of the destruction of ATSIC, the Commonwealth officers directly took on responsibility for it. Is that true?

**Ms Freudenstein**—I cannot answer that.

**Senator CARR**—Mr Gibbons, you would know this, wouldn't you, because you were responsible for this program at the time?

**Mr Gibbons**—Normally when ATSIC made a grant of land or of an asset there were attached conditions and there was a caveat. When ATSIC was dissolved, the Commonwealth assumed responsibility for the caveats. Some of those caveats were distributed to agencies; others were passed on to organisations like the Indigenous Land Council et cetera.

**Senator CARR**—So would it be fair to say that the transfer responsible from ATSIC to FaCSIA has in fact delayed the process of allowing Yumba-Meta to secure the funding that they are seeking to establish this elders village?



**Ms Freudenstein**—I do not know that that is the only sticking point,

**Senator CARR**—I will come to the others, but is that a factor in the delay in the resolution of this particular project?

**Ms Freudenstein**—It could well be a factor, and I understand that the discussions between the Department of Housing in Queensland and the Queensland office of FaCSIA are being undertaken now. We understand that the Queensland Department of Housing will advise in early June whether they can progress.

**Senator CARR**—Yes, but will that change the fact that the caveat has to be lifted?

**Ms Freudenstein**—I think that involves that fact.

**Senator CARR**—What I am told is that the whole project is in the hands of your department and your action is required insofar as taking the first step on the caveat before there can be progress. Would you agree with that statement or not?

**Mr Knapp**—I do not think it is simply a matter for our department. The briefing that we have obtained is that the Department of Housing in Queensland has been involved in discussions with the community. They met back in February '06. The Department of Housing in Queensland is considering the proposal and looking at strategies for whether it could fund it. As we already indicated, it is not necessarily that, if the Queensland Department of Housing were able to go ahead with it, we could lift the caveat and the Department of Housing could take out a second mortgage on the properties. That is my understanding of the matter. It is not so much that the Commonwealth is standing in the way; it is more a negotiating process involving the Queensland government as much as ourselves. That is my understanding from the briefing.

**Senator CARR**—When was the application made for assistance to the Commonwealth?

**Ms Freudenstein**—Which one?

**Senator CARR**—How many have there been? For this particular project.

**Ms Freudenstein**—The current funding program for eSub closed in February this year.

**Senator CARR**—There was a previous application for funding that I thought you indicated in your chronology.

**Ms Freudenstein**—That is right. I am not sure of the exact date of that.

**Senator CARR**—Was that some years ago?

**Ms Freudenstein**—Yes.

**Senator CARR**—How many?

**Ms Freudenstein**—I am not sure of the exact date of it.

**Senator CARR**—Was it 2003?

**Ms Freudenstein**—I would have to check.

**Senator CARR**—When was the previous round, can you tell me that?

**Ms Freudenstein**—The previous eSub round would have been last year, and I am not sure if Yumba-Meta had an application in that.

**Senator CARR**—What was the date of their rejection of the previous application?

**Ms Freudenstein**—The \$200,000 that was offered to them by AT SIS was in 2003-04.

**Senator CARR**—So this has been going on for at least that length of time.

**Ms Freudenstein**—Two years, that is right.

**Senator CARR**—The question of the covenant has been raised with you: when was it first raised with you?

**Ms Freudenstein**—I have just been advised that there has not been a request yet re the caveat being lifted.

**Senator CARR**—There has not been a request?

**Ms Freudenstein**—No, not a formal request to lift the caveat.

**Senator CARR**—Not a formal request, I see. What do you require by way of a formal request?

**Ms Freudenstein**—I believe we require a request from the indigenous housing organisation that owns the land. We require a request from the organisation and a description of the use that it is going to be put to.

**Senator CARR**—I have here a copy of a correspondence. There is one letter here dated 23 May to the regional manager of the Department of Families, Community Services Indigenous Affairs, and that is Ms Rosemary Warlosz—have I got the right person?

**Ms Freudenstein**—That is in our Queensland office. We have not received that letter.

**Senator CARR**—You have not received it, so it is not true to say there has not been an application, a formal application.

**Ms Freudenstein**—We have not received it, that is right.

**Senator CARR**—I take it that that is not the first time the issue of the covenant has been raised with the department though, is it?

**Ms Freudenstein**—I have been advised that we had not received a formal request, so obviously our Queensland office—that letter was written last week.

**Senator CARR**—But I am saying, it is not the first time that the question of lifting the caveat has been raised with the department. It was put to me in Queensland when I visited the site that this matter had been raised with you. We do not have any reason to believe that people were telling us untruths, do we?

**Dr Harmer**—It may have been raised with our Queensland office staff. That is possible and Ms Freudenstein—

**Senator CARR**—Doctor, I am used to the idea of the Commonwealth of Australia going right across the continent.

**Dr Harmer**—Indeed.

**Senator CARR**—If a matter get raised with your officers in Queensland, I have a reasonable expectation to expectation that that has been raised with the department.

**Dr Harmer**—Indeed, and we may be able to help you.

**Ms Winzar**—My understanding of this is that Yumba-Meta applied for some assistance last year for their aged facility. They have also had several meetings with the department in the last couple of months. The most recent issue is that the Commonwealth does have a caveat over the land, which we would be prepared to lift if there is some money approved to develop the facility. The caveat itself is not a major impediment to the thing proceeding. Certainly the issue of the caveat was only brought to my attention last week.

**Senator CARR**—I have here correspondence, for instance, with the minister Mal Brough to Peter Lindsay, MP, the member for Herbert, pointing out that:

Yumba Meta Housing Association has made approaches to my predecessor Senator the Hon Kay Patterson and to my department to secure—

the funds but unfortunately the funds sought by the association—

far exceeded those available through my department's Community Housing and Infrastructure Program for the Townsville region.

Can you tell me when was that money sought?

**Ms Winzar**—The organisation put in a request for funding in the eSub process, the whole of government funding round, and that was at the start of last year. What they were looking for was an amount of money which did exceed the notional allocation that we had for the Townsville region. We are talking about somewhere in the order of \$5 million to \$6 million to develop the whole facility.

**Senator CARR**—Was the question of impediments to this project proceeding, other than the quantum, raised with the association in response to their application at the beginning of last year?

**Ms Winzar**—No, because the primary issue was the availability of funds.

**Senator CARR**—So that was the first reason for a knockback?

**Ms Winzar**—That is correct.

**Senator CARR**—When did it become apparent to you that there were other issues that needed to be addressed?

**Ms Winzar**—As I mentioned, we held a couple of meetings between my staff, members of the organisation and various state government officers over the last couple of months. They were looking at alternative funding sources from the state government as well as potentially the Commonwealth government. One of the issues which was identified as a potential barrier that would need to be overcome was the issue of the Commonwealth holding a caveat over the land in question.

**Senator CARR**—Would you say it is not an insurmountable problem?

**Ms Winzar**—It is certainly not a matter of substance.

**Senator CARR**—Could it be fixed quickly?

**Ms Winzar**—Yes, it could.

**Senator CARR**—Have you told the association that it could be fixed quickly?

**Ms Winzar**—I believe that they are aware of that, yes.

**Senator CARR**—Then why hasn't it been fixed quickly?

**Ms Winzar**—There is no need to fix it at this particular point because we have not made a decision on whether or not funding will be approved for this purpose. That is subject to the normal funding round, and I think it must be fairly close to being resolved. It would not be normal that the organisation would receive notification before the end of June.

**Senator CARR**—So we come back to money?

**Ms Winzar**—Yes.

**Senator CARR**—I understand that there is a submission to the Queensland government for funding. It says it hopes to get \$225,000 under the CHIP as part of its contribution. Is that right?

**Ms Winzar**—My understanding is that, as I mentioned, the total cost of the project is likely to be in the order of \$5 million to \$6 million. My understanding is that they are seeking somewhere in the order of a bit over half a million dollars from the Commonwealth in respect of the site-servicing element of the project and they are then seeking some funding from the state government in respect of building the actual physical infrastructure.

**Senator CARR**—So the total project is \$5 million and they are seeking \$225,000 from Queensland?

**Ms Winzar**—No. My understanding is that the total cost is about \$5 million to \$6 million. They are seeking somewhere in the order of half a million dollars from the Commonwealth and they are seeking the balance from the state government, although I do understand that they have several hundred dollars themselves in trust that they can contribute.

**Senator CARR**—Absolutely. I am going to come to that in a minute. So the \$3.8 million that you quoted earlier is no longer relevant and is not an issue?

**Ms Winzar**—No. My understanding is that the original costings in last year's application were a little elderly at the time they were submitted and we would expect that the actual cost is likely to be about 20 per cent higher than that early figure.

**Senator CARR**—Mr Brough's letter, which I quoted earlier, also states that stage 1 of the Innes Estate project 'is included in the North Queensland Regional Housing Corporation's submission for funding'. Is that the same application that we referred to earlier?

**Ms Winzar**—I am not certain of that.

**Senator CARR**—Would you check that, please?

**Ms Winzar**—Yes, I can check that.

**Senator CARR**—Would you have a look at the minister's letter back to the association and see whether or not we are actually singing from the same song sheet on this?

**Ms Winzar**—Yes.

**Senator CARR**—I am also told that there is \$325,000 available through the trust account to be held for this project. But I am told that once again officers from your department are required to give permission for the use of the funds. Is that correct?

**Ms Winzar**—That is a standard process. If the funds, as I understand it, were received from—

**Senator CARR**—Do you have a position on that? Are you going to grant permission?

**Ms Winzar**—Yes. It is normal that we get the organisation to seek our approval before they spend funds that they have obtained through the sale of houses, which is the case in this instance.

**Senator CARR**—But you intend to grant that?

**Ms Winzar**—There would be no reason not to.

**Senator CARR**—I am also told that the problem that has been identified is that the target group for the project is restricted to older people. What the association has told me is that the construction of the new village will enable it to free up housing stock that is currently under-utilised, potentially housing 16 families or around 80 people in addition to the elders who are directly tied up with this village. Has that been made clear to you?

**Ms Winzar**—Yes, it has.

**Senator CARR**—And do you agree with that assessment?

**Ms Winzar**—Yes, we do.

**Senator CARR**—So that is not an impediment?

**Ms Winzar**—No.

**Senator CARR**—Do you agree with my earlier description of the quality of this association? Is there any reason for anyone to point to any issues with regard to governance or are there any other questions about their competence? Would you agree that this is an extremely well run association?

**Ms Winzar**—I am not in a position to comment on that. I am not sufficiently familiar with the organisation's conduct to be able to give you an indication.

**Senator CARR**—I am surprised you are not aware of their conduct. I would have thought that, if what I am saying is right, you would be holding it up as an example of how well Indigenous people can manage their housing. The other issue that has been brought to my attention regarding the association is that they are saying that the moneys that were made available for the purchase of new stock is no longer available to them. In fact, that is because of policy of the department to prepare old stock for transfer to the Queensland government.

**Ms Winzar**—That is correct.

**Senator CARR**—So in the past they have had access to capital to purchase a couple of properties a year to expand their operations, and that is no longer available to them. Is that right?

**Ms Winzar**—Our priority under this current year's funding round is to focus on repairs and maintenance to the existing stock rather than any expansion of stock. That is correct.

**Senator CARR**—And is it your intention to transfer that stock to the Queensland government?

**Ms Winzar**—I do not know about transferring the stock to the Queensland government but certainly transferring the responsibility for housing to the Queensland government, yes.

**Senator CARR**—Including the assets?

**Ms Winzar**—The assets are technically owned by the community organisations.

**Senator CARR**—That is a technical description, given what you have just told me. Effective control of them is through the officers of the department, isn't it?

**Ms Winzar**—There are restrictions on what the organisation can do by way of sale or disposal of the assets; that is correct. That responsibility would pass to the Queensland government.

**Senator CARR**—I will just ask again: when will we be able to know whether or not they have been successful in getting this project off the ground?

**Ms Freudenstein**—The eSub process applications will go to the minister in the next few weeks.

**Senator CARR**—Will you be able to advise the committee if they have been successful? When is the earliest date you can advise the committee of the success or otherwise of their application? Obviously it will be after the minister has made the decision.

**Ms Freudenstein**—After the minister has made a decision—whatever date that is.

**Senator CARR**—Will you provide the committee with advice as to the success or otherwise of the association's application for money?

**Ms Freudenstein**—Yes, after the minister has made a decision.

**Dr Harmer**—And he has authorised it.

**Senator CARR**—That is what I am asking. Can you provide the committee with that advice?

**Dr Harmer**—The answer is yes. We can do that, but there will be a process to go through of advising the organisations.

**Senator CARR**—But you know what I am saying.

**Dr Harmer**—I understand.

**Senator CARR**—I want to know how we are going because I intend to pursue it. That is what I am putting to you.

**Proceedings suspended from 4.09 pm to 4.34 pm**

**CHAIR**—We are still on outcome 1, and I believe Senator Carr has further questions.

**Senator CARR**—Senator Evans and I obviously work closely on these matters and I understand he has some matters we want to pursue. I would like, if I could, to address another issue. It relates to the programs administered by the department Indigenous community housing projects. I understand that the department has drawn to our attention the ABS figures on the number of Indigenous persons who live in improvised dwellings. I am wondering if I can get further advice on that matter in terms of the ABS's survey descriptions of improvised dwellings. Given that there is a new census coming up, what is the department's view on the

number of improvised dwellings that are administered by the department's Indigenous community housing organisations that are funded by the Commonwealth?

**Dr Harmer**—Senator, can I just get a clarification of your question?

**Senator CARR**—There was an email sent to one of the advisers in Senator Evans's office on behalf of Ms Casey from your department.

**Senator CHRIS EVANS**—Did you obtain that legally, Senator Carr?

**Senator CARR**—We could have a private meeting and then table it! As I said, our officers work closely together.

**Senator CHRIS EVANS**—I just wondered whether we knew you had it!

**Senator CARR**—This is in fact a briefing to explain the various programs. I was surprised to read in this briefing that the data for June 2005 shows that 1,131, or 6.4 per cent, of the housing stock administered by the Indigenous Community Housing Organisation are classified as improvised dwellings. This includes both state and department administered Indigenous Community Housing Organisation dwellings but does not include any other improvised dwellings. Given the ABS is about to launch another of its censuses and will presumably try to tell us how many homeless people there are in Australia—and I presume that, if we are talking about people living in improvised dwellings rather than homeless people, one might say they are roofless—it would, I understand, include people who live in improvised dwellings. Is that the case?

**Mr Knapp**—My understanding is that houses which are called dongas are included in that definition of improvised dwellings, but I have just been looking and I do not actually have a specific definition of improvised dwellings with me. Certainly we can get back to you with a definition. That text you just read out is the latest information—

**Senator CARR**—Standard format in your correspondence, is it?

**Mr Knapp**—Yes. That information is the latest information we have. We are going to be running the homelessness census along with the main census later this year, and that will give us up-to-date information on homelessness, both Indigenous and non-Indigenous.

**Senator CARR**—If you cannot provide it now, take it on notice: can I get a breakdown of the types of improvised dwellings managed by the Indigenous community housing organisations? Are they derelict buildings? Are they tents? Are they humpies?

**Mr Mann**—I have a definition here from what we call the CHINS survey. Through ABS we are currently doing a new survey. An improvised dwelling is described as:

A structure used as a place of residence which does not meet the building requirements to be considered as a permanent dwelling—includes caravans, tin shed without internal walls, humpies, dongas or other makeshift shelters (CHINS).

**Senator CARR**—So you would agree that, of all the Indigenous community housing that you are funding, there have been 1,131 instances—or 6.4 per cent—of these improvised dwellings?

**Mr Mann**—I had better explain our funding. Either directly or through the states we fund community housing organisations. Some of these community housing organisations have

what are called improvised dwellings. It is not something that we are happy about but that is the state and that is what has been caught either in the CHINS survey or through AIHW.

**Senator CARR**—Clearly, you are funding people to live in dwellings that do not meet the normal building standards.

**Mr Knapp**—We are not funding those people to live in those dwellings. We may be funding the organisations, for example, for some of the municipal type services that may be associated with it, but we certainly are not funding individuals to live in those improvised dwellings. It may be the case in some communities that, as the data shows, there are people living in improvised dwellings, but we are certainly not funding them to live in those dwellings.

**Senator CARR**—I see. Do the surveys you undertake include not just the humpies and dongas and other improvised dwellings that you were referring to but also others outside of the Indigenous community housing organisations of a similar character?

**Mr Mann**—The survey I described earlier, the CHINS survey, is a survey of Indigenous community housing organisations and Indigenous communities. They would be looking at the total housing stock in those communities under the ownership or control of an organisation. Some of them they classify as improvised dwellings.

**Senator CARR**—The 6.4 per cent though does not include any other improvised dwellings. So there are more than 1,131 of these structures. There is an additional number over and above that, isn't there?

**Mr Mann**—I am not familiar with the source.

**Senator CARR**—I am quoting from the departmental source. How many are there over and above this 1,131 that we are talking about?

**Dr Harmer**—This could presumably include dwellings that either have been funded through other sources or were funded by the Commonwealth or the state at one point to be appropriate dwellings and because of lack of maintenance or whatever are now improvised dwellings.

**Senator CARR**—I see. So you think they may well be dwellings that have deteriorated?

**Dr Harmer**—That is possible. I do not know the source either, but it is possible that you could do the survey and make an assessment of a house which, for example, may have been at one point a perfectly reasonable house but that without maintenance and upkeep may have turned into an improvised dwelling.

**Senator CARR**—Are these people regarded as primarily homeless?

**Mr Knapp**—It depends on the definition of homelessness. The ABS has different definitions. I am just trying to think whether that would fit under the primary or secondary definition of homeless. I can—

**Dr Harmer**—We need to check that.

**Mr Knapp**—We need to check the actual definition.



**Senator CARR**—Fair enough. I am sure you would. Are they charged rent? Are they tenants?

**Mr Knapp**—We do not have that information at our disposal but, as I said, we do not support the provision of improvised dwellings through any funding. Obviously, if people either choose or have no choice but to live in improvised dwellings that would be the situation, but certainly all our funding is about trying to improve the standard of housing and put people into housing that meets state or territory building regulations. We are trying to reduce the number of people who are living in improvised dwellings. It will be interesting to see when the census is conducted whether there will be any change from the numbers that appeared in 2001 and whether there has been an improvement.

**Senator CARR**—Yes. We discussed that the other night on the recent research that says the ABS wants to modify its survey techniques.

**Mr Knapp**—You asked that question. We are not aware of that.

**Senator CARR**—You will have an opportunity to establish whether or not what I am saying is right or wrong.

**Mr Knapp**—Yes, that is right. We will be checking that.

**Senator CARR**—Can you give me a quick rundown of the access that Indigenous communities have to homelessness services in those communities?

**Mr Knapp**—Are you now talking about the SAAP services?

**Senator CARR**—Yes. What are they? Do they have any?

**Mr Knapp**—There are certainly SAAP services that operate in remote communities. Unfortunately, because I had that information for last night, I do not have it with me at the moment.

**Senator CARR**—Can you take that on notice?

**Mr Knapp**—Yes.

**Senator CARR**—I am interested in this insofar as there has been considerable discussion in recent times about Indigenous people taking greater personal responsibility and basically kicking their relatives out of overcrowded humpies.

**Mr Knapp**—I have just been given the information I was thinking about. There are 96 agencies or SAAP bodies located in remote locations of Australia. This is defined as 'remote urban centres with a population of 5,000 or more, or other remote areas with a population of less than 5,000'.

**Senator CARR**—Does that refer to 5,000 people or 5,000 homeless people?

**Mr Knapp**—It refers to 5,000 people. There are 96 agencies in remote regions of Australia. According to classification, 'remote regions' are defined as 'remote urban centres with a population of 5,000 or more, or other remote areas of population of less than 5,000'.

**Senator CARR**—What SAAP services are in Wadeye?

**Mr Knapp**—We have 96 services.

**Senator CARR**—How many in Wadeye?

**Mr Knapp**—There is none at the moment in Wadeye.

**Senator CARR**—What other Northern Territory communities could we look to for SAAP services?

**Mr Knapp**—There are 22 agencies operating in the Northern Territory, including Alice Springs, Katherine, Winnellie, Tennant Creek, Nhulunbuy, Jabiru and Warrabri.

**Senator CARR**—Alice Springs is hardly remote. I would hardly regard Tennant Creek as remote. I would hardly regard Alice Springs as remote by the standard of Indigenous housing.

**Mr Knapp**—This is according to the definition that is used.

**Senator CARR**—That is what I am concerned about. If that is your definition, it does not seem to fit with the facts. We are talking about people living in humpies.

**Mr Knapp**—The issue is that the SAAP services need to be located where they can reach a number of communities, so they will tend to be in some of the larger towns.

**Dr Harmer**—Senator, I am sure you know this, but the Commonwealth involvement in SAAP is to provide funding. I think it is about \$174 million a year. We provide it to the states. The states contract the service provision and make the decisions about the location.

**Senator CARR**—Can I have a list of those locations for those services, please?

**Mr Knapp**—We will provide the list.

**Senator CARR**—Thank you very much. That would be helpful. I will put the rest of my questions that are not picked up by Senator Evans on notice.

**Senator CHRIS EVANS**—I want to ask about the Alice Springs town camp issue and what policy responses are going in there. I have read a lot of press reports about it and some of them go to issues about people not being able to get access to land. Some of them go to media reports saying that the minister has ordered Indigenous community groups not to be involved in the provision of housing. I will come to each of those. Can someone tell me what action the federal government is taking in relation to housing issues and the camps in Alice Springs?

**Mr Gibbons**—The Australian government and the Northern Territory government have agreed on a number of priorities for Alice Springs. There is still quite a bit of work to flesh out the detail, but I can tell you at this stage that the first of three priorities is—and these are my words—to convert the town camps into normal suburban environments within the township of Alice Springs. That will involve, as I understand it, the Northern Territory government building some additional houses in these so-called ‘camps’. The Australian government has committed \$10 million to upgrade the basic infrastructure—power and water arrangements so that they comply with the town standards so that what we are calling ‘normalisation’ can occur; that is, they would become the day-to-day responsibility of the local government of the town of Alice Springs.

The second priority focus is on the needs of Indigenous visitors to Alice Springs—and I am not talking about people who come for one or two days; I am talking about people who come for weeks and sometimes months—who at the moment are forced to camp in the riverbed or

vacant spaces or crash the town camps as they are called. The commitment involves identifying land in the north and the south and possibly the east and constructing some additional hostels with some clean, properly run camping facilities.

The third priority—which is designed to support the Northern Territory government's announced alcohol plan—is to construct an alcohol rehabilitation centre to deal with people who come before the proposed alcohol court that the Northern Territory government has indicated it is going to establish. The first meeting to flesh out some of the detail will take place in Darwin next Monday. The Commonwealth has indicated it wants to move quickly. We received assurances from the Northern Territory government last week of its similar intentions. For our part, we are already organising an examination of available land. We have a number of sites provisionally selected.

**Senator CHRIS EVANS**—This is for the hostel sites?

**Mr Gibbons**—Yes.

**Senator CHRIS EVANS**—So they are separate from the current camps?

**Mr Gibbons**—With the exception of two 'town camps', which are established on land without any lease, you might regard the others as suburbs of Alice Springs that need to be upgraded and integrated into the town.

**Senator CHRIS EVANS**—Established communities.

**Mr Gibbons**—There are a number of small capacity hostels in Alice Springs for visitors undertaking renal and other specialist treatments. We are looking to expand that capacity and to make available some general hostel facilities run on a professional basis, a user-pays basis, that are clean, drug-free, alcohol-free et cetera and to supplement that with camping facilities with proper ablution and canteen facilities and, again, that are drug-free, grog-free et cetera.

Alice Springs does not have much land available. It is surrounded by pastoral or mining leases. We have, however, identified some land that we think will be suitable for the purpose in the south. We are looking for additional sites, and we will be talking to the Northern Territory government, to the Alice Springs council and to others in the town about that in due course.

Our priority is to start soon on a rehabilitation facility. It is something that is sorely needed and, in that context, we have some of the facility that is now surplus to Immigration need at Woomera that we would like to relocate to Alice Springs and that would be ideal. We are anxious to move on that as soon as we can.

**Senator CHRIS EVANS**—Who owns that currently?

**Mr Gibbons**—It has now been transferred to the portfolio, or that part of it that is relocatable has been transferred to the portfolio.

**Senator CHRIS EVANS**—How is that done? Minister signs it off to minister? That came from whom?

**Mr Gibbons**—DIMIA.

**Senator CHRIS EVANS**—Yes, it was DIMIA. DIMIA have signed over the stuff that is capable of being removed to you. They will charge, I assume.

**Mr Gibbons**—As I understand it—and I am not the authority on this—the site has to be cleared, remediated and returned to the Department of Defence. We have surveyed most of the demountable buildings, and we have surveyed possible locations for those, or uses for those buildings in Indigenous communities in Central Australia within economic distance of Woomera, transport distance of Woomera, but we have not yet made final decisions on where each building will go. We are in the process of trying to resolve that.

**Senator CHRIS EVANS**—When do you think they will be transported?

**Mr Gibbons**—We have opportunities to move them immediately. The issue is where we are going to put them.

**Senator CHRIS EVANS**—These are taken up by road train, I would have thought.

**Mr Gibbons**—They have to be, yes.

**Senator CHRIS EVANS**—Can you tell me what Commonwealth funding is going to this? You are putting \$10 million into the town camps normalisation program. What bucket is that \$10 million out of?

**Mr Gibbons**—There is \$10 million from CHIP funds, which is going into the upgrading of the infrastructure in the town camps. That is something that has been negotiated with the Northern Territory government. There is another \$10 million that the minister is releasing from the Aboriginals Benefit Account, which will go towards the cost of constructing a hostel and a camping facility and alcohol rehabilitation. That will be supplemented by money from the flexible funding pool and possibly CHIP as needed. It is still early days. We have to nut out the detail with the Northern Territory government before we can finalise the arrangements.

**Senator CHRIS EVANS**—Was the CHIP money allocated to other projects? You said ‘\$10 million from CHIP’. Where did you find the spare \$10 million?

**Mr Gibbons**—When we were approached by the Northern Territory government to make Alice Springs a priority, we had already been discussing with them the upgrade of infrastructure in town camps in a number of communities. Alice Springs had notionally \$10 million—

**Senator CHRIS EVANS**—Had notionally?

**Mr Gibbons**—set aside for the purpose. We added another \$10 million and the Northern Territory government put \$10 million on the table for housing, so it makes a \$30 million buying package.

**Senator CHRIS EVANS**—I see, so you had \$10 million from CHIP already.

**Mr Gibbons**—Notionally committed to infrastructure improvement in the town camps.

**Senator CHRIS EVANS**—Where did you find the other \$10 million?

**Mr Gibbons**—The ABA.

**Senator CHRIS EVANS**—No, your notional commitment from CHIP funds, which was \$10 million, was realised. You have then found another \$10 million.

**Mr Gibbons**—For housing, for the hostels from the ABA, and then the Northern Territory government is putting in \$10 million, which will, I think—

**Senator CHRIS EVANS**—You are saying to me the \$10 million you are putting in for infrastructure was actually the \$10 million that was already nominally—

**Mr Gibbons**—Notionally.

**Senator CHRIS EVANS**—I thought we were talking about \$40 million; we are talking \$30 million in total. That is why I was asking. The CHIP money was part of this year's budget allocation nominally allocated for Alice Springs. It has been directed in that manner. There is \$10 million from the ABA—I will come back to that in a moment—and the other \$10 million is from the Northern Territory government.

**Mr Gibbons**—Yes.

**Senator CHRIS EVANS**—Is that also out of money they were intending to use in Alice, anyway, as part of this?

**Mr Gibbons**—I do not know the answer to that. I do not think so, but I am not the authority on that.

**Senator CHRIS EVANS**—I can ask them. What happens to the ABA? I know the minister approves it, but I thought the ABA sort of initiated the programs or discussed them.

**Mr Gibbons**—The ABA is an advisory board. The minister may act to release funds from the account. The account is set up out of the budget process. The budget contributes money to the ABA account, based on matching the dollars that go to the Northern Territory government from mining royalties in the Northern Territory and dollars that the Commonwealth receive from uranium mining in the Northern Territory. The account is used to fund the operation of the land councils in the Northern Territory. Some of the funds are distributed to owners of land on which the mining occurs and the balance goes into the ABA, and the act empowers the minister to distribute it for the benefit of Aboriginal people.

**Senator CHRIS EVANS**—Isn't it supposed to have some sort of economic development focus?

**Mr Gibbons**—Part of it is used for economic purposes, but the government announced that it wanted to see some of the ABA used for economic development purposes and in that context it is open to Indigenous communities to apply to the minister for the release of funds for economic purposes. In most cases the minister normally asks the ABA Advisory Committee to consider requests and to advise him. It is also open to the government to initiate action with an economic focus.

**Senator CHRIS EVANS**—This is a bit different. I am not saying that the work is not a priority. I am not downplaying the importance of the work, but it seems to me this is, if you like, going to another well which had a primary other purpose.

**Mr Gibbons**—No. It is fairly broadly described in the act, and there is no doubting the need. The account currently stands at about \$115 million. The minister has agreed to release \$30 million—\$20 million for Landcare programs in the Northern Land Council and Central Land Council zones and \$25 million for housing—\$10 million in the north and \$10 million in the south. I mentioned that Galiwinku will be the target area for the north.

**Senator CHRIS EVANS**—That did not seem to add up right, or did I miss something? I thought you said \$30 million and we got to \$50 million. I must have misheard you.

**Mr Gibbons**—The minister agreed to release \$30 million from the ABA: \$10 million for Landcare programs in the Northern Land Council and Central Land Council areas—\$5 million in each—and \$10 million for housing in the Northern Land Council zone. We are looking at Galiwinku and Elcho Island in that context, and \$10 million will go to the Alice Springs hostel camp purpose that I mentioned.

**Senator CHRIS EVANS**—When was that decision taken?

**Mr Gibbons**—After the March meeting of the Aboriginal advisory board.

**Senator CHRIS EVANS**—The advisory board considered these things as being a must and the minister made the decision?

**Mr Gibbons**—Correct.

**Senator CHRIS EVANS**—Was that soon after—

**Mr Gibbons**—It did not consider the Alice Springs proposals specifically.

**Senator CHRIS EVANS**—That is why I thought the time line did not seem to work.

**Mr Gibbons**—It considered and advised on the release of \$10 million for housing infrastructure in the central zone and \$10 million in the northern zone. The minister has decided that it will be focused on Alice Springs.

**Senator CHRIS EVANS**—If the advisory group—and they are purely advisory—considered this at their March meeting, why did housing infrastructure become the priority then?

**Mr Gibbons**—Because we had sought their advice on that. The minister's first meeting with the Chief Minister to discuss priorities in the Northern Territory resulted in two issues coming to the fore—Alice Springs, which was the Chief Minister's first priority, and Elcho Island, in the remote corner of Arnhem Land, which is a large community in great need. We therefore put the release of money from the ABA for housing and infrastructure programs and land programs on the agenda to seek their views.

**Senator CHRIS EVANS**—But the proposition about Alice Springs housing and infrastructure was not actually before them?

**Mr Gibbons**—Not the specifics of Alice Springs, no.

**Senator CHRIS EVANS**—So what did their advice reflect?

**Mr Gibbons**—It recommended that funds from the account be released for housing—\$20 million—and divided equally between the Northern Land Council zone in the north and the Central Land Council zone in the south.

**Senator CHRIS EVANS**—Without being specific in either case about where the money should be applied?

**Mr Gibbons**—No, it was not specific about where it should be applied.

**Senator CHRIS EVANS**—You did not make a recommendation about where the money should be applied?

**Mr Gibbons**—No.

**Senator CHRIS EVANS**—So, subsequent to that, the minister and the Northern Territory government decided that Alice Springs was the priority?

**Mr Gibbons**—Yes, I think that is correct.

**Senator CHRIS EVANS**—Was that view taken before the question of the town camps crystallised?

**Mr Gibbons**—We were determined to seek the view of the ABA on the release of money for housing before the requirement in Alice Springs had been fully fleshed out, though we already had a view on what was needed in Galiwinku when we sought their advice.

**Senator CHRIS EVANS**—So the minister made the decision to prioritise the Alice Springs town camp issue?

**Mr Gibbons**—In response to the Chief Minister's request to make it our highest priority in the Northern Territory, yes.

**Senator CHRIS EVANS**—When was that decision taken?

**Mr Gibbons**—It was taken after the minister's first meeting with the Chief Minister. I cannot remember off the top of my head, but it was a few weeks ago—maybe three or four weeks back.

**Senator CHRIS EVANS**—There has been a flurry of activity and lots of press coverage, some of which does not seem to be all that reflective of the decision-making process.

**Mr Gibbons**—To put it very simply, at the first meeting between the minister and the Chief Minister, the minister took the view that he wanted to be quite strategic in the investment of Commonwealth and ABA dollars in the Northern Territory. He sought the advice of the Chief Minister on priorities and there was an agreement to target two areas: the Alice Springs situation—and that was before we had given serious thought to the solutions that were needed in the Alice Springs context—and Elcho Island. That did not exclude other activities that we might have wanted to pursue during the year. It was to kick-start a close relationship of large-scale investment that was quite strategically focused. I am advised that the first meeting was on 17 February.

**Senator CHRIS EVANS**—I think the minister announced it on 5 May, according to my time line.

**Mr Gibbons**—It was jointly announced in Alice Springs.

**Senator CHRIS EVANS**—I saw them both do media interviews. Not many of them seemed to be joint. They were discussing each other, but that was later in the piece. In identifying the need, a lot of people have put to me that this problem in Alice happens every year. It may be greater or lesser, but this has been a constant. This is not a new problem of people coming into Alice and staying for legitimate reasons—for health reasons, for footy carnival reasons, for weather related reasons. There are a whole range, I gather, of drivers for people to do that. Is there any analysis being done as to whether this year's problem is greater

than a previous year's and whether this reflected a problem that was likely to grow? I am not saying there was not a problem all along but, in terms of the severity of the problem, was there any analysis done about that? I have had conflicting reports about how atypical this year's migration was.

**Mr Gibbons**—The Northern Territory government set up a task force to look at the problem. It invited our participation. We accepted a position on that task force and we have been working with them. The task force provided an interim report to both governments. It facilitated the in-principle agreement of the minister and the Chief Minister. The final report of the task force is now available and that will enable us to proceed at officials' level to flesh out much more of the detail of our approach. That report showed that it was not a new problem, but it was a growing problem. The patterns of mobility are strong in Central Australia. With the demographic trend, it was getting a bigger group of mobile Indigenous Australians, and Alice Springs was coming under increasing pressure to provide short-term accommodation in particular. In the absence of short-term accommodation, there was intolerable pressure on the Indigenous communities that live permanently in the town camps—hence, the origin of the solution to upgrade the town camps to normal suburb status and provide facilities for the transient population.

**Senator CHRIS EVANS**—As you say, those camps have been under that pressure for many years. Does the interim report make any attempt to quantify the growth or the increase in pressure from more visitors?

**Mr Gibbons**—There was a demographic study commissioned by the Northern Territory government on mobility around Alice and that points to growth over time. There is also work being done by the desert knowledge CRC.

**Ms Bryant**—John Taylor has done some work and there is a report available on that.

**Senator CHRIS EVANS**—That is right. Someone did mention that to me before.

**Mr Gibbons**—As I recall, some of that work does show that there is migration occurring, but it emphasises that a lot of it is to do with mobility. Hence the importance of short-term—two or three months—accommodation in Alice Springs as the major service centre for a large number of people who live in that south-west central area.

**Senator CHRIS EVANS**—That is right. Wadeye is a classic example: if the roads are closed and you are in Alice Springs, you do not go back to Wadeye.

**Mr Gibbons**—Yes, but the mobility into Alice does not normally extend to the Wadeye community.

**Senator CHRIS EVANS**—I am just saying it is an example of there actually being practical reasons sometimes why people do not go back straight away, as well as social or health or other reasons, so there are real issues there. So what is the intended hostel capacity that is to be provided?

**Mr Gibbons**—That is something for us to resolve at this stage. We have taken the in-principle decisions. We have now got to do the homework before we commit. We are doing that jointly with the Territory government.



**Senator CHRIS EVANS**—So you have the \$10 million from CHIP going into the town camp conversion?

**Mr Gibbons**—Yes. I think that was based on a survey, so our expectation is that that will complete the works needed to make the transition in respect of hostels and temporary camp facilities. As for the balance between the two, we have still got quite a bit of work to do.

**Senator CHRIS EVANS**—But am I to take it that the \$20 million is to go on the hostels' catering facilities and the rehabilitation centre?

**Mr Gibbons**—Certainly on the hostel and camping facilities, the minister has not ruled out flexible funding for the rehabilitation centre.

**Senator CHRIS EVANS**—So you might have a fourth source of funding that might be able to assist with the rehabilitation centre?

**Mr Gibbons**—Yes.

**Senator CHRIS EVANS**—And that would come out of your OIPC flexible funding pool?

**Mr Gibbons**—Most likely.

**Senator CHRIS EVANS**—What have you got in that?

**Mr Gibbons**—For next financial year there is \$34.5 million.

**Senator CHRIS EVANS**—Perhaps an officer could help me here. I know that once you have done the \$10 million worth of infrastructure the plan is to hand it over to the town council. Does that involve the normalisation of rates?

**Mr Gibbons**—Yes, it is a normalisation program.

**Senator CHRIS EVANS**—Obviously, the council will want to take responsibility only if they are going to get paid for it, which is probably not unreasonable from their point of view. I am wondering what the understanding is as to how the rating system will work on those communities.

**Mr Gibbons**—Just before my colleague says something on that, I should have mentioned that the task force that has been looking at this includes the Alice Springs local government and that the agreement involved the Mayor of Alice Springs. I should have mentioned that at the beginning.

**Senator CHRIS EVANS**—Broad-brush agreements tend to get caught up when you get to the question of who is paying, I have always found. I am not suggesting that here, but clearly that has always been the issue with town camps, which is why they have not been mainstreamed in the past.

**Mr Gibbons**—That is one of the reasons we want mainstreaming and normalisation, as they are missing out on the normal funding that is available for urban infrastructure.

**Senator CHRIS EVANS**—Indigenous community organisations have struggled to provide services due to insufficient funding and expertise. So were we able to get any assistance on that other matter?

**Mr Knapp**—With regard to that, once the Connecting Neighbours project is complete, then Alice Springs council will take over the day-to-day management of the provision of

services to those town camps. But we recognise that the Tangentyere Council, which manages a number of those town camps, will not necessarily be in a position to raise the level of funds that are raised in other suburbs of Alice Springs, so where necessary we will use the municipal services funds that we provide under CHIP to assist the Tangentyere Council to meet the cost of rates at the normalised level until such time as they are able to meet those levels. So we recognise that there is a need for a transition strategy there.

**Senator CHRIS EVANS**—Have you done an estimate of how much that is going to cost?

**Mr Knapp**—No, we have not done an estimate at this stage.

**Senator CHRIS EVANS**—So you envisage the Tangentyere Council continuing to play the role of coordinator of the communities?

**Mr Knapp**—It will be a lesser role. Up until now they have been playing effectively a municipal role. But, with Alice Springs Town Council taking over power, water and so on, the number of those functions will no longer be performed. It will focus more on the cultural and other aspects of the support the council provides to the communities rather than the municipal function. It is saying we recognise that some funds may still need to be provided to assist in the transition to the level of rating that a normal suburb of Alice Springs would be required to meet.

**Senator CHRIS EVANS**—What is the view about ownership of the hostels? Who is going to own and run them?

**Mr Gibbons**—I will go back one point before I answer that. Tangentyere were a partner in the task force. Although Tangentyere will be displaced from a local government role, they will have an important role to play as we realign their focus on things that are appropriate for an NGO. With regard to the hostels, that is something we still have an open mind on. The minister would prefer that they be commercially run, even if they need to be subsidised.

**Senator CHRIS EVANS**—He is not joining the National Party, is he? That sounds like a National Party policy.

**Mr Gibbons**—Our approach at the moment is to work through Indigenous Business Australia, but we still have a bit of work to do before we can give you a definitive answer on that.

**Senator CHRIS EVANS**—Is there potentially a role for Aboriginal Hostels Limited?

**Mr Gibbons**—Potentially, yes. We have also spoken with them about it.

**Senator CHRIS EVANS**—Who is going to run the rehabilitation centre?

**Mr Gibbons**—That is an open question. For our part, at this stage we are offering to build the infrastructure. We do not have expertise in the management of such a centre. We are going to be talking to the Northern Territory government about that.

**Senator CHRIS EVANS**—The *Australian*, I think, said the Howard government was going to strip Indigenous housing organisations of responsibility for housing and give it to the states and territories to administer, and that funding would be tied to residents' behaviour. We both know there is a tenancy management conditions in current arrangements, but does this

reflect a broader policy decision to remove responsibilities from Indigenous housing organisations?

**Mr Gibbons**—That is not entirely accurate, but it does describe a policy view expressed by the minister that future funding for Indigenous housing should shift from communal housing arrangements to public housing arrangements where there are equitable rules for access to housing—criteria for occupancy and opportunities for lease-purchase et cetera.

**Senator CHRIS EVANS**—We should put lease-purchase to one side at the moment. We need the houses before we can do that.

**Mr Gibbons**—And this is not exclusively a Commonwealth position. As I understand it, a number of states are already moving in this direction.

**Senator CHRIS EVANS**—Given what we learned earlier about the Commonwealth's bilaterals with the states, effectively looking to get out of the housing game, for want of a better term, that is already a policy decision, isn't it? That is what the bilaterals are reflecting. I think you told us that, as of 1 July this year, you are out of the housing function in the Northern Territory, other than continuing some financial commitment.

**Mr Gibbons**—Yes. The bilaterals basically commit the Commonwealth to retreat to the position of funder but not manager of housing, not duplicating the state housing infrastructure housing arrangements.

**Senator CHRIS EVANS**—I am having difficulty seeing how, if you are getting out of the market, you are making decisions about how the market is going to operate.

**Mr Gibbons**—The Commonwealth will condition the grant of funding to state and territory governments. That is traditionally how the Commonwealth operates.

**Senator CHRIS EVANS**—So you are not really getting out; you are just going to set the rules.

**Mr Gibbons**—Some of the conditions.

**Senator CHRIS EVANS**—A minute ago we were retreating to funder; now we seem to be continuing to play a policy role.

**Mr Knapp**—We are still accountable for the funds of course.

**Mr Gibbons**—Whenever the Commonwealth is making a major financial contribution through the states, it is going to have an interest in how the money is spent—not at a micro level but certainly in terms of—

**Senator CHRIS EVANS**—So you are going to make it a condition of funding that they not use Indigenous community housing organisations.

**Mr Gibbons**—I think I would prefer to wait until the minister has had his meeting with Commonwealth and state housing ministers, which is on 16 June, before being quite definitive on that.

**Senator CHRIS EVANS**—I have seen what he has said publicly. Has there been a cabinet decision?

**Mr Gibbons**—I cannot comment on that.

**Senator CHRIS EVANS**—So you can tell me whether there has been a decision; you are not allowed to tell me what it is.

**Dr Harmer**—I think what Mr Gibbons is saying that the minister has expressed a number of views about concern about providing housing money to Indigenous housing organisations because of the objectivity in the allocation, the rent collecting et cetera. He has a preference, I think, but these are issues that he will be discussing with his housing ministerial colleagues on the 16th.

**Senator CHRIS EVANS**—He has made a lot of public comments. That is why I am trying to work out which are thought bubbles and which are policies. As I found with the welfare debit card, it seems to be more thought bubble than policy. That is what we are trying to know. I know the minister has, on a number of occasions, referred to the communist models that apply and said that communism is dead but not in Aboriginal housing. These are reported comments to the media, so I gather he has got a thing about it. But I am really just trying to ascertain whether there has been a government policy decision on these matters.

**Mr Gibbons**—I think I could say at this stage that the minister has expressed publicly his disposition and it remains for him to confirm a policy position. I expect he will not do so until he has had discussions with at least the Commonwealth-state ministers of housing at the housing ministers meeting on 16 June.

**Senator CHRIS EVANS**—Would that sort of policy change require a change to the Commonwealth State Housing Agreement? Are there machinery issues?

**Dr Harmer**—It is difficult to speculate. It would depend on the nature of the policy change, and he has not pointed to it.

**Senator CHRIS EVANS**—You are obviously providing advice to the minister on how to deal with this issue.

**Dr Harmer**—We are constantly providing advice to the minister on all sorts of housing issues, including this.

**Senator CHRIS EVANS**—I am fascinated to know whether that is after the public comment or before. I suspect you will not tell me the answer to that. I suspect it was after, but that is editorial on my part. Has there been any consultation with Aboriginal housing organisations about this change of policy?

**Dr Harmer**—I do not think it is quite correct to call it a change of policy yet.

**Senator CHRIS EVANS**—Clearly, we have established these are not just media reports, that there is an active consideration. I think Mr Gibbons used the term ‘open question’. It seems to me that it is something you are dealing with as an issue.

**Dr Harmer**—As Mr Knapp mentioned before, we have a review of the community housing infrastructure going on. Part of that review will clearly—

**Senator CHRIS EVANS**—That is the Office of Evaluation and Audit’s review?

**Dr Harmer**—No, this is the review we are doing.

**Mr Knapp**—It is the review of the CHIP funding that I mentioned earlier in the day. That will be one of the issues that I am sure we will be getting some commentary and feedback on.

**Senator SIEWERT**—I understand that is not going to the minister until September and yet this is being considered in June.

**Mr Gibbons**—I did not say it was being considered in June. I said I believe he will not make any decisions at least until after the meeting with—

**Dr Harmer**—He will be discussing it in June, we expect. We are not sure.

**Mr Gibbons**—I should also clarify that the funding that has been made available over the years to Indigenous communal housing organisations generally involved the grant, sometimes with caveats, of funds for them to build or acquire houses. In those cases where it is their property, the Commonwealth cannot simply take it back without compensation. That is a separate issue altogether. I am not suggesting that that is in the minister's mind.

**Senator CHRIS EVANS**—You are not going to nationalise the community housing at this stage?

**Mr Gibbons**—I think in the comments that have been made to this point the minister is talking about the future.

**Senator CHRIS EVANS**—In that case, it could only be owned by the state because you are withdrawing from management and construction of housing; ownership would have to be with some sort of state body, either a state housing authority or a separate authority established for the purpose?

**Mr Gibbons**—Most likely. However, I do not think we can exclude the possibility of a private developer.

**Senator CHRIS EVANS**—But surely not private ownership as well.

**Mr Gibbons**—No. Particularly when we are getting into a situation where we are trying to encourage normalisation of services to Indigenous people, the provision of housing has the scope to involve partnership with private developers.

**Senator CHRIS EVANS**—I am sure you will learn from the experience of the Defence Housing Authority. There is policy consideration of the future of funding of Indigenous housing development. I note there is also an Office of Evaluation and Audit report about to come out on Indigenous housing organisations. Is that right?

**Mr Knapp**—The Office of Evaluation and Audit, which is part of the Finance portfolio, is doing some audits of the CHIP funding and related audits, if that is what you are referring to.

**Senator CHRIS EVANS**—Yes. Aren't they doing Indigenous housing organisations as well or have I got that wrong?

**Mr Knapp**—I believe they are, yes, but I have not as yet seen a draft of their report. I am aware that is happening.

**Senator CHRIS EVANS**—I understood it was due to be completed in June 2006 but you do not know that?

**Mr Knapp**—As I said, I have not seen a draft.

**Senator CHRIS EVANS**—I was just wondering whether you could confirm for me whether or not you are expecting it in June.

**Mr Knapp**—Sorry, I will correct that. Another officer in my group has seen a draft of the report.

**Mr Mann**—The senator's timetable sounds about right to me. Within the next month or so I expect it will be finalised.

**Mr Knapp**—Could I also correct something I mentioned earlier, because I do not want to create heart attacks in the Alice Springs Town Council. I mentioned earlier, when talking about responsibility and the normalisation of arrangements in Alice Springs with the connecting neighbours, that it was the Alice Springs council that would be providing the services. That was incorrect. The Northern Territory Power and Water Corporation, which is a Northern Territory statutory authority, will be normalising the provision of power, water and sewerage under the Connecting Neighbours Program, not the Alice Springs Town Council.

**Senator CHRIS EVANS**—I assume when talking about the town council you are talking about things like rubbish collection, which I think Tangentyere do now.

**Mr Knapp**—Yes. I was concerned about the power and water side, that I made it sound as though the Alice Springs Town Council was doing the whole thing.

**Senator CHRIS EVANS**—The plan is still that the Alice Springs Town Council will pick up municipal services such as rubbish collection and road maintenance?

**Mr Knapp**—That is my understanding, as part of that normalisation.

**Senator CHRIS EVANS**—I was asking about rates, because it first occurred to me that that was also the town council. Are you providing financial support to the Power and Water Corporation?

**Mr Knapp**—No we are not providing any funds to the Power and Water Corporation. The \$10 million will be used for the normalisation, but the ongoing municipal services funding will be provided to the Tangentyere Council to help them meet the costs of the various rates—power and water, plus any Alice Springs Town Council charges. As we said earlier, that has not yet been determined.

**Senator CHRIS EVANS**—Yes. I was thinking of council rates et cetera, but you are talking about water and power bills as well.

**Mr Knapp**—That is correct.

**Senator CHRIS EVANS**—What is the situation with the rateable land? The town camps are different leases, are they not? Will they be rated in the normal way?

**Mr Knapp**—I assume that part of the arrangement is to make them no different from any other suburb of Alice Springs in their treatment—rates and so on.

**Mr Gibbons**—Senator, I think we are getting a little beyond our detailed knowledge. There is an objective and, as I said, the task force has only just reported. We are about to sit down and start serious discussions with the Northern Territory government. Although we have an objective, we will have to navigate around existing arrangements, including some long-term lease conditions.

**Senator CHRIS EVANS**—I would have thought that some of those lease conditions would be quite difficult in the normalisation process. The minister has been claiming that, in

fact. He was going on about traditional owners at one stage. Is there a traditional owner issue with these leases?

**Mr Gibbons**—No. He has been talking about native title claimants in the context of land that might be used for hostels et cetera.

**Senator CHRIS EVANS**—I see. So when he was concerned about whether the traditional owners would cooperate, it was in relation to potential sites for hostels, was it?

**Mr Gibbons**—Yes, Senator. It is my understanding that all of the town camps are on land that is owned by the Northern Territory government and is subject to long-term leasing, with the exception of two camps, which are squatters camps basically.

**Senator CHRIS EVANS**—That is my understanding of the lease arrangements. You had a southern and northern proposition for hostels. I think you said you were confident about the land for the southern. Is there a title issue regarding that site?

**Mr Gibbons**—I do not know. We have not identified a site. It is early days.

**Senator CHRIS EVANS**—I am just trying to catch up with the newspapers—it may be early days—but I keep reading about it, so it seems to be going apace. I always like to check what I read in the paper. I also want to ask a couple of questions about remote community policy, because that is the other one that seems to be raging apace in public debate. Can someone update me where we are with the development of government policy in relation to remote communities? I keep reading that, following Minister Vanstone's comments about cultural museums and lots of concern about the cost of maintaining remote small communities, there is a change of policy occurring. It is interesting to note that the main issue at the moment is the fact that people come from remote communities to Alice Springs, and the major policy issue we are addressing is the fact that people have come from remote communities and that problem then occurs at the town site. But, having noted that irony, has there been any change? What is the current government policy position on government support for essential services in remote communities?

**Mr Gibbons**—The short answer is that there has been no change in government policy. There are a number of things that I can say. In the context of the bilateral agreement with the Northern Territory, there was a commitment to examine the issue of remote outstations-homelands and the servicing of these remote communities. It has been planned for some time that we would, with our colleagues from the Northern Territory government, undertake an examination of a representative selection of communities around a number of service centres. That is about to get under way next week. That has given rise to speculation that we are about to implement policy change. It is no more than the start of the work we need to do to give effect to the undertakings we made in the bilateral agreement.

**Senator CHRIS EVANS**—There are obviously conservative think tanks looking to push that agenda out all the time. A former Labor minister made another contribution yesterday to that debate.

**CHAIR**—A very good one I thought, Senator.

**Senator CHRIS EVANS**—I do not know that not educating Aboriginal students is a step forward myself, but we can have that debate some other time, Senator Humphries. I would have thought that removing education services is hardly a progressive move.

**CHAIR**—I depends where they go, doesn't it?

**Senator CHRIS EVANS**—Our experience has been that they do not go to school, they stay where they are and miss out on education. Anyway, we will have that debate. The last I heard you were going to try and make sure school attendance increased. There are these groups obviously pushing an agenda, which seems to be developing. I am just trying to ascertain how much of that agenda the government has picked up. Did the Northern Territory bilateral agreement envisage this examination of the viability of these communities?

**Mr Gibbons**—It looks at the question of servicing the outstations, the responsibilities and roles of the respective governments. As I recall, it is not looking at the question of their viability or of withdrawing services per se. As I said, we envisage this is going to take months of work and study and we have got to the point in the bilateral relationship where it is the next item on the agenda.

**Senator CHRIS EVANS**—But you had a report late last year which scoped these issues. Has there been a policy response to that?

**Mr Gibbons**—Could you refresh my memory. What report are you talking about?

**Ms Bryant**—I assume you are talking about a document prepared for the Australian and Northern Territory governments which was simply a factual background paper on outstations and homelands?

**Senator CHRIS EVANS**—Yes, on delivery of services.

**Ms Bryant**—It outlined a bit of the history, numbers, existing government investment and so on. It was a background paper and a piece of work prepared to facilitate examination of the issues as part of the bilateral process. So there has been no policy response to it.

**Senator CHRIS EVANS**—So it was used as a background brief for you and the Northern Territory government?

**Ms Bryant**—That is correct.

**Senator CHRIS EVANS**—Okay. So the first initiative is the examination of communities around service centres. What form is this examination to take and who is going to conduct it?

**Mr Gibbons**—It is beginning next week with the head of the Northern Territory Office of Indigenous Policy and others from the Northern Territory government, myself, my COAG colleague, Ms Bryant and a number of others, proceeding on an itinerary that the Northern Territory government has put together to sample a number of remote communities around service centres in the north and in Central Australia—three clusters basically.

**Senator CHRIS EVANS**—What are those clusters?

**Mr Gibbons**—Communities around Maningrida in the gulf, communities around Wadeye and communities around Hermannsburg in Central Australia.



**Senator CHRIS EVANS**—So the examination in the first instance is a group of senior Northern Territory and Commonwealth officials having a look?

**Mr Gibbons**—And listening to the views of the people who live in these remote outstations, homelands and the organisations that provide services from the service centres.

**Senator CHRIS EVANS**—What sorts of organisations do you mean?

**Mr Gibbons**—In each of the three centres there are organisations that provide services to the outstations. They have a view and we will be hearing that view.

**Senator CHRIS EVANS**—What sorts of organisations are we talking about here? Are we talking about commercial suppliers?

**Mr Gibbons**—They are NGOs or community organisations that are set up to handle—

**Senator CHRIS EVANS**—Do you mean local hospitals' outreach services?

**Mr Gibbons**—Not so much hospital outreach services; more the NGOs set up to ensure supplies, maintenance of infrastructure et cetera.

**Ms Bryant**—Senator, they are generally known as outstation resource centres. Generally, they are funded through CHIP and the CDEP. They are funded to provide a range of infrastructure and other support to a surrounding geographic area of homelands.

**Senator CHRIS EVANS**—I see. So what is the next stage in the examination? Is it quantitative work? With all due respect, it is obviously more impressionist.

**Mr Gibbons**—At this stage, yes. It is to introduce the people who are going to be involved in the longer term examination and negotiation of outcomes to the environment. There will be work commissioned.

**Senator CHRIS EVANS**—Are you clear as to that yet or is that a work in progress?

**Mr Gibbons**—It is a work in progress. It follows a methodology that the Northern Territory and the Commonwealth adopted in respect of another matter that was set out in the bilaterals. That was the coordination of respective government funding and services for Landcare programs, ranger programs et cetera. A number of months ago, the Northern Territory invited representatives of relevant Commonwealth agencies to participate with them in an examination of remote homelands, where these Landcare programs were operating, to kick-start the examination. That led to further studies and will soon result in a schedule to the agreement setting out how both the Northern Territory and the Commonwealth are going to align their funding and other support for these programs. So we would expect in due course to come to a similar position on services and support for these outstations.

**Senator CHRIS EVANS**—Minister Brough was quoted talking about his proposal for an audit of remote Indigenous communities. Is this it or is this something else?

**Mr Gibbons**—This is not it. What we are doing next Monday is not an audit of remote Indigenous communities. There are hundreds of remote Indigenous communities. We are probably going to visit 15 or 20. That article was wrong.

**Senator CHRIS EVANS**—Sorry?

**Mr Gibbons**—That report was wrong. This is not the audit that the minister was talking about.

**Senator CHRIS EVANS**—I am not necessarily saying that. I guess it is a separate question. Is there, in addition to what you are talking about, an audit of remote Indigenous communities being planned or occurring?

**Mr Gibbons**—I am not aware of one, but I hope I have not missed something.

**Senator CHRIS EVANS**—I refer you to the *Weekend Australian* of the 27th so you can catch up on your reading, Mr Gibbons.

**Mr Gibbons**—No, I meant that in terms of my relationship with the minister.

**Ms Bryant**—Senator, there are a number of pieces of work, like that initial outstations paper that you referred to earlier, which are in train and which may have given rise to a notion of audits. We are not aware of an audit being planned or in train, but the Northern Territory government has commissioned some work in relation to community living areas as one of a variety of small communities. I believe the northern and central land councils are undertaking that work on their behalf. We have also sought some background information on outstation resource centres and we will be undertaking—

**Senator CHRIS EVANS**—When you say ‘we’ do you mean the OIPC?

**Ms Bryant**—The Commonwealth and the Northern Territory governments have jointly sought some background information from outstation resource centres principally about their roles, responsibilities and key relationships.

**Senator CHRIS EVANS**—You have asked them for that information?

**Ms Bryant**—That is correct. We have had a consultant travelling to a number of those resource centres collecting that information.

**Senator CHRIS EVANS**—So it is not a survey?

**Ms Bryant**—No.

**Mr Gibbons**—Every five years there is a survey of housing and infrastructure services in remote communities across Australia, and there is a survey planned, I think for November this year—the CHIN Survey. That is an established—

**Senator CHRIS EVANS**—The CHIN Survey?

**Mr Gibbons**—Community Housing and Infrastructure Needs Survey, which is done every five years, I believe.

**Mr Knapp**—The CHIN Survey is done every five years, so it is linked in with the broader census.

**Senator CROSSIN**—It is undertaken by the Bureau of Statistics?

**Mr Knapp**—The Australian Bureau of Statistics will be conducting that survey on our behalf.

**Senator CHRIS EVANS**—What does it survey?

**Mr Knapp**—It surveys all Indigenous communities across Australia for the standard of housing and other infrastructure services that exist there. So it is a very comprehensive snapshot of Indigenous communities as at that point in time.

**Mr Mann**—It is of discrete Indigenous communities but also of Indigenous housing organisations. It looks at dwellings and information about these organisations. It is done every five years and they are at it now.

**Senator CHRIS EVANS**—When will that report come out?

**Mr Mann**—In March 2007.

**Senator CHRIS EVANS**—This has a housing focus—is that right?

**Mr Knapp**—That is correct.

**Senator CHRIS EVANS**—So it would not be an audit?

**Mr Mann**—No, it is a survey.

**Mr Gibbons**—It is an important survey.

**Senator CHRIS EVANS**—I think you are offering it up as a potential candidate for an audit announcement, and that is fine. That is helpful. I am just trying to work this out. Basically, apart from this consultant going around the resource centres, chatting to them about issues that you want to gain information on, which is going to complement the work that Mr Gibbons and others are doing, you have some land council thing about community living areas, which sounds a bit different.

**Ms Bryant**—That is being undertaken by the Northern Territory government, and there was the report of the Alice Springs task force. But those are the only things that we are aware of in the environment that could have given rise to a suggestion that there may be an audit in prospect.

**Senator CHRIS EVANS**—I am not going to verbal the minister to say that my take on this article is exactly what he said. The article talked about a proposal for an audit. To be honest, it is a bit more specific, though. It talks about ‘150 remote Indigenous communities on the brink of social collapse’ and ‘an ambitious intervention plan being drawn up by the Howard government’. Are any of you guys working on this ambitious intervention plan or is it news to you? I might say, the minister was not quoted as saying that.

**Dr Harmer**—We are working on a lot of ambitious plans.

**Senator CHRIS EVANS**—I know that you are ambitious. We have to accept your capabilities, though. That was the lesson I was talking about.

**Mr Gibbons**—I forget how many communities make up the Marthakal-Galiwin’ku homeland area, but we have been working with Commonwealth agencies and the Northern Territory on some fairly ambitious plans for that area. But they are still in the design stage. We have quite a way to go before we will even be talking seriously to communities. That is the only one I can think of.

**Senator CHRIS EVANS**—What is the plan there?

**Mr Gibbons**—You will recall earlier I said that we agreed with Northern Territory government that Alice Springs and Galiwinku would be priority areas for some strategic investment. The Galiwinku area involves not just a large township, Galiwinku itself, but what are called the Marthakal homelands that exist in that broader area, and we are focusing on that at the moment. Our planning is focusing on that.

**Senator CHRIS EVANS**—I do not think that is it, judging by the article. It talks about intervention in 150 remote Indigenous communities. You have not identified 150 specific communities with any plans to tackle a particular group of communities?

**Mr Yates**—That is the ballpark of how many SRAs we have currently got completed, and not that many communities are we engaged with through that mechanism. I do not know whether there is a cross-link to that, but there is no—

**Senator CHRIS EVANS**—You would not describe your SRAs as an ambitious intervention plan, though?

**Mr Yates**—En bloc, no, they are building up from small things.

**Senator CHRIS EVANS**—I was not being unfair, but that was not the sense of the—

**Mr Yates**—Some would describe having a go at them as being very ambitious, but I think the references that you are making imply something very different.

**Senator CHRIS EVANS**—Yes. The other thing in the article is that, as well as 150 identified remote communities, which does not seem to be known to you, is that the minister is quoted here indicating that communities with 100-odd people and above are viable for Commonwealth support but that we may not be able to offer many services to smaller communities. Has there been any work done on that? I asked earlier about the viability of communities. Have you made a decision about communities being the size of 100 being the benchmark.

**Mr Gibbons**—No, we have not made decisions on that magic line between viability and otherwise. It is something that we have discussed. The previous minister made a statement or made a speech about the issue. It is certainly something we will be talking to jurisdictions about. Clearly, the smaller the community becomes, the less comprehensive services are going to be. There are communities that are effectively one or two families and there are communities that are 200 people in remote Australia, and the difference is—

**Senator CHRIS EVANS**—Both Indigenous and non-Indigenous.

**Mr Gibbons**—Yes. Our focus, of course, is the Indigenous ones, and the ability of state and Commonwealth governments to provide services to the two types varies considerably, depending on their size.

**Senator CHRIS EVANS**—That is why I am trying to trace this audit question. You say you are not doing an audit. Have you done work on what is a viable community?

**Mr Gibbons**—No.

**Mr Yates**—I think one of the research themes of Desert Knowledge touches on that area, if I recall, but we are not involved in any of that sort of detailed research.

**Senator CHRIS EVANS**—The suggestion in the newspaper article is that at the end of the audit, as yet unidentified:

... specific communities will be targeted for resettlement or service reduction.

Do you have any knowledge of a policy decision or a scoping of that sort of action—‘resettlement or service reduction’?

**Mr Gibbons**—Limiting my comments to the Northern Territory, where we are starting to do some examination of the service requirements and difficulties of these homelands, I expect in due course we will come out with a policy position on what we can do in communities of 200 people and what we can do in communities of 15 people. But decisions have not been taken on that.

**Mr Yates**—And it is not simply a matter of size. It is a matter of their proximity to hubs of other services and whether there is a local economy. There are a range of considerations which necessarily bear on that.

**Senator CHRIS EVANS**—But you make those decisions now, don’t you?

**Mr Yates**—Governments have done for years—yes, that is true.

**Senator CHRIS EVANS**—You decide whether to supply water or not and whether to build a road or not.

**Mr Yates**—And health services.

**Senator CHRIS EVANS**—So there is nothing new about governments making decisions about services. Some would say that some of those decisions are made in ignorance or out of utter neglect. I suspect that the rationale is not necessarily consistent across Australia.

**Mr Gibbons**—That is one of the reasons for the work we are doing with the Northern Territory government. Some of the decisions that were taken 10 years ago are no longer relevant given the demographic changes. We have had communities grow and we have had communities that have effectively been abandoned. Getting a better handle on that, and a rationalisation of the approach between the two jurisdictions, is what it is all about.

**Senator CHRIS EVANS**—We built roads to Russ Hinze’s farm that stopped at the farm gate. I do not want to get Senator Adams going, but we have a lot of hospitals in regional areas which have very low bed averages but have been maintained as part of the community infrastructure.

**Senator ADAMS**—But health services change and service delivery is different.

**Senator CHRIS EVANS**—Quite right. Mr Gibbons, are you telling me there is no plan to target specific communities?

**Mr Gibbons**—The article is speculative. I do not think I can go into it any further than I have done.

**Senator CHRIS EVANS**—Are you considering the options of service reduction or resettlement of Indigenous people?

**Mr Gibbons**—At the moment, we are not considering any option. We are beginning a study—with an open mind.

**Senator CHRIS EVANS**—I take it the senior source quoted in the article is not from OIPC?

**Mr Gibbons**—I cannot comment on the article.

**Senator CHRIS EVANS**—But you can comment on whether any of this is under active consideration by your office. Is the answer to that no?

**Mr Gibbons**—I have given that answer.

**Senator CHRIS EVANS**—So we have no audit, no list of 150 communities, no plans at this stage to target people for resettlement and no plans for service reduction. What we do have is a re-examination of the communities around service centres. Is that what you are calling it?

**Mr Gibbons**—Yes. It is a joint study with the Northern Territory government on the planning, coordination, management and provision of essential services to smaller Indigenous communities.

**Senator CHRIS EVANS**—What can you tell me about the federal government's involvement in Balgo?

**Mr Gibbons**—Balgo is one of the communities in the Tjurabalan COAG trial region. Before the COAG trial seriously got under way, decisions were taken by ATSIIS to invest in turning that community around. For a decade or more it had been synonymous with dysfunction, violence and despair. We raised the issue of intervention with the Western Australian government at the time. We aligned the decision that the Western Australian government had taken post the Gordon report to put police into remote communities. Balgo was one of the first to support that with some infrastructure works, intervention to appoint an administrator to run the affairs of the council, funding to recruit a competent team to restore environmental services and to start community development and to provide some of the facilities needed to make it possible for those development workers to have an impact on the ground. If my memory serves me correctly, that was some time in 2003. The result has been successful, the community has overcome many of the problems associated with dysfunctional, desperate communities. It still has some way to go. It is still not at a point where I would say the improvements are sustainable.

**Senator CHRIS EVANS**—Why would you say that?

**Mr Gibbons**—They still depend on individuals and we have not turned the collective approach of the community to a point where I think that if we withdraw key individuals or support they would continue to make progress. We are not proposing to withdraw that support. Having come this far, we want to stick at it for the long haul. It is probably a 10- to 15-year challenge to cement the improvements, but we have at least reached a point now where it is a safe, reasonably happy environment and we can start investing in development. School infrastructure has been improved, housing infrastructure has been expanded and improved, community facilities exist, there is good policing, good youth community engagement and substance abuse has been reduced dramatically. But not enough people send their children to school. There are things to be worked on. Their diet has improved dramatically and the viability of the store has improved. It is a work in progress.

**Senator CHRIS EVANS**—Which is the lead agency there now?

**Mr Gibbons**—The lead agency for the COAG trial is DOTARS. As I said, this intervention predated the COAG trial and was continued past the ATISIS period by funding from the communities in crisis component of our budget and we will continue to support it.

**Senator CHRIS EVANS**—But you are currently supporting it through the COAG letters of—

**Mr Gibbons**—Yes. It is a key centre for smaller communities around it, so it cannot be divorced from the environment. The next steps are to look at normalisation of municipal services—power, water and sewage—and in that context we have been talking to the Western Australians about the Halls Creek shire taking on that role.

**Senator CHRIS EVANS**—If I get time, I will talk to you about electricity charging. In reality, are you running it or is DOTARS running it?

**Mr Gibbons**—DOTARS is managing the COAG trial, but we are a major contributor to Balgo and are running the communities in crisis program of which Balgo has been a designated target community.

**Senator CHRIS EVANS**—I hear that DOTARS want out and do not want to be involved. Is that a fair assessment?

**Mr Gibbons**—I have not heard that from DOTARS.

**Senator CHRIS EVANS**—My source was not from DOTARS either. It seems that OIPC is playing a larger role there than perhaps in other areas.

**Mr Gibbons**—It is because it was designated a community in crisis and we have the communities in crisis program.

**Senator CHRIS EVANS**—So what are you putting in to Balgo through that program?

**Mr Gibbons**—Under the CIC program, over the last three years, in 2003-04, we put in \$361,000, in 2004-05, we put in \$313,000 and in 2005-06, we put in \$326,000 from that particular program. That was to provide the key team that are driving the environmental and community development activities. In addition, funding has been provided from CHIP for housing. Ten or 12 houses, I think, have just been completed. This now predates the new arrangements under ATISIS. We funded paving of the roads, dust mitigation, preparation of additional service blocks for housing development, upgrade of the water supply and, I think I can recall, work on upgrading the power. My colleagues might be able to add to that, but that is the extent of my memory at the moment.

**Senator CHRIS EVANS**—Is your main ongoing commitment at the moment on community development staff costs?

**Mr Gibbons**—Staff and some infrastructure commitments. We made a commitment to stick around for the long term. We will be there to ensure that the improvements become less dependent on key people that have been imported into the town and can be driven and managed by the locals themselves.

**Senator CHRIS EVANS**—What is the focus now of the COAG trial in addition to what you are doing on the communities in crisis program?

**Mr Gibbons**—The COAG trial, as I said, is broader than Balgo. It picks up the other communities—Bililuna, Mulan, Ringers Soak et cetera.

**Mr Yates**—I can give you some background in terms of the broader trial in the East Kimberley region. The overarching priorities are essentially around stabilising communities in the areas of law and order, essential services, community capacity and governance. Focus areas for future work that has now been committed to are improving service delivery and employment and training opportunities. They have a regional reference group that oversees the progress of the trial and fosters the community engagement around the area that is governed by the trial. In March 2006, which, I think, was the most recent meeting of the regional reference group, they agreed to a set of current priorities. They are threefold: developing a community youth forum to improve the prospects of young people in the region; continuing work to improve housing; and addressing identified law and order issues. There are a number of specific activities that are under way or in prospect around those priorities.

**Senator CHRIS EVANS**—Have those priorities changed from what was originally intended?

**Mr Yates**—I suspect that they have been evolving progressively over the life of the trial.

**Senator CHRIS EVANS**—What do DOTARS bring to that sort of priority?

**Mr Yates**—In terms of their own departmental activity?

**Senator CHRIS EVANS**—Their activity, their expertise and so on.

**Mr Yates**—They bring the role of the lead agency under the arrangements we have been operating since the trials commenced. They perform their own departmental role but, more critically, they harness contributions and inputs from across the Commonwealth, assisted by our Indigenous Coordination Centre. If you require detail of the lead agency's role and how they have handled it, I think you would need to talk to DOTARS.

**Senator CHRIS EVANS**—I appreciate that. Part of it is that, when you need a youth forum, housing and law and order, you do not immediately think DOTARS is where you go for that.

**Mr Yates**—That is not the purpose of the lead agency. They are not there simply to deliver things from their own bailiwick. They have people on the ground based in Halls Creek—two staff, I think—and their role is very much to marshal effort across the Commonwealth in conjunction with the Western Australian government and the communities covered by the trial.

**Senator CHRIS EVANS**—Are you aware of criticism about the ICCs that the staff are increasingly located either in cities or in large regional areas and towns and not actually at the coalface?

**Mr Yates**—I have heard comments about changes in the location of some staff as those departments with smaller representations in ICCs that often have quite junior staff have sought to rationalise their presence. That is intended to upgrade their support to ICCs, but often it has involved establishing more senior people in a hub that services a number of ICCs. That may have been seen as some withdrawal of involvement, but it is essentially agencies coming to terms with the fact that they need a higher level of skills for the more strategic



work that they are involved with in contributing to SRAs and more effectively managing programs. For a number of them that has involved rationalising some of their staffing allocations, sometimes into urban areas and sometimes regional hubs.

**Senator CHRIS EVANS**—I guess the question is: are you concerned about that from a policy point of view? The reaction we get from people on the ground is: ‘We used to have 10 officers here; now there are two. The others are in Sydney. It’s gone back to the bad old days where bureaucratic decisions are made in Canberra or Sydney. There is no contact with us; we have not seen the officer from X for months, and we hear they have changed jobs anyway and the position is vacant.’ That is the sort of stuff I am picking up. I am generalising; I am not saying it is true of them all. I picked up the issue that you identified, which is that the staff were junior and either lacked the ability or, more often, lacked the authority to pull together various agencies. I understand that. That seems reasonable. I can understand how that might become an issue, but I am getting a lot of feedback that people are concerned that the ICCs are losing touch and not providing that on-the-ground function. I just wonder whether those concerns have been raised with you and whether you are treating them seriously.

**Mr Yates**—Not extensively. There has been a change in the focus of activities that ICCs have to perform compared to predecessor organisations that were operating in the regions. Program management activities can often be combined in a more centralised function; they do not necessarily have to be distributed widely, provided that agencies are ensuring that their management of the programs and their connection with the service providers is adequate to assess performance and delivery. We have been concerned to see agencies grow what is generally termed their ‘solution broker capacity’. That is their ability to have staff at the appropriate level who can not only broker contributions from the Indigenous-specific programs that were historically associated with ATSIC and ATSIIS but also bring to bear the contributions of mainstream programs as well. That means a different skills set and within the resource capacity the departments were provided with to run the new arrangements. They have had to adopt some revised staffing strategies to underpin that. We are going to be looking at a post implementation review of the operations of ICCs later this year and that issue about the shifting composition and location of staff will form part of that review, I am sure.

**Senator CHRIS EVANS**—That is right, but I guess I am raising it with you now as a concern that has been expressed to me as I move around the place. You would be aware of the CAEPR thing about views from the top, the quiet revolution secretarial perspectives on the new arrangements in Indigenous affairs—which was highly useful from my point of view, but there was a reflection in some attitudes that they seemed to go into a hub and spoke model and that some of the secretaries did not have the resources, they thought, to have even a single officer at an ICC. There just seemed to be a drawing back to the centre. That is the impression that I am picking up from people. Do you keep figures on how many ICC positions are filled at each of the centres or the numbers over time?

**Mr Yates**—This is an issue that is from time to time reviewed by the secretaries group on Indigenous affairs. When that occurs, we collect that information to inform the secretaries on the changing landscape in that regard.

**Senator CHRIS EVANS**—Someone told me that the ICC in Burke or Murdi Paaki has gone from 15 ICC staff to two. Is that right?

**Mr Gibbons**—I will give you the exact figures. Burke was reduced in size but Dubbo has a new office created as part of the spreading of resources to cover what was a large area with a lot of communities in the north and a lot in the south. Burke's office was unable to effectively cover the south and south-east. On May's current figures, we have five staff in Burke and three staff from the New South Wales Department of Aboriginal Affairs in the ICC, making a total of eight. I think that in the new Dubbo office at this stage we have six staff.

**Senator CHRIS EVANS**—Did you have 15 ICC staff in Burke?

**Mr Gibbons**—I cannot remember notionally when we may have.

**Mr Yates**—We will have to take that on notice. Are you comparing it with 1 July 2004?

**Senator CHRIS EVANS**—I do not have an exact date. This is not anecdotal but it is a concern rather than a document, so I am just trying to trace—

**Mr Gibbons**—The important thing for us, as Mr Yates has mentioned, is having people who can undertake the work that ICCs are there for. That is more about architecting intervention, investment and support programs. It is not so much about the back of office process functions. Some agencies that inherited programs from ATSI and ATSIC ended up with junior staff who were dealing with routine process work distributed all over the country. Some have rationalised those arrangements so that they have core contract management and grant management cells and are replacing those staff with more senior people who can perform the solution broker type activity that Mr Yates mentioned. That has been proceeding slowly—though I would have preferred to see it proceed more quickly.

**Senator CHRIS EVANS**—The rhetoric is about local solutions, matching community needs et cetera. How can you match that rhetoric when you move your office to Canberra or Sydney? How can you say that you are going to give much better service and local solutions than the people they used to be able to go to and have a cup of tea and a chat with?

**Mr Gibbons**—Let us get this clear. With ATSIC, there might have been 15 people in Bourke, but only two or three people were in a position to make any decisions on interventions. The structure of ICCs now is trending towards people who have the seniority and authority to participate in that intervention and design role.

**Senator CHRIS EVANS**—But the trend is also that they are not in the region.

**Mr Gibbons**—No. Looking at the May figures, there were 554 Australian government staff in ICCs. Sorry, that includes OIPC, so take 200 off that figure. There are 352 staff in ICCs and another 18 from other state agencies. The profile has risen in terms of the level of the officers and their ability to get involved in the serious work of negotiation and design.

**Senator MOORE**—Can you tell us the details of the locations and designations of the whole department?

**Mr Gibbons**—I can give you a table that shows the number of staff, by agency, in ICCs.

**Senator MOORE**—And their levels?

**Mr Gibbons**—I am sure it would not be beyond our capability to design a table that shows the profile.

**Senator MOORE**—That would be great.

**Senator CHRIS EVANS**—People say to me that they may be better paid but they are no longer Indigenous and they are no longer in the regions.

**Senator MOORE**—Can we also have details about the Indigenous staff?

**Mr Gibbons**—There are 148 Indigenous staff in OIPC—27 per cent of our staff. We are quite deliberately looking to recruit more Indigenous staff, but they must have the skills that are needed to do the work. We have just recruited another very well qualified SES officer—and we have another two senior executive staff who are Indigenous—and we will continue to do that. People have to understand that the role of the OIPC is very different from the role of an ATSI regional office. We need more senior, experienced and well-educated people to do the work that government wants to do. That transformation does not happen overnight, but it is occurring.

**Mr Yates**—I think it is fair to say that this is a significant transition. It is one that we need to watch very carefully. We need to support it and we need to test what agencies are doing. The secretaries group has been very active in monitoring developments. We have a review scheduled for later this year—a comprehensive consideration of where we are at with the implementation of those arrangements through the ICCs.

**Mr Gibbons**—I want to correct something. I said we should discount the 202 OIPC staff, but they are in the ICCs. The total of all Commonwealth staff in ICCs is 554.

**Senator CHRIS EVANS**—Now I am confused. Are you saying that all OIPC staff are in ICCs?

**Mr Gibbons**—I said 352 were in ICCs. I was excluding OIPC staff in ICCs.

**Senator CHRIS EVANS**—Are you saying 200 of your staff are in ICCs?

**Mr Gibbons**—Two hundred and two of the staff in ICCs are OIPC staff. The rest that make up the total of 554 come from a range of Commonwealth agencies. On top of that, there are another 18 who come from state government agencies. We will provide a table that will make that clear.

**Senator CHRIS EVANS**—What about solution brokers. Are they in those numbers?

**Mr Gibbons**—Yes. If you look at the profile of ICC staff, there are seven SES, 41 executive level 2, 82 executive level 1 and 139 APS6 level. That is an improvement on the profile if you go back to the early days.

**Senator CHRIS EVANS**—Some people would call it an improvement on the profile, others would say Canberra bureaucrats are getting paid more. I am not saying that, but it depends on your take on it.

**Mr Yates**—They are not Canberra bureaucrats. They are all in the ICC network.

**Senator CHRIS EVANS**—I will look at the figures. The report from CAEPR seemed to indicate there was some withdrawing back in essential areas. The anecdotal reports are that it is withdrawing back into central offices. You told me that the secretaries group are monitoring it. It is obviously an issue you are dealing with.

**Mr Gibbons**—There have been some areas where we have been concerned. We have raised it in the internal forums.

**Senator CHRIS EVANS**—I am now raising it at an external forum. I do not see any reason to be overly defensive. If you are having to deal with it, clearly it is a problem.

**Mr Yates**—I was just correcting you, Senator. The numbers that we are referring to here are not relating to better paid Canberra bureaucrats. They relate to the profile of staff in the ICC network out in the regions.

**Senator CHRIS EVANS**—I will be interested to see that because the couple of examples I have seem to indicate that they are not so much in the regions as they used to be. I think your evidence tonight supported that in the sense that you were saying we need more staff that are senior. The more senior staff are not likely to be located in the regions. That is what I took from your comments.

**Mr Yates**—Yes, in regional hubs or in state capitals, that is true. I think it is fair to say that the numbers would bear that out.

**Senator CHRIS EVANS**—That is what I thought you were saying. You have higher paid, more senior staff at the same time that there are more of them in the hubs and the regional capitals.

**Mr Yates**—Many of them spend most of their time out servicing regions, so you would have to look at how those resources are deployed.

**Senator CHRIS EVANS**—I will test those assumptions as well.

**Mr Gibbons**—We have deliberately targeted a number of very remote stations because they are strategically important to us—so if you go to places like Kununurra, that services the East Kimberley, or to Broome, that services West Kimberley and the cape. Now with the focus on East Arnhem Land, we will be strengthening our staff in Nhulunbuy and putting an officer for some time on the ground in Galiwinku. We are shifting our emphasis to remote Australia.

**Mr Yates**—As Mr Gibbons's evidence earlier on in the day pointed out, we are not confined to operating through our own staff. In a number of jurisdictions, we are jointly, with the government, appointing service coordinators. We have panels of expertise that we have available that are accessible by communities to draw down on expertise. There are a variety of tools or mechanisms that are available to add to the capability that is on the ground over and above our own staff. I think that is an important part of the transition to appreciate as well. For a lot of the community development work that is required or particular expertise, improved governance training requires us to draw in expertise outside of the ICC framework itself.

**Mr Gibbons**—If I can demonstrate that by, say, reference to Alice Springs, given the work that we have to do to give effect to the agreement between the two governments, we will temporarily increase our staff in Alice Springs, including some senior people, until we have completed the design phase. Then we will hand over to agencies like IBA or others who are going to do the implementation.

**Senator CHRIS EVANS**—The Alice is one of the places where there is some suggestion that there are fewer people than there used to be. Are you saying you are going to build that up again?

**Mr Gibbons**—We are certainly going to be building it up because of the commitments that we have on central region petrol sniffing. We are about to appoint a second SES officer in Alice Springs. With the work we are doing with the town camps and other activities in Alice Springs, we will be strengthening our staff again, but we will not be creating a big bureaucracy forever out there, because our role is engagement, negotiation and agreement of strategies. The doing agencies or authorities will then take over once those agreements have been reached.

**Senator MOORE**—Are you looking at term contracts, or having ongoing officers transferred there?

**Mr Gibbons**—A mix, it depends on—

**Senator MOORE**—But there could well be term contracts for two years, for instance?

**Mr Gibbons**—Yes, indeed. In fact—

**Senator MOORE**—There were not a large number in ATSIIC.

**Mr Gibbons**—No.

**CHAIR**—This might be a convenient point to adjourn for dinner.

**Proceedings suspended from 6.41 pm to 7.46 pm**

**CHAIR**—We will resume our examination of the Families, Community Services and Indigenous Affairs portfolio. We are still on outcome 1. The suggestion I make for handling this is that we aim to continue with questions in this area until approximately half past eight. I hope that it is possible to complete questioning in this area by then. At that stage, we will shift to outcome 2. There are a fair number of questions in that area. I know Senator Evans, Senator Siewert and Senator Adams have some questions in that area, so I will try to give everyone a chance in that three-quarters of an hour or so.

**Senator CHRIS EVANS**—We have asked the Indigenous Land Corporation to hold back too. I have some questions for them, so I will be very quick in the main group.

**CHAIR**—That would be great, thank you.

**Senator CHRIS EVANS**—I have a few things that I will put on notice, but the one thing I did want to follow up, and I indicate I got a helpful briefing from the department some months ago to try and resolve some complex issues, is this question of electricity charging guidelines. I appreciate the briefing that was made available. That really helped with resolving some of the issues and the concern I had from Indigenous communities in the north-west of Western Australia. I will not go through all the background; nevertheless, there was concern about the impact of the new funding guidelines on the economic capacity of those communities. Basically, this revolves around the increase in the cost of diesel over the assumptions made in the funding arrangements. I understand now you are doing top-up funding from the municipal services budget. Is that correct?

**Mr Knapp**—That is correct.

**Senator CHRIS EVANS**—What is the extent of that top-up funding you are having to draw on?

**Ms Finnigan**—The gap funding for diesel fuel for powerhouse usage was about \$2.7 million this year.

**Senator CHRIS EVANS**—Is that the old gap funding or the additional caused by this?

**Ms Finnigan**—That is the additional cost for the increase in diesel fuel during this year.

**Senator CHRIS EVANS**—Is that what you expect to spend this financial year or is that what you have spent so far?

**Ms Finnigan**—That would depend on how much diesel fuel increases.

**Senator CHRIS EVANS**—Is the \$2.7 million expenditure for this financial year?

**Ms Finnigan**—Yes, it is.

**Senator CHRIS EVANS**—For 2005-06. So that is what you have spent at the end of May?

**Ms Finnigan**—At the end of March.

**Senator CHRIS EVANS**—So it will be over \$3 million effectively?

**Ms Finnigan**—Yes, it will.

**Senator CHRIS EVANS**—What does this mean for those essential services if the money is coming out of the municipal services budget? Are you robbing Peter to pay Paul?

**Mr Knapp**—Given the nature of CHIP, there is always some flexibility, particularly at the beginning of the year. Because the price rises were starting to happen from fairly early on, money was put to one side to reflect our expectation that there would be a requirement for additional supplementation; so there was no Peter robbed to pay this Paul. It was more that it meant we had a first call against funding to enable us to make sure that we had sufficient funds to meet the costs of those subsidies. Usually what happens is that the CHIP funding is examined during the year to see if there is any spare funding for some projects that perhaps did not get funding initially. It is a normal process that there will be some movement of moneys during the year between projects. That is how we have funded this project this financial year—by this exercise.

**Senator CHRIS EVANS**—Is everyone getting a top-up or are you doing some assessment of eligibility?

**Ms Finnigan**—This financial year, everybody that needed the gap covered for their powerhouse fuel was topped up. It has been about an 18-month transition into the electricity charges. The commitment was that during that transition period we would top up.

**Senator CHRIS EVANS**—What about factoring this into their funding arrangements with other organisations? Is this going to continue as an emergency top-up? What is going to happen in the longer term?

**Ms Finnigan**—The way that the electricity charging levies are set and the energy rebate credit scheme, and with diesel fuel increasing, there is always going to be a bit of a gap until the costs level out a bit. While communities are making a contribution towards their costs, it is intended that they will be topped up for any of that gap.

**Senator CHRIS EVANS**—What about where they cannot get the energy credits rebate from the ATO?

**Ms Finnigan**—I am not aware of any that cannot do that.

**Senator CHRIS EVANS**—You do not think anyone is missing out? I know this is terribly complex and I have to get my head around all those issues again, but there was concern expressed to me about what happens if there is a gap where they cannot get the energy credits rebate from the Taxation Office. You are saying they are all getting it?

**Ms Finnigan**—Where they have eligibility to do that. Certainly in the past not all communities were claiming their credits, but as awareness has grown over the last 18 months the FaCSIA staff based in ICCs have been making sure to inform communities about what they are eligible for and assisting them to access what they can claim.

**Senator CHRIS EVANS**—Has any work been done, for instance, to talk to other funding organisations about dealing with the gap in the longer term? For example, if it is a health clinic being run by WA Health, is there any suggestion about adjusting the funding from the direct funding sources or do you just expect to keep picking up the gap until something happens?

**Ms Finnigan**—We do not pick up the gap for other government businesses or services. WA services such as health are provided with additional funding through the WA state government to cover electricity costs.

**Senator CHRIS EVANS**—What is going to happen this coming year? Are you just going to seek top-up money again?

**Ms Finnigan**—We will have to look at the situation and see what the gaps are and make decisions based on that. The CHIP guidelines provide that where community members are contributing towards the costs of their power usage a top-up can occur.

**Senator CHRIS EVANS**—As you know, these are fairly finely balanced budgets for these places and the diesel fuel is a large part of the cost to support the community.

**Ms Finnigan**—The ATO is extending access to the Energy Grants Credit Scheme from 1 July. I understand that legislation will be presented soon, and services such as schools will be able to access those credits as well.

**Senator CHRIS EVANS**—They are widening the eligibility to—what, state funded organisations?

**Ms Finnigan**—To any community service organisation.

**Senator CHRIS EVANS**—Good. What is that bill called?

**Ms Finnigan**—I am not sure what the actual bill is called. I would have to take that on notice. It is just an amendment to the energy credit scheme.

**Senator CHRIS EVANS**—Thank you for that.

**Senator SIEWERT**—I want to quickly go back to Balgo and the trial. That is also being evaluated, is it not?

**Mr Yates**—Yes. East Kimberley is one of the COAG trial sites that is included in the round of evaluations that is now in train.

**Senator SIEWERT**—Will that be reporting at the same time as the others?

**Mr Yates**—We can give you an approximate finalisation date for that.

**Ms Bryant**—We have received a draft report, so I think it would be by the end of the financial year.

**Senator SIEWERT**—Will that be released publicly?

**Ms Bryant**—Public release is a matter for the parties to the trials. In this case, that would need to be considered by our minister and the Western Australian government.

**Senator SIEWERT**—If it is not publicly released, will it at least be made available to the participants or the people in the region? Do they count as ‘public’? How do they get feedback if it is not released?

**Ms Bryant**—It varies a little bit across the trial sites whether the community is formally a partner. In the case of Wadeye and so on, the Thamarrur council is formally a partner and so, yes, they get a copy of the draft report and are consulted. In the case of Western Australia, I am informed that we are organising meetings with the community in the next few weeks to discuss it with them.

**Senator SIEWERT**—That is around—

**Ms Bryant**—The Western Australian report.

**Senator SIEWERT**—Will they get the final report?

**Ms Bryant**—That is a matter for decision by the two governments.

**Senator SIEWERT**—When you say you are having meetings with community people around the draft, will they get a copy of the draft or will you just tell them what is in it?

**Ms Bryant**—I understand that, because of language use with some of the community that we would wish to consult with, we plan to have a facilitative discussion around the executive summary rather than the full report.

**Senator SIEWERT**—There are, of course, some people that can and do at least use English as a second language. I am sure there are people that are quite capable of reading the report and interpreting it.

**Ms Bryant**—I am sure there are people who are capable of that as well, but the proposal at this point is to consult around an executive summary of the report.

**Senator MOORE**—Is that just your decision?

**Ms Bryant**—That is a decision jointly by the two levels of government, Western Australia and yourselves.

**Senator SIEWERT**—This evaluation was being done by a consultant. Was it their impression as well that that was the methodology that would be best?

**Ms Bryant**—I do not think that that is a matter that the consultant determines.

**Senator SIEWERT**—The decision is not theirs?

**Ms Bryant**—That is a matter for the two governments who are commissioning the consultant.



**Senator SIEWERT**—Was that something the consultant wanted to do? I know the decision was not theirs, but the consultant has done the work, working with the communities about how they are finding the evaluation. From their work, was that seen as the most effective way to do it?

**Ms Bryant**—I am advised he has not expressed a view to us and is happy to do it the way we propose to do it.

**Senator SIEWERT**—Sorry to jump around, but Senator Evans went on to the next topic before I realised that we were leaving issues relating to Alice Springs. I know what the others are paying for, but what element of the program is the \$10 million that the Northern Territory is putting in paying for?

**Mr Gibbons**—I understand that it is going to be used in the town camps for housing. Whether that is a final position of the Northern Territory government, I cannot be certain, but officials have told me that that is one of the priority areas for their expenditure.

**Senator SIEWERT**—How was the figure of \$30 million arrived at? Was that an estimate of need or was it what you thought you could get out of the different funds? How many houses does it pay for?

**Mr Gibbons**—I cannot speak for the Northern Territory government's component, but for the Commonwealth contribution I understand that the upgrade of infrastructure is based on need. There was a survey to establish that.

**Senator SIEWERT**—That is the CHIP money.

**Mr Gibbons**—That comes from CHIP, and the minister decided to contribute \$10 million from the ABA for the hostel and camp accommodation and make an offer to provide infrastructure, utilising some of the facility from Woomera that I mentioned, for an alcohol rehabilitation centre. That is the basis of the decision. It did not follow a survey of need or of cost, so it is limited by the available funds.

**Senator SIEWERT**—If that does not meet the need, what happens then?

**Mr Gibbons**—I do not know. That is a matter for governments. Governments will have to look at that and decide what, if anything, they want to do.

**Senator SIEWERT**—I know that we touched on some of the services that Tangentyere provides to town camps at the moment, and they are beyond some of the services we were talking about. Has there been a value put on those as to who is going to provide them? I have been there and I know that Tangentyere provides a lot of services in looking after people in the camps, doing their mail, helping them with advice on community services and all sorts of things. My understanding from the media is that that has all been taken over by the town council. Is that true or will Tangentyere still be—

**Mr Gibbons**—It is not as simple as that.

**Senator SIEWERT**—I know. That is why I am asking.

**Mr Gibbons**—Tangentyere provides a wide range of services for members of the community in Alice Springs. Many of those will continue to be performed by Tangentyere, particularly their social services. They are being displaced from what I would describe as

local government services—power, water, sewerage and mail. Mail should be delivered to the front doors of all Australians who live in urban Australia. At the moment it is dumped at the entrance to the town camp and it is up to Tangentyere to deliver it, so you would expect them to be displaced as mailmen as well. We will be looking to utilise the capacity of Tangentyere in other services that are going to be needed. As I said earlier, it is early days and we have a lot of work to do before we settle on the detail.

**Senator SIEWERT**—I will put my other questions on notice.

**Senator CHRIS EVANS**—I have one last question before we move on to the ILC. We talked earlier about what has been released from the ABA. I asked this many estimates rounds past. I do not have the reference. There was a promise by the government at the election to release up to \$50,000 from the ABA to invest in the regionally based economic development strategy for Indigenous Australians. I am not sure whether that has occurred or not. So I would like to know whether that has occurred. But really it is the broader question of what else has come out of the ABA in recent times prior to this \$30 million that was approved in March, I think you said.

**Mr Gibbons**—You are right. There was a commitment made in the context of the last election to prioritise some of the money in the Aboriginal benefit account for Aboriginal economic development. At this stage, only a limited amount of money has been released for economic development, in response to bids from various organisations. There was \$330,000 released for an Indigenous horticultural project in Central Australia. There was \$455,000 for the commercial mud crab farm in Darwin, and about \$1.3 million has been provided towards a residential construction project in Nhulunbuy-Gove. The account currently stands at about \$113 million.

**Senator CHRIS EVANS**—Is that with or without the \$30 million?

**Mr Gibbons**—That is before the \$30 million is taken out. I think there are seven proposals in process, valued at about \$20 million or \$21 million.

**Senator CHRIS EVANS**—Those three you mentioned are the only three prior to this—

**Mr Gibbons**—Three have been approved. That, in aggregate, is \$2.3 million, and there are seven in the pipeline that, if they were approved, would total \$20 million or \$21 million.

**Senator CHRIS EVANS**—The \$2.3 million has been paid out.

**Mr Gibbons**—Yes.

**Senator CHRIS EVANS**—That left the balance of \$113 million; \$30 million had come out and you say there were seven applications in the pipeline, totalling \$21 million, but they have not been approved by the advisory board or the minister.

**Mr Gibbons**—The seven in the pipeline? They certainly have not been approved by the minister, to my knowledge, but I am not sure how many have been considered by the ABA advisory board at this stage. I do not have any advice at my fingertips on that.

**Senator CHRIS EVANS**—You have created the impression in my mind that these were likely to be coming on-stream shortly. Is that right?

**Mr Gibbons**—If they are considered viable and worthy of investment, Senator. I do not want to anticipate an outcome.

**Senator CHRIS EVANS**—Would these be described as economic development programs?

**Mr Gibbons**—Yes.

**Senator CHRIS EVANS**—Are you sure that those other three projects you mentioned are the only three since 2004 to be approved?

**Mr Gibbons**—That have been funded in the last financial year, yes. I am told by my colleague that some of those seven have been before the ABA advisory committee, but some other proposals are incomplete and will come back to the committee.

**Senator CHRIS EVANS**—What is the annual income, roughly, now of the fund, the ABA?

**Mr Gibbons**—I think the contribution to the ABA this financial year—it varies from year to year, depending on the performance of the mining sector—is about \$67 million.

**Senator CHRIS EVANS**—And the funding of the land councils comes out of that.

**Mr Gibbons**—That is correct.

**Senator CHRIS EVANS**—Okay.

**CHAIR**—Before we get to Aboriginal hostels, are there any further general questions about outcome 1?

**Senator CHRIS EVANS**—I thought we were going to go to the ILC next.

**CHAIR**—All right.

**Mr Yates**—I was finishing up outcome 1 to provide the committee with a copy of the working party report on family violence and child abuse in Indigenous communities that was provided to the Prime Minister in August 2003.

**Senator CHRIS EVANS**—Can we confirm that was a public report?

**Mr Yates**—Yes. It was released by the Prime Minister.

**Senator CHRIS EVANS**—At the time?

**Mr Yates**—At the time. Within a week I will have for you the listing of activities which I mentioned can be seen as consistent with the recommendations that were incorporated into that report. Also, because I promised something to you at the last estimates, I would flag that on our website now is a framework for the whole-of-government evaluations now in train that OIPC is responsible for in terms of the new arrangements in Indigenous Affairs. The portfolio budget statement at page 90 outlines that in summary form, but now there is a more comprehensive overview provided on our website and I can give you a copy of that tonight.

**Senator CHRIS EVANS**—Thank you for that. I had not forgotten and I had it on my list but time did not permit.

**CHAIR**—Thank you very much. If there are no other general questions on outcome 1 or any of the output groups in that program, we will move to the Indigenous Land Corporation.

[8.14 pm]

### **Indigenous Land Corporation**

**Senator CHRIS EVANS**—The chief officer was not able to be with us tonight but I have been trying to pursue this question of the Indigenous Land Fund funding for some time now and the more I try, the more gobbledegook I get and the less informed I am. That probably gets somebody a big tick at the estimates review process, from the secretary, because—

**Dr Harmer**—Certainly not, Senator.

**Senator CHRIS EVANS**—transparency is prevented and it is no clearer to anybody.

**Dr Harmer**—We try to help wherever we can.

**Senator CHRIS EVANS**—Yes. You have done really well on this one! Did the Indigenous Land Corporation expect to get in the order of \$50 million a year from the land fund, or did it expect to get \$4 million in 2004-05 and \$23 million in 2005-06—or was it as surprised as I was to see that the contribution to the Indigenous Land Corporation had so dramatically diminished?

**Ms Lindsay**—The ILC has been aware that the change in funding would obviously change the funding that we would get. We were subject to and part of an appropriation for 10 years, and after that 10 years we knew that we would live off the income from the land fund. It was a bit of a surprise. We did expect, from our calculations from the balance of the land fund, that we would get approximately \$45 million to \$50 million per annum. That was based on a set of assumptions using current interest rates and current CPI and performance of the fund over history.

**Senator CHRIS EVANS**—Good, so it is not me going mad then. That is what I understood to be the case and I have been pursuing valiantly, since that time, why it was you only got \$4 million and then \$23 million, because it seemed to me that that was a lot less money available to spend on purchasing land and assets for the benefit of Indigenous people. In trying to work my way through that, Dr Harmer, you will understand that we have got into this great debate about the gross non-farm product deflator.

**Dr Harmer**—I remember it.

**Senator CHRIS EVANS**—I have to indicate that I failed economics at university and it shows, I know. That is why I am in the social policy area. I am the only one who does not want to be Treasurer! The argument about the gross non-farm product deflator does challenge me. This is, on a serious note, a very significant drop in the capacity of the land fund to do its job. It is not just about non-gross farm product deflators; it is actually a halving at least of the capacity of the land fund, and I do not understand it, because the predicted amount of money in the fund is there. There has been no loss of funds. As I understand, there is about \$1,450 million in the fund. But, despite the health of the fund and the projections, it looks like we are going to have half the capacity that was predicted. I would like someone to have a go at providing better answers than I have so far as to why that is the case.

**Mr Youngberry**—There is a combination of reasons as to how we calculate the return from the land fund for payment to the ILC. The issue that impacts on that most is the implicit

price deflator for gross non-farm product. That is the measure of inflation that is defined in the act, so we have no choice but to apply that to the calculation.

**Senator CHRIS EVANS**—Why didn't you apply it for the previous 10 years?

**Mr Youngberry**—In the previous 10 years, the ILC did not receive funding from the land fund as such. It received an appropriation direct from government. The first 10 years were to build up the value of the fund, so that from the 10th year onwards the ILC would be funded from the realised real return of the investments of the land fund, which is the second component that affects the amount that is paid to the ILC. One of the objectives was to maintain the value of the fund in real terms over time; hence the measure of inflation is taken away from the nominal return that the fund might earn in any year. Once you take away that effect, you are left with a balance which represents the realised real return of the fund. It is the difference between the nominal return adjusted for inflation as measured by the gross non-farm product index.

**Senator CHRIS EVANS**—What index was used as the deflator in the 2005 budget?

**Mr Youngberry**—The same index would have been used to calculate the payment to the ILC. The amount that had been reported in DIMIA's portfolio budget statements was based on erroneous information or erroneous calculations, where they used CPI as a surrogate.

**Senator CHRIS EVANS**—Who did?

**Mr Youngberry**—Officers from DIMIA or ATASIC—whenever the calculation originally took place.

**Senator CHRIS EVANS**—It was not just the Indigenous Land Fund who had a mistaken perception on how much was involved; someone in DIMIA cocked up as well.

**Mr Youngberry**—I suspect it was not DIMIA. It probably predates the land fund being in DIMIA. I do not have the history on who did that calculation, other than—

**Senator CHRIS EVANS**—It is hardly ancient. It was only 2005, wasn't it?

**Dr Harmer**—It would have appeared presumably in forward estimates in, say, 2000-2001.

**Mr Youngberry**—In 2000-2001. The fund has been in existence since 1993-94.

**Dr Harmer**—It would have been a legacy of a calculation probably done for the 2001-2002 budget.

**Senator CHRIS EVANS**—It was not picked up at any stage in that period, you are telling me.

**Mr Youngberry**—No. It was picked up when it changed from what is defined in the act as a category A year to a category B year, which means the ILC is funded from the realised return from the investments in the land fund. When they have done that calculation, they have realised that the forward estimates did not reflect accurately what that number should be.

**Senator CHRIS EVANS**—So we are not really able to identify why or who made the mistake, but we have a gigantic error that has seriously changed the capacity of the Indigenous Land Fund as a result of the expectations of the capacity of the Indigenous Land

Fund. What do you expect to be the average income of the Indigenous Land Fund in the eight years now?

**Mr Youngberry**—The figure that we have reported in the folio budget statements for 2006-07 suggest about \$25.3 million will be paid in 2006-07 to the ILC. That is based on the current interpretation of realised real return and the use of that deflator.

**Senator CHRIS EVANS**—‘The current interpretation’—that implies that it is going to change.

**Mr Youngberry**—One of the things that we have been looking at since the land fund transferred to the FaCSIA portfolio is how we calculate the return from the fund. It has been subject to some discussions between the ILC and other parts of the Public Service, as well as with the department.

**Senator CHRIS EVANS**—Who are the other parts of the Public Service?

**Mr Youngberry**—Department of Prime Minister and Cabinet. There has been correspondence between the ILC and Dr Shergold, and the Department of Finance and Administration has also been involved.

**Senator CHRIS EVANS**—We blamed them in the last round, I think. It is DIMIA and their predecessors now.

**Mr Youngberry**—One of the things that is not defined in the act is realised real return and, because it is not defined in the act, it is open to interpretation. We do want to have a look at that and see how it is applied and whether its current application properly reflects the intentions.

**Senator CHRIS EVANS**—Am I right to say then that this is now an open question, as Mr Gibbons would say, about what the realised real return means and therefore what the impact on the fund will be in future years?

**Mr Youngberry**—I do not quite understand your question.

**Senator CHRIS EVANS**—It seems to me that you are having an argument or a constructive discussion about what ‘realised real return’ means. Is that what you just told me?

**Mr Youngberry**—I would not say that we are having an argument. We are having a look at how it is currently applied.

**Senator CHRIS EVANS**—That must mean that you are entertaining the thought of it being applied in another manner.

**Mr Youngberry**—Well, yes. We need to have a look at how it is currently applied and whether it achieves what is intended.

**Senator CHRIS EVANS**—Without wanting you to take too much time and without wanting you to baffle me with science, what is the nub of that argument—a 30-second layman’s—

**Mr Youngberry**—Of why we will look at the definition of ‘realised real return’?

**Senator CHRIS EVANS**—Yes. What is the debate about?

**Mr Youngberry**—Basically, the legislation or the explanatory memorandum to the legislation talks about ‘usual accounting practice’. The concept of ‘realised’ is not something that is common in the accounting world. It has a general definition that has been applied. ‘Real’ similarly implies ‘real’ in a monetary sense but it is not something that is well defined and we want to go back and say, ‘Well, how is it defined? How is it applied in the context of the land fund for payment to ILC?’

**Senator CHRIS EVANS**—Does that mean there is potential that projections of the income flowing to the land fund may be altered?

**Mr Youngberry**—Yes.

**Senator CHRIS EVANS**—Positively or negatively?

**Mr Youngberry**—I could not say at this time.

**Senator CHRIS EVANS**—The possibility is that a change might actually reduce the income flowing to the fund.

**Mr Youngberry**—I think that would be unlikely.

**Senator CHRIS EVANS**—So you could possibly say.

**Mr Youngberry**—Yes.

**Dr Harmer**—I think what Mr Youngberry is saying is that it is being reviewed. It is unlikely that we would be reviewing it with a view to reducing it. It is more likely that it will go up, but we will not know until we have done the investigation.

**Senator CHRIS EVANS**—When are we going to get the outcome of that review?

**Mr Youngberry**—We are going to undertake it over the next probably six or eight weeks, have a look at it and, if there is an adjustment, we will reflect it through our additional estimates statements.

**Senator CHRIS EVANS**—That will be done by FaCSIA?

**Mr Youngberry**—Certainly the work will be led by FaCSIA. The Department of Finance and Administration will be involved and we will need to have a look at whether we need some external expertise to assist us with that.

**Senator CHRIS EVANS**—Potentially an adjustment could be made as part of supplementary funding, which would allow an adjustment to the fund income for this financial year 2006-07?

**Mr Youngberry**—Yes, we would be reporting in additional estimates. Because it is a special appropriation, if the amount is different, it flows through automatically, so it is really just a reporting arrangement in the additional estimates.

**Senator CHRIS EVANS**—It will be obvious to you that I did not draft this question, so I will read it to you. Given that the budget shows the gross non-farm product deflator will drop significantly from 4.5 per cent in 2005-06 to 2.5 per cent in 2006-07, shouldn't this mean that the income available to the ILC increases in 2006-07, that is, less will be required to top up the loan account?

**Mr Youngberry**—The method for calculating inflation is quite complex. It involves taking the average of the quarters of the gross non-farm product index for the previous two financial years and averaging that to the payment for the return in the financial year that has just passed. It would take some time for that to flow through, is the short answer.

**Senator CHRIS EVANS**—I did not understand the question, but I did understand the answer.

**Dr Harmer**—The person who wrote the question will understand the answer.

**Senator CHRIS EVANS**—I understood the answer, which is that you get done coming and going if you are at the ILC. That is I think clearer but completely unsatisfactory still. We look forward to the outcomes of your discussions and deliberations. Thanks for that.

**CHAIR**—We will move to Aboriginal Hostels.

[8.28 pm]

#### **Aboriginal Hostels Ltd**

**Senator ADAMS**—I note that the Aboriginal hostels are temporary accommodation. That is their definition. I am just wondering what the average length of stay is in hostels for your clients.

**Mr Clarke**—Temporary accommodation generally means a temporary stay with us for three months. That is usually the maximum stay. We do have a couple of categories that stay longer than three months—that is, usually nursing care and aged care, and secondary students, who have to stay the academic year—but temporary is about three months.

**Senator ADAMS**—Once the length of stay has expired, what happens to those people?

**Mr Clarke**—Usually they come to stay in our hostels to look for permanent accommodation or a permanent job. A lot of them now are coming for medical reasons, to go to the hospital or for legal reasons. Usually they go back to where they came from or in most cases they are able to find more permanent accommodation.

**Senator ADAMS**—Does the hostel help them do that?

**Mr Clarke**—Yes. The hostel managers do not run them around, but hostel managers refer them on to appropriate government and non-government agencies.

**Senator ADAMS**—You spoke about medical—I am very interested in the accommodation for the Patient Assisted Travel Scheme people. Do you have many of those in your hostels?

**Mr Clarke**—We have a variety of medical transient hostels, we call them. Usually we set them up for people who come into major centres to attend the local hospital. We allow them to stay at our hostels if they are approved PATS patients. That scheme gives them money to travel and also gives them money for accommodation. That way we charge an accommodation rate which is reasonable for the health services, usually about \$30 a night, which compares fairly favourably with a motel—about \$100 a night. That is how that scheme works.

**Senator ADAMS**—Do you accommodate their escort or their carer as well?



**Mr Clarke**—Usually the escort is an approved escort. When they get approved as a PATS patient, they get approved for one escort. Sometimes we get the odd occasion when we get non-approved escorts. They have to pay their own way there.

**Senator ADAMS**—So you still have room to accommodate them?

**Mr Clarke**—Yes.

**Senator ADAMS**—Are the young teenage schoolgirls, mainly, allowed to stay there?

**Mr Clarke**—We have difficulty with underage children. Usually they can stay there if they are with an adult guardian. That is the arrangement we have. They are allowed to stay if there is someone there to care for them.

**Senator ADAMS**—If they are coming to school, coming away from their community to go to school in a regional area where you have a hostel, they still have to have an adult?

**Mr Clarke**—No, if they come to school we have a secondary education hostel in some locations, not all locations. Those secondary education hostels are staffed by what we call house parents. They are trained in the duty of care for looking after minors. They have the same responsibilities as most boarding schools. They are a type of de facto parents.

**Senator ADAMS**—Are you getting more over the years? Is that number increasing?

**Mr Clarke**—We have been pretty stable. At the moment I think we fund about eight company hostels for secondary students and we fund about seven community organisations to run theirs. The difficulty we get sometimes is that students are not readily or easily approved Abstudy students, because they may come from a large town, and it is difficult to be an approved Abstudy student if you come from interstate.

**Senator ADAMS**—I notice now that you are saying that the accommodation charges will rise when the Indigenous Youth Mobility Program starts. How many hostels will open under this program and where will they be situated?

**Mr Clarke**—The Indigenous Youth Mobility Program is mainly aimed at Indigenous apprentices or Indigenous trainees who are able to get a trade and to go back to their communities. That is the ideal world. We are working with the Department of Education, Science and Training. They are going to help provide the trainees and we will provide the accommodation. We are to provide an environment that is conducive for them to go off to their trade and do their study, so they are less likely to get homesick and they are able to finish a trade and go back to their communities with a trade. Most communities, especially outlying communities, are crying out for people to be in some sort of accredited trade.

**Senator ADAMS**—They will be paying accommodation fees? Do they get scholarships?

**Mr Clarke**—Yes, we will charge a tariff for them to stay because they will be able to get some income from the department of employment and training. They will be asked to pay a tariff. In answer to your earlier question, we have 10 sites around Australia. We deliberately left out the major capital cities, because we wanted to attract rural apprentices. Those 10 sites are Perth, Darwin, Cairns, Townsville, Toowoomba, Newcastle, Dubbo, Canberra—because we are not catering for Canberra students but catering for outback New South Wales—Shepparton and Adelaide.

**Senator ADAMS**—I was just wondering about South Australia, but they are there. Are there any specific hostels that are available for people with mental health problems who are being treated as outpatients and who need somewhere to stay?

**Mr Clarke**—No. We have had cases where there have been some hospitals or some communities that have wanted to put patients who have a mental problem into our hostels. We just do not have the staff to be able to cater for those types of problems. There probably will be some need in the future to discuss with the various medical services or the medical providers working in partnership with us if those sorts of provisions are needed, but that is a perennial problem with Aboriginal hostels and with some communities in relation to the mental capacities of some of the residents and whether we can take them. They just become so much of a burden for our staff.

**Senator ADAMS**—That is all I have.

**Senator McLUCAS**—Could you give me an indication of the allocation in your budget for 2006-07 to residential aged care services?

**Mr Lane**—Sorry, what was the question?

**Senator McLUCAS**—I understand that Aboriginal Hostels deficit-fund a number of Aboriginal residential aged care services. How much has been allocated in this budget for that purpose?

**Dr Sharma**—In this budget we have \$1.3 million allocated specifically to aged care programs and our Community Hostels Grants program—\$1.3 million allocated to about 14 aged care hostels—plus we have another \$1 million of our own funds allocated to the Hetti Perkins Home for the Aged in Alice Springs that the company owns and operates.

**Senator McLUCAS**—So that is quarantined?

**Dr Sharma**—Yes, so there is about \$2.3 million in total.

**Senator McLUCAS**—How does that compare with last year?

**Dr Sharma**—It is about the same.

**Senator McLUCAS**—So we cannot see any growth in new Indigenous residential aged care facilities?

**Dr Sharma**—Not at this stage. The funding we get for the Community Hostels Grants program comes to us directly from the Department of Health and Ageing, and it is very hard to get increased funding from them.

**Senator McLUCAS**—Can you, on notice, give me the amount that was allocated in 2005-06.

**Dr Sharma**—That was the same amount—\$1.312 million that the Department of Health and Ageing gave us and \$1 million of our own funds that went to the Hetti Perkins Home for the Aged.

**Senator McLUCAS**—So no indexing, no growth, at all?

**Dr Sharma**—No, we did not have any growth.

**Mr Lane**—In a sense, there has not been a need for much growth at this stage while we maintain those level of hostels, simply because of the growth in residential subsidies direct to the organisations, including to us, for the resident classification system, depending on need. So the actual income into the facilities direct from the Department of Health and Ageing has actually increased year by year.

**Senator McLUCAS**—But that is working on the premise that there will be no change to the number of facilities that you deficit-fund.

**Mr Lane**—Yes. We only go into the hostels where it is shown that we are needed, and new hostel developments or nursing home developments will depend on approval from the Department of Health and Ageing. We do not initiate that ourselves.

**Senator McLUCAS**—I understand that, but can you give me an indication of what numbers of organisations and individual people across Australia have requested support from Aboriginal Hostels into the future so that they can put in an application for residential aged care?

**Mr Lane**—I cannot off the top of my head, but occasionally we get approached by community organisations when we are out and about who have an interest in setting up a residential aged care service. We usually put them in contact with the Department of Health and Ageing, because they need to apply for the places that are advertised. There are two new ones in the pipeline to come on over the next couple of years. We have approval for an extra 30 high-care places ourselves in Perth, and that development has been slowed down because we need to identify some more capital to go ahead with it ourselves. There is also another one approved for Brisbane—an expansion of beds in Brisbane—but they are also having problems with capital.

**Senator McLUCAS**—Hostels does not have the capacity to assist with capital?

**Mr Lane**—No.

**Senator McLUCAS**—Could you give me an indication of the level of unmet need, expressed really by contacts that have been made with Hostels about potential support for funding should an application be successful? It is like the chicken and the egg really. If Health and Ageing give you the same amount that they gave you last year, the potential for you to assist facilities is therefore limited to the number that you support now.

**Mr Lane**—Yes.

**Senator McLUCAS**—We are sort of stagnating here, aren't we?

**Mr Clarke**—A lot of it depends on the approved places that a community can get access to from the department. If they do not have approval, then they are unlikely to get any funding or assistance. If a community is able to get approved places, then that is the first major step in them getting funding. It is a chicken and egg thing.

**Senator McLUCAS**—It is. Thank you.

**CHAIR**—Thank you, gentlemen, very much for being here tonight to answer questions.

[8.43 pm]

**Department of Families, Community Services and Indigenous Affairs**

**CHAIR**—We now move to outcome 2.

**Senator CHRIS EVANS**—I want to ask about the one-off bonus to older Australians. The payment is an additional one-off payment by June 2006:

to the maximum rate of Utilities Allowance (\$102.80) to each household with a person of Age or Service Pension age eligible for Utilities Allowance on 9 May 2006. A \$102.80 payment will also be provided by 30 June 2006 to each self-funded retiree eligible for the Seniors Concession Allowance.

I want to understand why there seem to be two different sets of conditions on this. The age pension is a one-off payment by the household. So if there is a couple on the age pension they get the one payment, but for those on the senior concession allowance that is not the case. There are a few questions arising out of that. Does that mean if there are three age pensioners in a house they would only get the \$102.80?

**Mr Hartland**—No. If there were two members of a couple, they would get one payment. If there was a single living with them, that person would also get a payment.

**Senator CHRIS EVANS**—I had two sisters telling me that they would only get one payment. What is a 'couple'? If two sisters are sharing a house, do they get two or one?

**Mr Hartland**—If they are receiving the single rate of age pension they should get two payments.

**Senator CHRIS EVANS**—They rang one of the helplines and they were told that because there were two of them in the house they only got the one payment. Of course, if you read the budget measure, from the way it is expressed, I thought that was a reasonable interpretation. That is how I would have interpreted it. Can you tell me how you are interpreting it?

**Mr Hartland**—The rate is paid on your status on the Centrelink computer as to whether you are single or a couple. They would be, I imagine, single and therefore they would get the full payment each.

**Dr Harmer**—I think they may have been given the wrong information by the sound of it.

**Senator CHRIS EVANS**—But, if you read what you say in the budget papers, that is the logic of the position. That is the advice I would have given. It says 'to each household with a person of age or service pension age eligible for utilities allowance'. It is like a household payment.

**Mr Hartland**—I understand, but that is not the intention, and the legislation is clearer on that point.

**Senator CHRIS EVANS**—What you are really saying to me is that you will make one payment to an individual or a couple as defined under the age pension regulations, but you will pay the one-off payment to individuals even if they are resident in the same premises if they are each eligible for the age pension. So three sisters sharing a house will get three payments?

**Mr Hartland**—Yes. Three single pensioners would be entitled to the single rate of pension and they would get three full payments.

**Senator CHRIS EVANS**—I think we will use the standard couple; I do not know what your ‘couple’ definition is these days. Without opening up that debate, a married couple on an age pension in a household will get only \$102.80. They will be punished for being married.

**Mr Hartland**—The proposition is put occasionally that people are punished for being married. We do not agree with that proposition.

**Senator CHRIS EVANS**—I will have to pull you aside and have a chat. So it will be paid to individuals who are in a household with other individual age pensioners. You will be making one payment to each single age pensioner and one to each age pensioner couple?

**Mr Hartland**—It is a little bit more complex than that. With a couple, they each get half of the full rate; so, in terms of payment counts, every age pensioner will get a payment. It is just that if you are a member of a couple you will get half of the rate.

**Senator CHRIS EVANS**—They will get \$51.40.

**Mr Hartland**—Yes.

**Senator CHRIS EVANS**—If you are part of a couple you will get \$51.40; if you are not part of a couple you will get \$102.80.

**Mr Hartland**—Yes, a couple gets \$51.40 each and a single person would get \$102.80.

**Senator CHRIS EVANS**—Yes, that is another way of saying it, but each individual who is in a couple will get \$51.40. Have you got the numbers of payment you will make then for each of those categories? I know I could look it up in the current pensioner rates, but could you just give a sense of it.

**Mr Hartland**—The government’s announcement indicated that 1.94 million people who are currently eligible to receive the utilities allowance will get the payment and 313,000 holders of the Commonwealth seniors health care card.

**Senator CHRIS EVANS**—The 1.94 million are pensioners?

**Mr Hartland**—That is right, yes. The utilities allowance also goes to a slightly larger group than just age pensioners.

**Senator CHRIS EVANS**—Yes. This measure goes to 1.94 million people who are age pensioners.

**Mr Hartland**—That 1.94 million would include some other people who are eligible for utilities allowance; they are not just age pensioners. There are disability support pensioners who are over age 65, for example. But they are minor. It is basically age pensioners.

**Senator CHRIS EVANS**—It is people who are over 65, effectively.

**Mr Hartland**—Yes.

**Senator CHRIS EVANS**—People on other pensions who are younger than 65 do not get it, effectively, do they?

**Mr Hartland**—Part of this measure was that some people who are eligible for some payments from the Department of Employment and Workplace Relations would also be included in the payment of the utilities allowance for the first time. That is, though, a separate measure. I believe Budget Paper No. 4 refers to the two together.

**Senator CHRIS EVANS**—How many of the 1.94 million are in a couple and how many are single? How many get \$51.40 and how many get \$102.80?

**Mr Hartland**—I have here somewhere the broad split of singles and couples. I do not have the precise figure, but I think, flicking through these folders, I can find single and couple.

**Senator CHRIS EVANS**—You can give it to me later on if you want after I finish this line of questioning rather than put you under any pressure.

**Mr Hartland**—The information I have here about the percentages on the customer base is that about 55.6 per cent—say, 55 per cent—are in a couple and 44 per cent are single. That is from 2004, but the percentage stays pretty constant, so if you were looking for a broad order of magnitude that would be it.

**Senator CHRIS EVANS**—And what number of age pensioners are we talking about—1.94 million?

**Mr Hartland**—That is right, yes.

**Senator CHRIS EVANS**—We basically have about one million in couples and a bit less than that not in couples. Self-funded retirees are each paid the full \$102.80 bonus, are they?

**Mr Hartland**—That treatment mirrors the current arrangements for the seniors concession allowances.

**Senator CHRIS EVANS**—Yes, it mirrors that, and we will come to why it mirrors that in a second. Each person in a couple who are self-funded retirees will get \$102.80?

**Mr Hartland**—Yes. That will be paid to each card holder, basically.

**Senator CHRIS EVANS**—What if one is a card holder and the other is not—they will only get the one?

**Mr Hartland**—Yes, that is right.

**Senator CHRIS EVANS**—But, if they are both seniors concession allowance card holders, they will get effectively \$205.60?

**Mr Hartland**—Yes, that is right.

**Senator CHRIS EVANS**—I know it mirrors the last measure, and I was never very happy with the logic the last time. The last time the logic was based around a sort of convoluted argument about state concession rates. Is that the justification again?

**Mr Hartland**—I think broadly, yes. The government has a view that self-funded retirees do not get adequate treatment by the states for their expenses and has sought to provide to them additional assistance.

**Senator CHRIS EVANS**—What is it that it thinks they do not get from the states that they should get?

**Mr Hartland**—They are not eligible for a range of concessions off state charges. A pensioner concession card holder will get concessions around rates, water, car registration—things like that. That is not generally made available to self-funded retirees.

**Senator CHRIS EVANS**—But that is not consistent across the states, is it? There is not a state regime which you can compare against the regime for age pensioners, is there? As I understand it, it varies in each state.

**Mr Hartland**—There is some variation in each state but as part of our funding arrangements for the special purpose payment to the states, in relation to concessions, we do require them to offer a common set of core concessions to pension concession card holders, so there is a standardisation.

**Senator CHRIS EVANS**—But didn't that not work? Wasn't this at the heart of the fight, that Minister Patterson could not get them to agree to—

**Mr Hartland**—What I was referring to was the base level of services to age pensioners. As part of our funding arrangements we provide already to the states some funding for these core concessions for age pensioners. The issue that occurred a couple of years ago with the government's offer was about extending that core group of concessions in addition to self-funded retirees, so it was a measure that built on something that was already occurring for age pensioners.

**Senator CHRIS EVANS**—So you say there is some standardisation now of arrangements between states in respect of how—

**Mr Hartland**—For age pensioners, but not for self-funded retirees.

**Senator CHRIS EVANS**—So when you are comparing the treatment of age pensioners and self-funded retirees, you have to do a different analysis for each state?

**Mr Hartland**—Yes.

**Senator CHRIS EVANS**—But you have not got a different state based payment here? There is one national payment of \$102.80 per card holder.

**Mr Hartland**—Yes.

**Senator CHRIS EVANS**—So the compensation argument is general at best, is it?

**Mr Hartland**—I think the differences in relation to self-funded retirees are coming off a pretty low base from the states. There would be very few concessions available to self-funded retirees.

**Senator CHRIS EVANS**—I accept that. I am not dealing with self-funded retirees. What I am dealing with is the complaints from pensioners who wonder why they are treated differently. I am struggling to give them a good answer. They want to know why they get half as much. What is the best answer I should give them?

**Ms McKay**—I think the argument runs that people who are on pensions have pensioner concession cards and therefore there are certain benefits that flow from those that do not flow to self-funded retirees and as some measure of compensation to self-funded retirees, who are not necessarily terribly well off, they receive this allowance.

**Senator CHRIS EVANS**—I know how the argument runs. I have tried it on a few pensioners.

**Ms McKay**—And they do not like it.

**Senator CHRIS EVANS**—It does not work. I am very unconvincing. I must say my heart is not in it, but when I try they just think, ‘That’s bull-dust.’ They are on \$13,500 a year as their pension rate—the last time I checked it was in that vicinity. They say, ‘How come we’re getting half as much as self-funded retirees?’ And I struggle to reply.

**Dr Harmer**—Their argument sounds like it is on the basis of the magnitude of their pension, rather than this issue.

**Senator CHRIS EVANS**—No. They say, ‘If a self-funded retiree is on 30 grand or whatever and I’m on 13, why do I deserve to get half the rate?’ I am just looking for a good explanation.

**Dr Harmer**—That is the explanation we would give.

**Senator CHRIS EVANS**—And if I press you further, you will say, ‘That’s government policy, Senator.’

**Dr Harmer**—Indeed.

**Senator CHRIS EVANS**—Can you tell me what the eligibility requirements are, income wise, for a seniors concession card?

**Mr Hartland**—Yes, we can. To be eligible for a Commonwealth seniors health card, you must make a claim for the card. You must not be receiving an income support payment from Centrelink or the Department of Veterans’ Affairs. You have to be of age pension age. You must be an Australian resident and you must have an annual adjusted taxable income of less than \$50,000 for singles or \$80,000 combined for couples. There is also an amount added to those taxable income limits if you have a dependent child.

**Senator CHRIS EVANS**—Effectively, the income limits for access to the card are \$50,000 for a single and \$80,000 for a couple?

**Mr Hartland**—That is right.

**Senator CHRIS EVANS**—So a couple on \$79,000 income per year will get \$205.60 because they will get twice the allowance. And a couple on the pension payment—I forget what the couple pension payment is; does anyone have that at their fingertips?

**Mr Hartland**—The single rate is about \$500 per fortnight.

**Senator CHRIS EVANS**—Yes, what is the couple rate?

**Mr Hartland**—\$430 per fortnight or so. They are in the Centrelink book. I could flick through and find them but I do not know that I can answer your question.

**Senator CHRIS EVANS**—What is that, about \$20,000 a year?

**Mr Hartland**—Yes.

**Senator CHRIS EVANS**—So the single rate is about \$13,500 and the couple rate is about \$20,000. They are going to get a payment of \$51.40 each and those who might have incomes up to \$80,000 a year as a couple are going to get \$102.80 each. That is where the argument gets a bit difficult as to the fairness and equity of the measure. I am just trying to understand: is this argument about concessions still the only basis for the argument about the treatment of the two groups?



**Ms McKay**—That is correct.

**Senator CHRIS EVANS**—There is no other justification?

**Mr Hartland**—I do not think we would wish to add to what the government has stated about the utilities.

**Senator CHRIS EVANS**—No, I want to make sure I have it, because I know it was run when we had the utilities allowance the first time. There is no pretence this is to pay out the utility allowance, is there? It is just struck at the utility allowance rate. This is a one-off cash payment. Is it designed to meet anything in particular?

**Mr Hartland**—No. I think we would want to refer you to material that is published in relation to that. The government's statement around this is that this is a demonstration of its appreciation and acknowledgment of the contribution older Australians and carers have made and continue to make to our society.

**Senator CHRIS EVANS**—Everyone likes to be appreciated. That is good. I guess the pensioners are asking why they are appreciated at half the rate? Are they half as much appreciated? Anyway, there is no pretence that this is for utilities. This is a straight cash payment based on the fact that the government can afford to because of the surplus. Do you have the number of persons eligible for the concession card who are not pensioners?

**Mr Hartland**—I have given you the number for seniors concession card holders. It is just over 300,000. All other people, apart from one category, get a concession card because they get a pension or an allowance. The additional category is the low-income health care card, which is paid again on adjusted taxable income for people of workforce age who have a low income. But I do not believe that I have with me the numbers for that and we would not normally have looked to update them at this estimates. That would be something we would look to do at annual report time.

**Senator CHRIS EVANS**—But those eligible for the seniors concession allowance who will benefit from the \$102.08 per person are a group of about 300,000?

**Mr Hartland**—Yes.

**Senator CHRIS EVANS**—Have you a breakdown of couples or singles on that?

**Mr Hartland**—Again, I would have only a percentage breakdown with me.

**Senator CHRIS EVANS**—Only if you have it at your fingertips.

**Mr Hartland**—I do not think I have it with me. We will have to take it on notice.

**Senator CHRIS EVANS**—I am sure it will be in the annual reports or something. Thanks very much for that.

**CHAIR**—I invite further questions on output groups 2.1 to 2.3.

**Senator McLUCAS**—I have an issue about access to the pension bonus. This is not the first time I have had constituents raising with me their confusion about the pension bonus scheme. This particular case is of a 69-year-old gentleman who worked extra time and has mesothelioma. He made contact with Centrelink and was told, because he did not advise Centrelink when he was 65, that he could not claim the pension bonus. Is that correct?

**Mr Hartland**—Most of rules of the scheme are legislated. The act requires that a person must register for the scheme within 13 weeks of the date that they qualify for the aged pension. There is a discretion in some circumstances to extend the period, and this might include situations where the person was overseas or living in a remote area or did not know that they had to register with the scheme or were not aware of the scheme or speaks no or little English. We have, with Centrelink, sought to ensure that this discretion is applied to ensure equity of treatment, but it may be that the decision maker in that case felt that it was not a reasonable view that he would not have been aware of the requirement to register. Having described to you the act and the discretion which exists under it, without knowing the detail of the case, it is a bit awkward to give you a view on what might have happened to this gentleman.

**Senator McLUCAS**—Of those who apply for a discretion to be applied, how many are successful? You might want to take that on notice.

**Mr Hartland**—I do not think it would be the administrative practice that you would apply for the discretion. I think it would be that a decision maker looking at a case would need to satisfy himself or herself that the discretion should be applied in that case. So I doubt that the information that you are seeking is available.

**Senator McLUCAS**—So at a point in the discussion with the applicant, the Centrelink staff member says, ‘Okay, you didn’t understand, I know. We’ll let this happen.’ Is that how it happens, or is there a more technical process to that?

**Dr Harmer**—I suspect you would need to know a lot more about that process.

**Senator McLUCAS**—So you would tell me to go to Centrelink?

**Dr Harmer**—If Mr Hartland knows, he would be happy to tell you, but I would be surprised if he does know the detail of that, given it is a Centrelink process.

**Senator MOORE**—Is that a reviewable decision? If someone is told there is no discretion and finds out that there is discretion, then would that be a reviewable decision?

**Mr Hartland**—Yes.

**Dr Harmer**—I would think so, yes.

**Mr Hartland**—There would be an appeal process, but that was not quite the question we started with.

**Ms McKay**—If the information is available, we will be able to provide it on notice.

**Senator McLUCAS**—Good.

**Ms McKay**—What Mr Hartland is saying is that we are uncertain as to whether that data is collected in any kind of form where it could be aggregated quickly and given to you. We will do our best.

**Senator McLUCAS**—Thank you. I would like to move to 2.2 now.

**Senator CHRIS EVANS**—Before you do, I want to ask about this proposal to halve the asset test taper rate. Explain that to me. There is a plan to simplify and streamline superannuation, which I have been trying to get my head around. There is not a lot of

information and obviously some of it is still developmental. As I understand it, the proposal is to halve the aged pension asset test. Was FaCSIA involved in the development of that proposition?

**Mr Hartland**—This relates to a plan that was released by the Treasurer, and Treasury estimates would be the appropriate place to ask questions in relation to a statement by the Treasurer.

**Senator CHRIS EVANS**—We asked them about their responsibilities. I am asking you now about yours. Was FaCSIA involved in the development of the proposal? Were you consulted?

**Mr Hartland**—We consult with our colleagues in Treasury regularly on all aspects of the architecture of our system, but I do not think we would be willing to provide a view at this point on the processes underlying a statement by government.

**Senator CHRIS EVANS**—It is not a hard question. Did they formally consult you or didn't they? I know you have ongoing discussions and all that. The question is one of process. It is one that has been asked at thousands of estimates hearings, ruled admissible and answered by you and other departments. Were you consulted and involved in the development of the proposition?

**Dr Harmer**—Mr Hartland wasn't, but he is not sure whether someone else in the area was, so I would like to take that on notice.

**Senator CHRIS EVANS**—Are you seriously telling me you do not know whether you were consulted about what is alleged to be the greatest change to superannuation known in the history of mankind?

**Dr Harmer**—I want to be very accurate about it, and it may be that someone in one of the other parts of the department was involved. It's a very big department.

**Senator CHRIS EVANS**—That means that clearly, if there was contact, it was on a fairly unofficial basis.

**Dr Harmer**—Either that or it may have been a separate area. It is most likely to have been Mr Hartland's area, and the answer is likely to be no, but I want to double check.

**Senator CHRIS EVANS**—That, I suppose, answers my next question. There is no IDC, there is no formal structure that you are participating in developing in this proposal.

**Dr Harmer**—No.

**Senator CHRIS EVANS**—You will take on notice whether you were consulted at all—

**Dr Harmer**—Yes.

**Senator CHRIS EVANS**—but essentially there was no structured contribution from FaCSIA.

**Dr Harmer**—I want to make sure.

**Senator CHRIS EVANS**—I appreciate that. Have you seen the costings for this particular measure? Have they been made available to FaCSIA?

**Mr Hartland**—No.

**Senator CHRIS EVANS**—Have you done any of your own work on the costings of this particular measure?

**Mr Hartland**—Not at this point, no.

**Senator CHRIS EVANS**—Have you done an estimate of how many people are likely to be affected by this measure?

**Ms McKay**—You understand that the Treasurer has put out a consultation paper on a range of measures, and they all interact. During that process of consultation, there will be a good deal of dialogue with a range of people, including the industry and including ourselves, on the interaction of various elements. That will be the point at which more formal costings are made. There is only a global costing on this at this stage, and any questions about the detail of the costings need to be addressed to Treasury.

**Senator CHRIS EVANS**—And they remain unanswered. While I accept the logic of your proposition, it is also true that they have not been able to be provided at this stage, but that is not your problem. One of the reasons I ask is that it seems to me this might be as much of a change as some of the other changes announced and it might actually be more costly than some of the other changes contained in the package. I must admit I am stumbling around in the dark, but can you tell me how many of your current customers are subject to the aged pension asset test?

**Mr Hartland**—I believe I can.

**Ms McKay**—Perhaps you can ask another question while he is looking that up, Senator.

**Senator CHRIS EVANS**—I suspect when he finds the right page we will get the answer to that.

**Mr Hartland**—I have a figure in front of me of about 168,000 but I would like to perhaps take that on notice.

**Senator CHRIS EVANS**—We have had a guess at 150,000 so we are in the same ballpark, but we might both be wrong.

**Mr Hartland**—That gives me more confidence.

**Senator CHRIS EVANS**—I would not take any confidence from that.

**Mr Hartland**—In that case it is 168,133.

**Senator CHRIS EVANS**—They are people who currently have their—

**Mr Hartland**—If that figure is wrong—and this is a table with a number of rows and columns in it and I am hoping that my eye, late at night, has not gone to the wrong cell—I will come back and correct it.

**Senator CHRIS EVANS**—You will correct the number. How do you describe that subset? These are people who what?

**Mr Hartland**—These are people with substantial assets but the thing about the assets test that is important in this context is that we run two tests separately over a customer to test their eligibility for the pension. We look at their income and separately we look at their assets and

we pay them on the test that results in the lower amount. Therefore, the characteristics of this group obviously are that they have assets over the thresholds.

**Senator CHRIS EVANS**—What are the thresholds now?

**Mr Hartland**—It is about \$150,000 for a single and \$200,000-odd for a couple. Again, I could get them if you are interested.

**Senator CHRIS EVANS**—No, I just wanted the ballpark figure. That is fine.

**Mr Hartland**—Firstly, they have to have assets over those thresholds, over the free areas, but also the income that they would be earning from those assets would have to be at a rate that did not make the income test apply, so they would be typical of people whose assets were not generating high amounts of income.

**Senator CHRIS EVANS**—Effectively, we think in the order of 168,000 is currently caught by the asset test and has a reduction in their eligibility.

**Mr Hartland**—Yes. The 168,000 is reduced rate customers who are asset tested.

**Senator CHRIS EVANS**—Have you any ideas on the numbers of people above the asset test? You would not because they would not be customers of yours, would they?

**Mr Hartland**—That can be derived from ABS statistics because we know the total population and we know how many Commonwealth Seniors Health Card holders we have but those are figures we publish in the annual report when we look at the proportion of the aged pensioners against the population.

**Senator CHRIS EVANS**—Because not all senior concession card holders would necessarily benefit from a reduction in the assets test, would they?

**Mr Hartland**—No. I did not mean to imply that. I was answering whether we knew, in a sense, how many people are off the test in the population and, yes, we do have some information about that. We can get information about that through the ABS.

**Senator CHRIS EVANS**—Yes. Thank you for that.

[9.20 pm]

**CHAIR**—Any further questions on 2.1 or 2.2?

**Senator McLUCAS**—Yes, 2.2, please. I want to go to a set of questions around the extension of the carer payment to carers of severely disabled children. When is it proposed that that measure will be in place?

**Mr Wallace**—The start date for that measure is 1 July 2006.

**Senator McLUCAS**—Yes. That is what concerns me. I read in the explanatory memorandum of the significant change to the definition of ‘disability’ but it changes only in some aspects. Could you go through those changes to the definition?

**Mr Wallace**—Certainly. At this stage, the changes are proposed changes, as the legislation is yet to pass. I can certainly take you through the proposed changes. I will take a moment to flick through. As you are aware, the intention of the measure was to extend eligibility for carer payment (child) to carers of children with severe psychiatric, intellectual and behavioural disorders. In our discussion at the last estimates hearings, we were talking

through the different ways in which that may be given effect in legislation. The proposal at this stage is that there be changes fundamentally at two levels in the legislation. The first is in a general sense to expand the current definition of a profoundly disabled child, which is currently restricted to a child with a profound physical disability or medical condition. That is at the top level.

Secondly, to augment the current test for carer payment (child) which requires you to meet three of seven criteria which are based on symptoms of severe physical disability with a set of three new criteria which relate to the behavioural characteristics of children with severe psychiatric, intellectual or behavioural disorders. In broad terms, those three criteria intend to capture what our medical and other experts term as internalising behaviours, externalising behaviours and the third category that relates to sexually inappropriate behaviour. The new legislation would require that one of those three criteria be satisfied on the psychiatric, intellectual or behavioural side and that the current test on the physical side, being three of the seven criteria, still apply.

**Senator McLUCAS**—I understand there are some changes to the form but that is another issue. I understand that under the changed definition for the group that we are talking about here, with behavioural disabilities and psychiatric disabilities and sexual disorder, it only applies to children between the age of six and 16. Is that right?

**Mr Wallace**—That is right. That is the proposal at present.

**Senator McLUCAS**—For the definition of a physically disabled child, is that also six to 16?

**Mr Wallace**—No. The definition in relation to a child with a physical disability remains as per the current legislation which can apply from zero to 16.

**Senator McLUCAS**—What is the philosophical reason why the child with a behavioural disorder under the age of six would not attract support in the way the child would if they were over six?

**Mr Wallace**—It is not a philosophical distinction as much as a practical one. The reference group provided advice to the minister in respect of these changes and considered the best way in which to give effect to the intent of government's policy and to define the group of children with psychiatric, intellectual and behavioural disorders whose disorders were such that they should attract a carer payment for their carer. The consensus view of that group was that in respect of those disorders it was too difficult to define clearly, in a legislative sense, the types of symptoms and behaviours that would apply in children in those younger age groups from the ages of zero to six. So the child psychiatrists, paediatricians, the peak groups and others that were consulted were of a view that it was too difficult to come to a definition of what symptoms defined children in those categories before the age of six. Between the age of six and 16 it is much clearer. We were advised to determine the substantially different set of behaviours that would warrant eligibility for carer payment (child).

**Senator McLUCAS**—Could you point me to studies that can confirm that. It is new information to me? I have not heard of developmental differences in younger children as opposed to school-age children.

**Mr Wallace**—I do not have any studies with me to refer to, other than to say that the views of the specialist child psychiatrists and paediatricians were that the measures of behavioural intellectual and psychiatric disorders in those younger age groups were much more difficult to define and that it was much clearer from school-age onwards. I cannot point you to a specific piece of research at this time.

**Senator McLUCAS**—If you were to find something, I hope that you could point it our way. The second issue then goes to how this level of disability will be diagnosed. How is it proposed that that occur?

**Mr Wallace**—The new criteria have been provided to Centrelink as a basis for them to determine eligibility for the payment. The intention is that the form be filled in in the same way as it is at present for eligibility for carer payment (child)—that it will be filled in by a medical practitioner.

**Senator McLUCAS**—Do you imagine that a GP will be competent to understand? I mean, GPs are extremely competent people but they are very busy people. Is there a training package? Are we going to teach GPs how to fill in these forms, or will the person have to be referred to a specialist?

**Mr Wallace**—I imagine, for a number of carers of children in these circumstances, they may already be in touch with a specialist, albeit that that will not always be the case. There is, I understand, funding provided for training for the Centrelink assessors, and generally information regarding changes in the legislation, and Centrelink processes are provided by Centrelink to medical practitioners and other relevant groups.

**Senator McLUCAS**—Will there be a change to the form?

**Mr Wallace**—There will be a change to the form, yes.

**Senator McLUCAS**—I know it is a Centrelink question but I am sure that you have had input into that process.

**Mr Wallace**—Yes, Senator.

**Senator McLUCAS**—Will it be ready on 1 July?

**Mr Wallace**—Yes.

**Senator McLUCAS**—Do you have a copy of the proposed form?

**Mr Wallace**—I do not have a copy, no.

**Senator McLUCAS**—Could you provide it to me?

**Mr Wallace**—When there is one available, we can provide it to the committee.

**Senator McLUCAS**—Thank you. How many people are proposed to be included in the expansion of this eligibility for a carer payment?

**Mr Wallace**—The estimates, following the advice of the reference group and the draft legislation, are unchanged from when the measure was announced—that is in the first year—an additional 3,700 customers. I have estimates in the following years. They are in the order of 310 additional customers in the following year; around 340 in the year following that. I can give you the precise numbers, if you would like them. I point out, though, that these are

estimates. They are not targets or caps; the number of people who are found eligible under the revised criteria will be eligible for the payment. They are merely estimates.

**Senator McLUCAS**—Thank you for your answer to question No. 47. You do not have a breakdown of why people miss out on carer payment. We know that there are a much larger number of people who apply than are successful in achieving it. I do not have the figures in front of me, but it is huge compared to the successful applicants. Are you imagining that we will have the same sort of problem with this changed definition of ‘disability’?

**Mr Wallace**—You are correct. Centrelink do not collect reasons for non-payment. The number of rejections is much larger than the number of grants under the current criteria. We do not have a set of estimates about the number of claims that we are likely to have under the revised criteria, so I do not know that we have an answer to that specific question.

**Senator McLUCAS**—My analysis is that there are lots of parents out there who think their children have a behavioural disability.

**Mr Wallace**—It is certainly the case that when there are changes in legislation and eligibility, people will seek to test their eligibility under the revised criteria. I imagine there will be a number of additional claims made, particularly as people become aware that there is a revised and broadened criteria.

**Senator McLUCAS**—We know that Centrelink does not analyse why people are refused. Have you asked Centrelink to do that?

**Mr Wallace**—Generally Centrelink collect the information that is required to determine eligibility for a payment or otherwise. In system terms, there is not generally a lot of data collected on reasons for refusal, other than that they do not meet the criteria as specified. There may be some level of information available via the systems, but the systems are not constructed in a way that would collect the reasons for refusal, as a rule.

**Senator McLUCAS**—It might be useful information to have, though, to inform future programs and supports that are required. If people are going to the trouble and the expense, as we know, to apply for these payments and then are refused in the very high rates that they are, it might be nice to know why. Anyway, that is another issue. Mr Wallace, you said 3,700 in 2006-07; 310 in—

**Mr Wallace**—I have the numbers for the estimates in front of me now. It is 290 in 2007-08; 310 in 2008-09; 340 in 2009-10.

**Senator McLUCAS**—To a layperson, how would you describe the level of behavioural or psychiatric disability that a child would need to have for someone to be successful to receive this payment?

**Mr Wallace**—The legislation describes that as requiring a profound disability. The intention of the measure has been to target eligibility for carer payment (child) to those carers caring for a child with a profound severe disability.

**Senator McLUCAS**—It is hard to describe in a layperson’s language. Given the time, could I quickly go to the issue of the special disability trusts, please. At the last estimates there were a number of elements to the budget allocation, but the issue that we were really



wanting an answer for was the number of people with disabilities that this program is expected to assist.

**Mr Wallace**—My recollection around the way in which the costings were constructed was that it was estimated to be around 5,000 trusts established. It was estimated that there would be around 10,000 people contributing to those trusts and benefit from the changes in the gifting and deprivation rules.

**Senator McLUCAS**—That is all I need to know on that one. Ms Winzar, has the number of business services that are operating now changed since the last estimates?

**Ms Winzar**—Yes, it has. At the moment we are running, I think, about 224 organisations who, between them, have 377 different outlets.

**Senator McLUCAS**—That is as at today, is it?

**Ms Winzar**—As of last week, yes.

**Senator McLUCAS**—How does that compare to February?

**Ms Winzar**—To be honest, I cannot recall the exact number that we talked about at the February estimates. I do not know that we actually discussed that particular number.

**Senator McLUCAS**—It was at this time last year.

**Ms Winzar**—Yes, I think it was. In 2005-06 there have been eight mergers or re-auspices of business services and that has reduced the number of outlets by 13.

**Senator McLUCAS**—They are services that have actually closed?

**Ms Winzar**—Some of them are administrative mergers rather than actual service closures.

**Senator McLUCAS**—These are sites that have closed?

**Ms Winzar**—Sites, yes. They may still be operating on different sites. An example would be two outlets of one service in the same town which decide that there is no great advantage to being treated as two separate outlets for administrative reasons. They merge, but they maintain two separate sites, if that makes sense.

**Senator McLUCAS**—Could you provide us with a list of the sites that have closed—I understand some of them are mergers and whatever—and let us know what has occurred to the workers who have worked in those places prior to their closure. Given the time, Ms Winzar, can you provide that on notice?

**Ms Winzar**—I can, yes.

**Senator McLUCAS**—Is that all right?

**Ms Winzar**—Yes. In addition to the eight mergers which have reduced the number of outlets by 13, there have been three outlets that have transferred to the Department of Employment and Workplace Relations and two outlets which have closed due to financial reasons.

**Senator McLUCAS**—Three have transferred to open employment services?

**Ms Winzar**—That is correct.

**Senator McLUCAS**—And two have closed?

**Ms Winzar**—That is correct.

**Senator McLUCAS**—For financial reasons?

**Ms Winzar**—Yes.

**Senator McLUCAS**—I thought we were not going to lose any. I thought that was the promise from the Prime Minister.

**Ms Winzar**—In terms of services, but if an organisation says, 'It's absolutely not economical for us to maintain this laundry business, we'll take'—for example—'the 13 workers and put them in our furniture fabrication plant,' then they will do that.

**Senator McLUCAS**—Could you provide, Ms Winzar, on notice the names of the 13 that have merged, or whatever the term was, the three that have transferred and the two that have closed.

**Ms Winzar**—I can provide that information now if you wish.

**Senator McLUCAS**—Yes, that would be good. Can I take you to a comparison of the budget papers. It is where the indicator of what is proposed to occur for business services is outlined, for example, in this year's budget papers on page 111.

**Ms Winzar**—Yes.

**Senator McLUCAS**—You are indicating that it is going to cost \$10,500 per employment outcome in business service compared to last year's \$9,000. Why is that?

**Ms Winzar**—The main issue is that last year we were halfway through the transition to case base funding from the original block grant funding. If we go back several years, the average cost for employment outcome was around \$7,000. As we have moved people on to case base funding, there has been an increase of a little over \$1,000 a head for each person working in business services, so what you are seeing this financial year is our expectation of the full impact of case base funding in 2006-07.

**Senator McLUCAS**—The number of hours that each person is working is diminishing. Is there an explanation for that?

**Ms Winzar**—That is correct, it is a slight reduction on previous years. It is not a particularly significant reduction I would not have thought.

**Senator McLUCAS**—But if it keeps going that way, that would be a concerning trend, I would imagine.

**Ms Winzar**—Yes, it would be, if it continued to drop, but in a sense the workforce of business services reflects the broader workforce, which has a substantial number of part-time employees as well as some full-time employees.

**Senator McLUCAS**—And there are fewer people expected to be involved in business services this year than last year.

**Ms Winzar**—No, not at all. The number of individuals currently in business services is around 17,900, which is actually up about 500 people on this time last year. That is the number of people employed in business services, and that is data at the end of April. The

number of places in business services has gone up to 19,357 and that is an increase of around 600 on last financial year.

**Senator McLUCAS**—Am I misreading this document when I read the total number of people using business services? Are they the purchasers from business services?

**Ms Winzar**—Did you ask, ‘Are they the purchasers of business services’?

**Senator McLUCAS**—People who purchase from business services.

**Ms Winzar**—No, those are the people who are using business services as a place of employment. IT is the old debate about whether we call them clients or customers or employees. Not all of them are employees because some of them are job seekers.

**Senator McLUCAS**—Let us call them ‘people’. That might be nice.

**Ms Winzar**—Yes.

**Senator McLUCAS**—Then I do not understand that number. On page 111 it says that there are going to be 20,343 people using business services.

**Ms Winzar**—Yes.

**Senator McLUCAS**—Where does that figure come from?

**Ms Winzar**—That is the estimate of the full year impact, the number of people in a full year who will go through a business service, so the point in time number that I have just given you, which is the 17,900 figure, is those who are actually employed in a business service at 30 April. On top of that, there will be somewhere between 2,500 and 3,000 people who will work for part of the year in a business service. That figure on page 111 is the full-year impact.

**Senator McLUCAS**—And that 17,500 is the effective full-time figure?

**Ms Winzar**—‘Point in time figure’ would be the correct description.

**Senator McLUCAS**—In 2.2, can I get an update on the action that has occurred following the COAG ‘Young people in nursing homes’ announcement, please.

**Dr Harmer**—What was the question, sorry?

**Senator McLUCAS**—What has happened since the COAG announcement earlier this year?

**Mr Wallace**—We have had a range of activities since the announcement on 10 February. There has been a range of contacts between the Australian government and state and territory governments at ministerial level, and an initial piece of correspondence from Minister Brough to the relevant state and territory ministers outlining an offer of funding and the broad nature of the program, reflecting the COAG announcement. Subsequent to that there was a multilateral meeting of officials in Canberra on 16 March, looking to establish a common understanding about what it was COAG was seeking to achieve and to get some agreement at a multilateral level on some common elements to be reflected in each of the bilateral agreements. There was then a series of bilateral discussions with each state and territory government in April 2006, with more detailed discussions about the way in which the program would operate in each state and territory, and last week in Adelaide the national disability administrators met to review progress towards those bilateral agreements. There

have been a number of teleconferences, in between those meetings, between the Australian government and all state and territory jurisdictions, and all jurisdictions are working towards finalising bilateral agreements for 1 July.

**Senator McLUCAS**—The funding is in the 2006-07 budget, isn't it?

**Mr Wallace**—That is right.

**Senator McLUCAS**—We will receive some action in 2006-07.

**Mr Wallace**—That is right.

**Senator McLUCAS**—When is the survey that the Australian Health Care Associates are doing proposed to be completed?

**Mr Wallace**—The survey is in the field at present. I would need to check the precise details for when the survey is intended to be complete and the analysis complete. It has been discussed by national disability administrators, all of whom are keen to have that information available as soon as possible, to inform the process of assessments and design of programs by state and territory governments. Going from memory, the survey work was due to be completed quite soon, and the analysis completed within the next few months, but I would need to check the precise details to ensure I am accurate.

**Senator McLUCAS**—Could you find out when that is meant to be concluded? The other information that we would find useful is an understanding of the types of disability that they are going to categorise people as having. For example, there will be a group of people who have spinal injury, a group of people with multiple sclerosis and a group of people with Huntington's disease. If we could get an understanding of the categories of disability that they are assessing people for, that would be useful.

**Mr Wallace**—If you are after an understanding of the types of disability that younger people in residential aged care have, the survey should provide us with more detail on that than we have at present. I am confused about the term 'being assessed for'. Is it just the descriptive information you are after?

**Senator McLUCAS**—There are 6,500 people we are talking about and there is a group of them who are under 50 years old.

**Mr Wallace**—That is right.

**Senator McLUCAS**—We have to categorise that group of people. The government is intending to categorise that group of people under 50 years old into certain categories of disability so we know what their disability is. We do not know that now. I dare say there will be a list of people with spinal injury. What are the categories of people?

**Mr Wallace**—I am not sure that there is—

**Senator McLUCAS**—If that is the wrong way of thinking about the methodology of the survey, then I wonder if you could advise us how the survey is going to be conducted.

**Mr Wallace**—I am not sure the intention is to categorise people into types of disability as much as it is to understand more about the nature of the disabilities of younger people in residential aged care, but also to gain a greater understanding of what their level of care needs are and the types of things that would best support them outside a residential aged care

setting. Yes, we should through this survey have a better understanding of the nature and types of disabilities experienced by younger people in residential aged care. That will inform the services and supports and models that the states may employ in order to assist people to move out of residential aged care.

**Senator McLUCAS**—I wonder if there is a document that describes the contract between the department and Australian Health Care Associates that the committee could have which gives us an understanding of the methodology of the survey, because that is different to what I had understood it to be delivering.

**Mr Wallace**—I can describe the methodology in very broad terms. It is an agreement between the national disability administrators and Australian Health Care Associates, rather than between the Commonwealth or the department. In that sense it is not the property of the Commonwealth to provide. There is a survey methodology. The intention of the project is to better understand the population of younger people in residential aged care, the types of disabilities they experience, the level of care needs they have and what their needs and desires and interests are. That set of information would inform the way in which we roll the program out between the Commonwealth and states and territories. The survey is not intended to diagnose people's disorders or disabilities.

**Senator McLUCAS**—That has already occurred, though, has it not?

**Mr Wallace**—I imagine, to have been admitted to aged care through the ACAT process, there would need to be some level of diagnosis of their disability or at least of their care needs.

**Senator McLUCAS**—Those care needs will change over time, though. I am wondering why we are spending all this effort doing a snapshot of the care needs of individuals, down to individual people, at this point. I do not understand why we would do that.

**Mr Wallace**—At the last hearings we talked about the fact that we have a range of information about the nature of this population, but not in a great deal of detail and in order to plan the types of capital investments states and territories might require—the sorts of associated recurrent costs in terms of support within settings outside aged care they may require—we needed a much greater understanding of the nature and characteristics of the people who are in residential aged care at the moment. Unfortunately, we do not have a particularly rich understanding of their disabilities and their needs. In order to take decisions about the allocation of resources, we require a better set of information.

**Senator McLUCAS**—It is really gathering information about that group of people rather than identifying the care needs of that individual?

**Mr Wallace**—Yes, but the way in which we intend to get an understanding of the needs of the group broadly is to aggregate from individuals.

**Senator McLUCAS**—I understand that. The forward estimates for this program have an allocation of \$5.7 million in this year, but in the fourth year it is \$39 million, for example. Why is the money back-ended, so to speak?

**Mr Wallace**—We are still in the process of negotiating with the states and territories about precisely what phasing of funding is going to be most appropriate. The phasing that informed

the COAG decision was based on advice from state and territory governments that the predominant activity in the first year of the program would be contacting younger people in residential aged care and undertaking more detailed assessments of their care needs in determining what sorts of alternatives might be appropriate. The reason for a lower level of funding in the first year reflects lower capital costs and lower recurrent care costs, because the large degree of activity would focus around assessments.

Since then, in our discussions with the states and territories, it has become clear that there may be some more opportunities earlier in the program to assist some younger people to move out of residential aged care. It is entirely possible that we will be looking at adjusting the way in which that funding is phased across the five years to best reflect our changed understanding of when we might be able to spend some of the capital and recurrent funding.

**Senator McLUCAS**—Thank you, Mr Wallace. Can the committee be advised if FaCSIA was consulted by the Department of Human Services in the redrafting of the carer allowance application form?

**Mr Wallace**—Yes. I understand we were.

**Senator McLUCAS**—What do you think the substantive difference is?

**Mr Wallace**—Going from my recollection of when we were consulted—I think it was a month or a couple of months ago—I understand, and I may check with my colleagues here in the room, that there was a change based on some of the discussion in committee where there was concern expressed about the use of the term ‘diagnosis’ on the carer allowance (child) claim form. Are they the changes to which you refer?

**Senator McLUCAS**—Yes. So we have changed one word.

**Mr Wallace**—We need to be careful to ensure that the claim forms reflect the language and intention of the legislation. So the language in the claim form now, I believe, more accurately reflects the language and intention of the legislation—a small change but an important one.

**Senator McLUCAS**—I am yet to find an applicant who will be able to identify the difference, but we will leave that.

**Mr Wallace**—The change in language in the form may be as or more important to general practitioners than to the claimants.

**Senator McLUCAS**—That is the point I made in the committee. This is not about diagnosis. My final question goes to the changed provisions for access for respite for carers. When did the rules change so that people who had previously been able to access respite could not use those funds in support of their travel?

**Mr Wallace**—I am not aware of the change you are referring to. Are you referring to a document there?

**Senator McLUCAS**—It is a letter from a constituent who for many years has attended the Alice Springs Beanie Festival as a way of achieving respite for her two physically disabled and chronically ill adult children. She has been caring for them for 33 years and her respite is to go to the Alice Springs Beanie Festival where she volunteers. She now is advised that she cannot access funding from the Commonwealth through the Commonwealth carer respite

service because she is travelling for herself. Previously she had been able to do it and now she cannot. When did the change occur?

**Mr Wallace**—I would need to check the detail of that. Most respite for carers of children with disabilities would be provided by state and territory governments under the Commonwealth-State Territory Disability Agreement. I understand some state and territory governments broker their respite via the Commonwealth carer respite centres. Beyond that, most respite that is provided by the Commonwealth through the Commonwealth carer respite centres is the responsibility of the Department of Health and Ageing, although it does not seem that would apply in this case. There is some funding provided by FaCSIA for respite for young carers. Again, it does not seem that this case fits those criteria.

**Senator McLUCAS**—This is DOHA.

**Mr Wallace**—I suspect either DOHA or the Territory government could tell you.

**Mr Hunter**—Senator McLucas asked me some questions in relation to the area which has been affected by both Cyclone Monica and Cyclone Larry, which has been defined for assistance now. I have managed to get hold of the definition of the area, so with your permission I will table that.

**Senator ALLISON**—There was an announcement in February about extra money to reduce the number of young people in nursing homes. The budget says money will go towards reducing the number of young people in nursing homes by diverting those that are at risk and providing disability support for those already in nursing homes. What sort of work has been done on how that funding will be allocated across those three different sectors?

**Mr Wallace**—There has not been a final decision taken about the split of funding or effort across what were the three categories identified by COAG under the program. That is the subject of negotiations with the state and territory governments on a bilateral basis. The level of effort reflected across each of the three elements of the program may vary between jurisdictions. It is expected that there would be some level of effort in each of those categories, but there is not a prescription on how much should go towards each.

**Senator ALLISON**—What is in the budget for the next year from the Commonwealth?

**Mr Wallace**—There is a total of \$5.7 million in 2006-07.

**Senator ALLISON**—Is the Commonwealth looking for matching funding from the states?

**Mr Wallace**—It is.

**Senator ALLISON**—Exactly matching?

**Mr Wallace**—The COAG announcement was for a total of \$122 million from the Commonwealth, looking for matched funding from state and territory governments.

**Senator ALLISON**—\$122 million over what period?

**Mr Wallace**—Over five years.

**Senator ALLISON**—That does not quite add up to \$5.7 million over five years, does it?

**Mr Wallace**—\$5.7 million in 2006-07 from the Commonwealth.

**Senator ALLISON**—It ramps up, does it?

**Mr Wallace**—It ramps up. The total administered funding is \$38 million in each of the fourth and fifth years.

**Senator ALLISON**—What is it anticipated that that funding will cover?

**Mr Wallace**—The announcement from COAG indicated that the funding could cover quite a broad range of things, including capital funding, such as the construction of alternative accommodation, if that is what is required, or the modification of existing buildings or accommodation. It could also cover recurrent costs in alternative accommodation, so the costs of carers or support in alternative accommodation. Relevant fit-out in capital might include hoists and other equipment that might be required to make living in alternative accommodation appropriate. It may also be used in the other category in the COAG program, which is to better support people with disabilities who remain in residential aged care. So it is envisaged there will be a group of people, for a range of reasons, who may not be able to move out of residential aged care. A portion of this funding can be used to provide them with other age-appropriate services within the aged care setting.

**Senator ALLISON**—Through this process, has there been an estimate of the additional costs over and above nursing home or residential aged care accommodation that will be required in an operational sense?

**Mr Wallace**—We have looked at a range of different models and the costs associated with different models of alternative accommodation. We do not have a figure that suggests that the average annual cost of supporting someone outside residential aged care will be \$80,000, \$90,000 or \$100,000, but we have looked at a range of alternative models, including funding that was provided by the Department of Health and Ageing through the innovative pool program, which had a similar set of objectives. We have looked at that program, and the costs associated with it, and at a range of programs that have been funded by non-government organisations, including the MS Society, who have established small-group homes to support people previously in residential aged care. We have looked at the average costs of supported accommodation through the Commonwealth State Territory Disability Agreement, and from that range of things you can get a sense of what the average cost might be. We do not have a precise number or modelling as such, but we have an understanding of what the costs may be.

**Senator ALLISON**—What is that understanding?

**Mr Wallace**—It may range from quite low levels of costs, in the order of \$20,000 to \$30,000, to assist people to remain in informal care settings, up to amounts in the \$100,000-plus category for people with particularly high support needs in small group settings.

**Senator ALLISON**—Aren't those who are in nursing homes pretty much in high support circumstances anyway?

**Mr Wallace**—Many of them are. Going from memory, we have some data on the support category in aged care for this group of people. The vast majority are in the high support categories, RCS categories 5 to 8, but I think around 20 per cent—and I would have to check to be accurate—are in low care categories in aged care.

**Senator ALLISON**—On average, that would be about \$20 million a year that is available from the Commonwealth. If that were matched by the states, that would be \$40 million a year.



With that range of extra costs, what does that tell you about the number of people who will benefit from this? Will they all be those who are currently in nursing homes or will it be those who may be diverted from nursing homes? What is the current thinking about who this will benefit?

**Mr Wallace**—We have been looking at the fifth-year figure which, combined between the Australian government and the state and territory governments, would be \$76 million in the fourth and fifth years of the program. We have not yet come to a conclusion on the number of people we think that may support outside residential aged care, because it is subject to negotiations with the state and territory governments. It is expected that that funding would be split across the three categories COAG identified, the first of which was a prevention component. Your suggestion that some of the funding may go towards people who are not currently in residential aged care is correct.

Secondly, we expect some of the funding will be provided to people who are in aged care now and will remain in residential aged care to better reflect their needs in an age-appropriate way. A significant proportion would go towards supporting people who are currently in residential aged care outside that setting.

**Senator ALLISON**—Are you able to put some numbers on the people in each of those three categories?

**Mr Wallace**—Not at this stage. That is still subject to negotiation with the state and territory governments.

**Senator ALLISON**—What about a range? Are we talking hundreds or thousands? You have a figure to be spent. How does that divide itself up? You must have some idea of the number of people who will benefit.

**Mr Wallace**—We are still working with the state and territory governments. The program obviously is a voluntary program, and we are uncertain about how many people will wish to move from residential aged care. We suspect, if an appropriate alternative option can be provided, that many will move but we cannot be certain of that, and there is some evidence to suggest some people who have been in aged care, particularly for a long period of time, may wish to stay there.

We are also not certain of what the care need profile of those who choose to move will be. We are really not yet in a position to make any statement about how many people will fit into each of those categories. That is something we are still working through with state and territory governments and which we are unlikely to be very clear about until we are able to do at least a portion of the initial assessment process. We expect that during the first year of the program we will have a much clearer idea of the profile of people in residential aged care, their care needs and whether or not they wish to participate in the program.

**Senator ALLISON**—Is it anticipated that any of this program will be funded through the \$1.8 billion mental health package?

**Mr Wallace**—This is separate from the \$1.8 billion announcement.

**Senator ALLISON**—Will this money be available for existing facilities for young people who would otherwise be in nursing homes; for instance, the MS Society? Given the extra cost over and above what is publicly funded, will they be able to apply for some of this money?

**Mr Wallace**—On a day-to-day basis the program will be run by state and territory governments, so decisions about precisely where the funding goes will lie with the states and territories. I do not think I could comment on a hypothetical scenario. Should the MS Society have a proposal to support young people who may otherwise go into residential aged care, or have in the past, which they submit to a state and territory government and it is found to be one of the suitable applications, I cannot see any reason why it would not be considered.

**Senator ALLISON**—The MS Society has not raised this with me. I am not acting on their behalf. I am just interested to know how this works as an entitlement. Do you see it being that?

**Mr Wallace**—If by that you mean an entitlement to service providers who are servicing a group of people who—

**Senator ALLISON**—Or individuals who may qualify for this high level of support.

**Mr Wallace**—The level of funding is limited, so I think we would be cautious about referring to it as an entitlement. I am not sure that the level of funding is necessarily going to be sufficient to have this as an entitlement.

**Senator ALLISON**—Why is that?

**Mr Wallace**—Because it is a limited program.

**Senator ALLISON**—How will you determine who has priority to receive the service?

**Mr Wallace**—The determination of who accesses the program and priority of access to the program will lie with the state and territory governments, who will administer the program on a day-to-day basis. I imagine decisions will be taken in the way that decisions around targeted programs need to be, on the basis of some determination of priority, but those decisions will need to be taken by state and territory governments.

**Senator ALLISON**—How far short of an entitlement would it be, do you think, in monetary terms?

**Mr Wallace**—I could not comment on that.

**Dr Harmer**—I do not think we have done that estimate.

**Senator ALLISON**—You were sure it was not going to cover everyone who might be entitled to it.

**Dr Harmer**—Mr Wallace was saying it was because it was a capped amount.

**Senator ALLISON**—I understand that it is a capped amount. If it is a capped amount, who is beyond the cap who might otherwise be entitled to be part of the program? What percentage of those are being—

**Dr Harmer**—I do not think we have done the estimate.

**Mr Hunter**—I think Mr Wallace explained that it is extremely difficult at this stage of the process to make an estimate of the numbers and the costs per individual that might be assisted

through this scheme. It will become easier once assessments have been done, but even then that will still be quite a problematic calculation to make. Therefore, making a calculation of the number of people who would be eligible if this was an uncapped scheme is not possible.

**Senator ALLISON**—Once this program gets under way and the Commonwealth discovers how many people wish to benefit from it, and would be entitled to by virtue of the category of disability they have and need for support, is it then anticipated that there will be a review and that the funding will be adjusted to accommodate that need?

**Dr Harmer**—I do not think we could say that there is that anticipation, but there would always be the opportunity for government, either Commonwealth or state, to increase their effort in the light of additional information.

**Senator ALLISON**—Let me put the question to you another way. How was that \$76 million by year 5 established? Why was it \$76 million and not some other figure?

**Mr Wallace**—That was part of the negotiation of the broader health package announced by COAG on 10 February. There was an agreement by COAG members that that would be the amount of funding committed across all levels of government.

**Senator ALLISON**—That decision must have been based on some figures. There must have been something there that advised ministers and others about (a) what this would do and (b) the extent to which it would solve the problem.

**Mr Wallace**—I think the nature of the COAG announcement by the Prime Minister and premiers and chief ministers was that this was an important issue for all levels of government and that the funding announced across all levels of government was a significant contribution to address the issue.

**Senator ALLISON**—How significant was it?

**Mr Wallace**—The COAG announcement said it was a ‘significant contribution’.

**Senator ALLISON**—If someone said, ‘Well, this is not a significant contribution because it only meets half the unmet need,’ what does ‘significant’ mean in that sense?

**Mr Wallace**—I can only refer you back to the COAG announcement.

**Senator ALLISON**—The fact of the matter is that we started with a figure and whatever fits into that is what is provided for. Is that correct?

**Mr Wallace**—It is a limited amount of money and the Commonwealth, states and territories are determined to do as much as they can with that amount of funding.

**Senator ALLISON**—Indeed. Can the funding that has been announced be used for respite and rehabilitation support services to people who are living at home?

**Mr Wallace**—Yes.

**Senator ALLISON**—Which category does that fit under? It is the ones who would be diverted from going to nursing homes, is it?

**Mr Wallace**—That is right.

**Senator ALLISON**—Could you go back over the stage we are at with the COAG meetings—when the next meeting is due and when this agreement will be finalised?

**Mr Wallace**—I think the next scheduled meeting of COAG is in July.

**Senator ALLISON**—The whole matter will be finalised at that point?

**Mr Wallace**—In terms of COAG's announcement of a commitment, the matter was finalised, in effect, on 10 February. FaCSIA, on behalf of the Commonwealth, are now negotiating with state and territory governments about having the program established and operational in 2006-07. Money technically is available from 1 July, subject to the signing of bilateral agreements between the Commonwealth minister and the relevant state or territory minister.

**Senator ALLISON**—Will the Commonwealth's money be shared on an equal per capita basis around the states and territories or is it likely that there will be some formula developed?

**Mr Wallace**—No. The funding is being distributed on a population basis.

**Senator ALLISON**—Population. All states and territories are part of the negotiations?

**Mr Wallace**—They are.

**Senator ALLISON**—Are there any priority areas that have been flagged, like Indigenous populations or specific groups like MS or head-injured people? What is the thinking about those special needs?

**Mr Wallace**—There was only one agreement in terms of areas of priority in the COAG announcement—that is, the group of people under the age of 50 who are in residential aged care should be the initial priority. Beyond that, areas of focus or targets in different jurisdictions may vary. It is quite likely in the agreement with the Northern Territory that they will have a greater focus on Indigenous communities. There certainly has not been a determination that a particular category beyond that be a target. Acquired brain injury, multiple sclerosis and other neurological disorders have not been singled out in that regard.

**Senator ALLISON**—Do you expect the states to do that prioritising? How will they manage this if it is a capped figure? I can understand why you would choose those who are under 50, but where do you go from there in terms of meting out the available funds?

**Mr Wallace**—That is something that the state and territory governments will need to determine. I imagine that it will be a mixture of principle and pragmatism. In our multilateral discussions with the states and territories, we have talked about prioritising access on the basis of a determination of those who are most inappropriately placed in residential aged care, but interpretations of that principle might vary substantially. It is also true that in some states and territories there may be a natural fit between a location and a piece of capital or service available that may present itself to assist a state or territory to decide where to place its money first.

**Senator ALLISON**—What sort of arrangement will apply with the model, which I understand is likely to be fairly typical, where a place for young people might be co-located with an aged care facility and share the facilities—laundry, kitchen and other service quarters—and even staff? Does your work so far suggest that that is going to be the most typical model for accommodation?

**Mr Wallace**—No, I would not say that that is likely to be the most typical arrangement. It is certainly something that has been suggested in my discussions with a range of peak groups and stakeholders. That is an approach that has been suggested. Equally, there are models of small-group homes, individualised support—a range of alternative models. I would not be confident in saying that that is likely to be the prevailing model.

**Senator ALLISON**—I am dancing around this issue a bit. Does the \$122 million take into account the savings on the part of the Commonwealth for the people who exit nursing homes—the operational grants that you make available for such people? Is that taken off this amount or is there another net saving that the Commonwealth expects to make?

**Mr Wallace**—The \$122 million contribution from the Commonwealth does not bear any relation to residential aged care subsidies. That is not a part of the funding equation, no.

**Senator ALLISON**—So there would be an extra saving, assuming that people are moved out of residential aged care places. There is presumably a saving to the Commonwealth of those places.

**Mr Wallace**—The rationale was that those places would then be available for people over the age of 65 with aged care needs; that it not, in a sense, be a saving to the Commonwealth as much as freeing up residential aged care beds for other people who may require them. The funding will still be available for residential aged care at the current ratio of 108 beds per 100,000 people over the age of 75, I think.

**Senator ALLISON**—But you would assume that at some stage the saving would be reflected in the lack of need to establish aged care beds in some areas. Perhaps it is too difficult to work out. That is all for me, Chair.

**CHAIR**—We had better move to output groups 2.3 and 2.4 together, on carers and youth. Senator Siewert was going to ask questions but she has had to go.

**Senator CROSSIN**—We will put them on notice.

**Senator MOORE**—We apologise that you are the last section again, Ms Flanagan. We must do something about the arrangements.

**Senator Kemp**—I think the best way to deal with that, Senator, is to make the questions very short so we can all go home, just to show that you are really sorry!

**Senator MOORE**—They may all go on notice, Minister.

**Senator CROSSIN**—Ms Flanagan, I notice that Support for Women has only three main programs in the PBS. Is that correct?

**Ms Flanagan**—Yes, that is correct.

**Senator CROSSIN**—Does your section now actually have staff that support youth and women, or are you still just in charge of the Support for Women section?

**Ms Flanagan**—I am still a head of the Office for Women, which has two branches in it, but also I have added responsibility for youth to my responsibilities in the department.

**Senator CROSSIN**—In the Office for Women, there is the Support for Women output and special appropriations for pensions. Is that correct?

**Ms Flanagan**—The special appropriations are classified under the outcome for women, but I am not responsible for those, so if you have questions for those—

**Senator CROSSIN**—No, I do not have questions for those. How is the Office for Women structured these days?

**Ms Flanagan**—In a very similar way to the way it was structured when we were in Prime Minister and Cabinet. We still have two branches. I have two branch managers reporting to me, and we have now around 54 staff that work in the office.

**Senator CROSSIN**—Fifty-four staff managing just three programs. Is that correct?

**Ms Flanagan**—We do a lot more than just manage programs. We provide advice to government on a whole range of issues that might impact on women. We have a research program that we also undertake. We consult with women. We have around 66 women's groups that belong to a number of secretariats and we also perform international functions in terms of Australia's role on the international scene, such as at the United Nations, on women's issues. There is a whole range of things that we do.

**Senator CROSSIN**—On page 96 of the PBS, the \$21.970 million down to \$20.017 million is the administrative items. Is that correct?

**Ms Flanagan**—That is just the administered programs.

**Senator CROSSIN**—You have only 66 women's organisations now in your national secretariat. Is that correct?

**Ms Flanagan**—Sixty-six women's organisations that now belong to the secretariats, yes.

**Senator CROSSIN**—Have any been added to those lists since I would have last asked that question in November?

**Ms Flanagan**—Yes, certainly. In the last year, about four extra women's groups have joined.

**Senator CROSSIN**—We might get you to take on notice a list of those secretariats and who belongs to them now.

**Ms Flanagan**—Yes. We can do that for you.

**Senator CROSSIN**—Thanks. We have a whole range of questions but we are going to try and do some of the main ones for half an hour.

**Ms Flanagan**—Can I clarify? At the moment I have the branch manager responsible for youth here.

**Senator CROSSIN**—Yes. We are going to try and split them.

**Senator MOORE**—Fifteen minutes each.

**Ms Flanagan**—All right. Are we doing youth now, or women?

**Senator CROSSIN**—We might do some on women and then some on youth, and we will have to put the rest of them on notice.

**Ms Flanagan**—I will get the responsible branch managers to the table for you.

**Senator CROSSIN**—Can you give us a broad overview of the projects and programs that are funded through the Women's Safety Agenda?

**Ms Flanagan**—There are a number of elements. As you would know, these two programs were funded last year for four years. The elements that are included currently in the Women's Safety Agenda are that we will rerun the Violence Against Women—Australia Says No multimedia campaign. That is supported by a helpline that is currently run by Lifeline. We will continue to fund the Australian Domestic and Family Violence Clearinghouse and the Australian Centre for the Study of Sexual Assault.

We will also look into programs providing training for nurses in rural and regional areas so that they can recognise and deal with people presenting with domestic violence issues at GP practices. We are developing training resources for the criminal justice sector on sexual assaults so that they will deal better with women presenting with sexual assault issues. We will also fund the Australian Institute of Criminology to continue our research into sexual assault. As well, we will be providing training resources to Mensline so that they, again, will be able to assist men who are seeking help in dealing with domestic violence. We also have a grants program that we are running. There are 27 different projects that are being funded under that currently. They are the elements that make up the Women's Safety Agenda.

**Senator CROSSIN**—Take this on notice: are you able to give us a breakdown of the monetary value in the estimates provided against each of those program outlines?

**Ms Flanagan**—We can give you the expenditure to date, yes, against those elements.

**Senator CROSSIN**—But not the anticipated expenditure?

**Ms Flanagan**—No, Senator. We have been over this before.

**Senator CROSSIN**—You have not yet sat down and worked that out with the minister. Is that what you are going to do?

**Ms Flanagan**—We have a new minister, as you would appreciate, and each year we review what is going to be delivered and how we are going to do that. As you would appreciate, as we engage with consultants to find out how much these sorts of things will cost, that will change over time, and we are more than happy to provide you with the expenditure figures.

**Senator CROSSIN**—Just tell us what you have spent, then. For the Women's Safety Agenda, was that \$16.8 million in the 2005-06 PBS over a four-year period? Is that correct?

**Ms Flanagan**—No, that is just for that year.

**Senator CROSSIN**—How much of that was expended, then, in that year?

**Ms Flanagan**—We can give you the expenditure to date, but you would appreciate that we are within a month of the end of the financial year and we will be reporting that, of course, in the annual report.

**Senator CROSSIN**—Will any money that is not spent be rolled over into the \$15.4 million?

**Ms Flanagan**—If there is an underexpenditure, yes—though at the moment we are predicting that, across the three programs we currently run, we will pretty much spend on budget.

**Senator CROSSIN**—The three programs under the Women's Safety Agenda, you mean?

**Ms Flanagan**—No, sorry, under the women's programs. We have the Women's Leadership and Development Program, the Women's Safety Agenda—

**Senator CROSSIN**—I am talking about the \$15.4 million that is allocated for the Women's Safety Agenda for this PBS.

**Ms Flanagan**—What I am saying is that we might possibly overexpend in one program and underexpend in the other, but overall we expect that all of the money allocated to us to run women's programs will be expended this financial year.

**Senator CROSSIN**—You are going to provide us with an estimate of money expended to date. The Women's Safety Agenda runs for four years. We are coming into its second financial year. Is that correct?

**Ms Flanagan**—We will be coming into its second financial year, yes.

**Senator CROSSIN**—And only the \$75.7 million? There has been no additional money allocated to that this year in the PBS?

**Ms Flanagan**—No, Senator. You would appreciate that we received a sizeable amount of funding last year, so we are just using our energies to expend that money appropriately.

**Senator CROSSIN**—Will the Domestic and Family Violence Clearinghouse and the Australian Centre for the Study of Sexual Assault continue to be funded for the remaining years?

**Ms Flanagan**—Yes. We have recontracted with both of those organisations to continue to provide a service. I do not know whether it is for the full four years. It is for two years at the moment.

**Senator CROSSIN**—From when?

**Ms Flanagan**—I think we signed the contracts in December with both.

**Senator CROSSIN**—There may be an option to extend that for a third year.

**Ms Flanagan**—We need to look at it. There is an option in the contract, but we do not usually make these things for the full four years of expenditure.

**Senator CROSSIN**—On the Violence Against Women—Australia Says No campaign, when are the advertisements planned for screening on television and in cinema again?

**Ms Flanagan**—We have just done a burst in March and I think that there are some scheduled for September and then another burst of activity around November, around White Ribbon Day.

**Senator CROSSIN**—They were screened on TV in March?

**Ms Flanagan**—Yes, they were. There was a three-week screening. I think they started on 26 March, for three weeks.

**Senator CROSSIN**—How many fortnightly blocks have been screened since the campaign's implementation?



**Ms Flanagan**—I think that we are probably on about our fourth block, but they are not two weeks. They are usually—

**Senator CROSSIN**—Three.

**Ms Flanagan**—The last one was three weeks, and sometimes they are like two weeks on, one week off, another week on. I think it has been four or five.

**Senator CROSSIN**—Do you have posters still in pubs and cinema toilets, for example?

**Ms Flanagan**—Yes. That is part of the campaign. That will continue to run.

**Senator CROSSIN**—They are there, and you have been there?

**Ms Flanagan**—I would need to check whether they are still there. Again, with all of these bursts of activity there is usually a longer time frame that we leave. For example, what we call convenience advertising might go for one or two months.

**Senator CROSSIN**—What other venues are they displayed in?

**Ms Flanagan**—I think that there is convenience, which are usually toilets, but we do things like cinema advertising, and again it goes for a longer period, and we also place ads in magazines. Again, we have a media buy based on magazines that our target audiences read.

**Senator CROSSIN**—Were any of these posters sent to remote communities?

**Ms Flanagan**—I would need to check where they are actually sent, but as part of the campaign there is an Indigenous stream. It is designed to target Indigenous audiences, so we have placements in magazines that are read by and distributed to Indigenous people, as well as having what we call Indigenous ambassadors that feature on posters that talk about the unacceptability of violence against women.

**Senator CROSSIN**—Can you take on notice, then, particularly which magazines the Indigenous stream was targeted in?

**Ms Flanagan**—Yes, Senator.

**Senator CROSSIN**—And if any posters were sent to remote communities, and where?

**Ms Flanagan**—Yes, we can get back to you.

**Senator CROSSIN**—I am hoping you have sent a big box and a big bundle of them to Port Keats now.

**Ms Flanagan**—We will check that for you.

**Senator CROSSIN**—Will the campaign be run for the remainder of the Women's Safety Agenda or just in September-November?

**Ms Flanagan**—The intention is that we will continue to run it. You would appreciate that we continue to test whether the ads are still having an impact—and certainly the evaluation suggests that they are, that there is much higher recognition in the community about this issue—but we will be evaluating whether we do need to change the ads in any way, of course, as we go through this. But certainly the intention is that there is a community awareness raising component of the Women's Safety Agenda, and we will continue to deliver on that over the forward estimates period.

**Senator CROSSIN**—What is your relationship with your state and territory counterparts when it comes to this campaign?

**Ms Flanagan**—Which counterparts would you be referring to?

**Senator CROSSIN**—I am assuming there might be either women's offices or women's policy units in state and territory governments. Do you work in with any campaigns they may be running?

**Ms Flanagan**—We have an ongoing relationship with all of the women's offices around Australia that work to ministers for women. They have an annual meeting, and they have set up under the ministers for women what is called a safety task force that all of the women's officials are on. In that way they exchange information about what is going on in the states and work with the states to try and combat domestic violence in a coordinated way.

**Senator CROSSIN**—You have run an evaluation of the helpline, have you?

**Ms Flanagan**—We have run an evaluation of the helpline, yes.

**Senator CROSSIN**—When was that done?

**Ms Flanagan**—That was done, I think, mid last year, sort of in the second half of last year.

**Senator CROSSIN**—What were the results?

**Ms Flanagan**—The results were that the helpline was performing as we would expect it to in terms of the objective that we had set for it, which was to deliver a 24-hour-a-day, seven-day-a-week service where people's calls were answered by trained, experienced counsellors.

**Senator CROSSIN**—Are we able to get a copy of that evaluation?

**Ms Flanagan**—No, Senator. I think this has been asked before. Because it is part of a campaign, we have been advised by the Government Communications Unit that we are not able to give out that report.

**Senator CROSSIN**—How many calls have been received on the helpline?

**Ms Flanagan**—I believe there are around 64,000 that have been received to date.

**Senator CROSSIN**—Do you get any telephone calls from Port Keats?

**Ms Flanagan**—I do not know that we can go into that level of detail, for privacy reasons.

**Senator CROSSIN**—Have you got the breakdown by state and territory?

**Ms Flanagan**—Yes, and I think that we might have provided that before. We are happy to provide the breakdown again.

**Senator CROSSIN**—That would be in February that you provided that, or November.

**Ms Flanagan**—I am not quite sure, but I think we have provided something like that before. We can take that on notice and provide it to you.

**Senator CROSSIN**—Was there a public tendering process for the new contract?

**Ms Flanagan**—Yes, there was. It went to open tender for the delivery of the helpline.

**Senator CROSSIN**—When did that close?

**Ms Flanagan**—I think it was advertised in March and closed at the end of March. We are currently going through the assessment process and we expect to have a new provider signed up ready to start on 1 July.

**Senator CROSSIN**—They will take over from Lifeline. Is that correct?

**Ms Flanagan**—The contract will be extended from 1 July. I am not at liberty to disclose how the contract negotiations are going or who we might be in contract negotiations with until we complete that process.

**Senator CROSSIN**—Lifeline have not relinquished their contract on this. Did they reapply for that?

**Ms Flanagan**—We only have a contract with them until 30 June, so our intention is to have the new provider up and running by 1 July. At this stage, I am not at liberty to disclose who applied to do this. When we finalise the arrangements, we can let you know.

**Senator CROSSIN**—How much has Lifeline been paid to date under the current contract?

**Ms Flanagan**—I do not know that we have added that up and have that with us, but we can take it on notice for you.

**Senator CROSSIN**—Can you also provide the amount in line items for each year?

**Ms Flanagan**—Yes.

**Senator CROSSIN**—Have you placed any requirements for qualifications of phone staff under the new contract?

**Ms Flanagan**—What do you mean by that?

**Senator CROSSIN**—Are you requiring people who answer the phone to be qualified in any way?

**Ms Flanagan**—We required them to be qualified under the current arrangements as well, but the request for tender was drawn up in such a way that we took account of the evaluation results. We are asking for a training and development plan to be submitted by the provider. I think we also have requirements in terms of what we call ‘warm transfers’. We have requirements in terms of them having a comprehensive list of service providers that they might need to refer people on to. There are a number of those. In fact, I think we can give you the RFT, which is a public document, so that you can see the sorts of things that we are asking tenderers to put in for.

**Senator CROSSIN**—What procedure is in place for people to complain about the campaign or to complain about helpline?

**Ms Flanagan**—In the RFT I think we also ask them to put in a complaints mechanism. We have made it very clear in a series of newsletters to providers that if they hear of complaints they can put them in to the Office for Women. We have also asked Lifeline to provide to us any complaints that they receive directly and have come up with remedial action that we think is warranted once we have seen those complaints.

**Senator CROSSIN**—What happens then? How are people’s concerns dealt with?

**Ms Flanagan**—We raise them with Lifeline. The New South Wales women's refuge made a number of calls to test the helpline. We asked them to provide us with the dates and the times that they did that, which meant that Lifeline was then able to identify which counsellors were answering those calls. If they believed that action was warranted, for example, to assist them to deal with the sorts of scenarios that were being presented by the New South Wales women's refuge centre, then they received further training or assistance to do that.

**Senator MOORE**—Ms Loveday, we will be putting a series of questions on notice about different programs. We want to get some updates on the progress of the National Youth Roundtable. Do you have budgets for the roundtable for 2005 and 2006?

**Ms Loveday**—The National Youth Roundtable is funded out of departmental funds. As I think we have explained at previous estimates, they cost what they cost. I can give you what we have expended this financial year. It is not necessarily allocated just to one roundtable. It may cover a little bit of last year's and a little bit of next year's, because we start work quite early on the roundtable.

**Senator MOORE**—So there has been no change in the way the funding operates. It is still out of existing funding, but you can tell us what you have spent.

**Ms Loveday**—Yes, I can.

**Senator MOORE**—This is the first year that the numbers have been 30. Is that right?

**Ms Loveday**—That is correct.

**Senator MOORE**—It went down.

**Ms Loveday**—Yes.

**Senator MOORE**—To date, has there been a saving? The last figures we have on record are 2003-04, where it cost about \$460,000.

**Ms Loveday**—Expenditure to date has been \$221,901, and that is to 15 May. That is a slight increase on the previous year, 2004-05. Even though the numbers were reduced to 30, part of the reason we had that reduction was to allow us to more intensively manage the group and to help them in a much more active way with their projects. Whereas the 2004-05 group had two meetings per year and worked on their projects out of session from all around the country, this year we have brought the groups together for two project meetings in addition to the two main meetings, so that we could help them interact with other departments, where they were working on projects that were relevant to other agencies' portfolio responsibilities, but also have some extra speakers who could help them with their overall appreciation of what happens in government, how systems work and what the budget process is like. They have to work with government and they asked to understand more about it, so we were seeking to respond to some of the things that they were interested in.

**Senator MOORE**—Is that part of the rationale in terms of changing the focus and the intensity as opposed to the large numbers?

**Ms Loveday**—Yes, that was a large part of it. We found that managing the 50 was quite difficult in trying to do that sort of intensive work.

**Senator MOORE**—Are you expecting significant expenditure in the next month, bills unpaid? I am looking at that last figures that we have on record: \$460,000 in 2003-04 and \$221,000 to date.

**Ms Loveday**—We have another major meeting of the roundtable in June.

**Senator MOORE**—So there will be another one?

**Ms Loveday**—Yes.

**Senator MOORE**—Will there be a clear comparison when you have that final figure?

**Ms Loveday**—Yes.

**Senator MOORE**—Has there been a formal evaluation of the roundtable process? It has been going for a while now and it has a high profile and public awareness. Has there been an evaluation of how it operates and the experiences of people involved in all of those things?

**Ms Loveday**—At the end of each roundtable we seek informal feedback from the young people who have been involved. We have not done a formal evaluation of that particular activity as such. It is much more a constant dialogue with young people and stakeholders.

**Senator MOORE**—It is still relatively unusual for a program that costs that much money not to have a formal evaluation process now in its seventh or eighth year.

**Ms Loveday**—It is not a program as such, Senator. It is funded out of departmental funds. It is not anything like a lapsing program out of administered funds.

**Senator MOORE**—Has it ever been audited?

**Ms Loveday**—We seek to improve it every year and make it work better, and that is why we have instituted some substantial changes for this year. One of the projects that the current group of roundtable members are undertaking is about how government consults with young people, and they have been seeking input from agencies across the Australian government of how they seek to consult with young people generally, and also on specific issues, and they are going to give a project report on that. That certainly will be of interest to us. They have been talking to me about it as well. In terms of getting an external independent evaluation, we have not gone down that road as yet.

**Senator MOORE**—Who is doing that last review you were talking about?

**Ms Loveday**—That is one of the projects that the group of young people are doing.

**Senator MOORE**—Can we see a list of recent projects? There are a wide range, and I was quite taken by a couple of the mental health ones. Can you also give us a list of applicants for 2006?

**Ms Loveday**—For the current group?

**Senator MOORE**—Yes.

**Ms Loveday**—Yes, 442 applications were received for 2005-06.

**Senator MOORE**—That was the first time and there were 30 that were successful?

**Ms Loveday**—That is correct.

**Senator MOORE**—Who makes the choice? I do know that from somewhere.

**Ms Loveday**—There is a range of criteria that the applicants have to address. Departmental officers short-list to about 80 from that group. Then we refer those 80 to a panel of young people, who make the final recommendations to the minister.

**Senator MOORE**—How many young people applied for the National Indigenous Youth Leadership Group in 2006-07?

**Ms Loveday**—In 2005-06, 67 nominations were received, and that was a 26 per cent increase on 2004-05.

**Senator MOORE**—Was there a marketing campaign for that?

**Ms Loveday**—We went to as many of the Indigenous media as we could, plus other networks that we had through our state and territory offices—ICCs and that sort of thing—to encourage as many applications as possible. We are going to have a look very shortly at how successful that was—whether we were able to get to the more remote areas and what was the range of applications we received from young people.

**Senator MOORE**—In the process, do you ask them how they found out about the program?

**Ms Loveday**—I would have to take that on notice. I am not sure.

**Senator MOORE**—And I have the same question as to the youth parliament, in terms of finding out where young people find out about these programs. What is the current status of the Australian Forum of Youth Organisations and the Youth Advisory and Consultative Forum?

**Ms Loveday**—I think I mentioned maybe this time last year that we were having a look at the advisory groups. When I came into this position, I met with several members of each group. There was a level of confusion about the roles of each group and whether they were operating effectively, so we undertook to have a look at whether what they were saying was widespread or what we could do about it and, from our point of view and the minister's, whether they were getting value from those groups. There was a variety of opinion from group members. We are still in that process. We have had a change of parliamentary secretary and minister, so that review that we started well over a year ago has not been completed.

**Senator MOORE**—Is that an evaluation?

**Ms Loveday**—Not so much an evaluation but looking at what role were they constituted to undertake and whether that is the sort of advisory mechanism that provides the best advice to the minister and to the government.

**Senator MOORE**—The original group still exists? On paper, the advisory group still exists?

**Ms Loveday**—We found that the groups themselves did not keep some of that work going. There were a number of projects, and I cannot bring to mind exactly what they were, that did not seem to progress. You would have to ask: was the work what was needed?

**Senator MOORE**—What is your understanding of—I think your term was ‘having a look at’; I will not use ‘review’—your current process of looking at how they are operating, because it has been a while.

**Ms Loveday**—We are still in discussions with the minister.

**Senator MOORE**—Can we put the next round of estimates perhaps as a goal towards having some response?

**Ms Loveday**—That would be good.

**Senator MOORE**—Is there a budget for that advisory process?

**Ms Loveday**—That is out of departmental funds. If there were meetings, we would be paying the costs of those meetings.

**Senator MOORE**—Have there been meetings in the last 12 months?

**Ms Loveday**—It has not met this financial year, no.

**Senator MOORE**—I will sneak funding for National Youth Week in before the chair notices it is 11 o'clock.

**CHAIR**—That is cutting it fine, Senator.

**Ms Loveday**—I do not have that information. Another part of the department—the events department—takes care of that. We could take any questions on notice.

**Senator MOORE**—Senator Crossin and I will have a look at these and put them in a form of questions on notice. You can see where the questions are coming from, that kind of data.

**Ms Loveday**—Yes.

**Senator MOORE**—Thank you, Chair.

**CHAIR**—The final siren has gone. No problem with the timekeepers, no time on. We have come to the end of our inquiry into FaCSIA's portfolio. I thank Dr Harmer and all of his officers who have attended over the last two days and put in such a strong effort here to support us and answer our questions. Thank you very much. I would give you another day or two off from here if I could but of course I cannot. Thank you very much, Minister, for your sitting through these last two days. I understand we have a new minister at the table tomorrow.

**Senator Kemp**—Senator, I have had a chance to view a range of Senate committees over a long period of time and I must congratulate the senators and the officers of this committee. This has been a particularly well-conducted committee. These people have been able to avoid too many heavily political attacks. I would say that it has been an extremely well conducted committee hearing, and my congratulations go to the officers for their performance.

**CHAIR**—Thank you indeed.

**Committee adjourned at 11.01 pm**