



**LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY FOR THE AUSTRALIAN CAPITAL
TERRITORY**

**STANDING COMMITTEE ON ENVIRONMENT, CLIMATE
CHANGE AND BIODIVERSITY**

(Reference: [Inquiry into ACT Budget 2021-22](#))

Members:

**DR M PATERSON (Chair)
MR A BRADDOCK (Deputy Chair)
MS L CASTLEY**

TRANSCRIPT OF EVIDENCE

CANBERRA

THURSDAY, 21 OCTOBER 2021

**Acting secretary to the committee:
Dr F Scott (Ph: 620 75498)**

By authority of the Legislative Assembly for the Australian Capital Territory

Submissions, answers to questions on notice and other documents, including requests for clarification of the transcript of evidence, relevant to this inquiry that have been authorised for publication by the committee may be obtained from the Legislative Assembly website.

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Amended 20 May 2013

The committee met at 9.32 am.

Appearances:

Rattenbury, Mr Shane, Attorney-General, Minister for Consumer Affairs, Minister for Water, Energy and Emissions Reduction and Minister for Gaming

Environment, Planning and Sustainable Development Directorate

Ponton, Mr Ben, Director-General

Rutledge, Mr Geoffrey, Deputy Director-General, Sustainability and the Built Environment, Environment, Water and Emissions Reduction

Walker, Mr Ian, Executive Group Manager and Conservator of Flora and Fauna, Environment, Heritage and Water

McGlynn, Mr Gene, Executive Group Manager, Climate Change and Energy

THE CHAIR: Good morning. I declare open the third online public hearing for the Standing Committee on Environment, Climate Change and Biodiversity inquiry into the ACT budget 2021-22. In the proceedings today we will hear from the Minister for Water, Energy and Emissions Reduction and Minister for Gaming, Minister Rattenbury.

Before we begin, on behalf of the committee, I would like to acknowledge that we meet today on Ngunnawal land. We respect the Ngunnawal people and their continuing culture, and the contribution that they make to the life of this city and this region.

On behalf of the committee, I would like to welcome and thank Minister Rattenbury and officials for appearing today. I understand that you have been forwarded a copy of the privilege statement. Could you each confirm for the record that you understand the privilege implications of the statement?

Mr Rattenbury: Fine for me, thank you.

THE CHAIR: Everyone is nodding. I also remind you that the proceedings are being recorded by Hansard for transcription purposes, and webstreamed and broadcast live. When taking a question on notice, it would be helpful if witnesses use the words “I will take that as a question on notice.” This will help the committee and witnesses to confirm questions taken on notice from the transcript.

We will not invite an opening statement and we will start with questions. Minister, could you talk about the Healthy Waterways funding that has been allocated in the budget? How much is being spent and what is happening to expand the project?

Mr Rattenbury: Members would know that there has been quite a program over the last number of years. We have invested in 19 hard infrastructure assets across the city. As part of both the February budget and this budget, the Healthy Waterways program is continuing.

The specific funding in this budget committed a further \$5 million to expand the

Healthy Waterways program. This consisted of \$1.6 million in capital works and \$3.4 million in expenses. You will see in the budget papers that, on the expense side of things, this essentially provides the money for the staff to continue over the four years. I think that is a real positive. There is a retention of knowledge and a commitment to the ongoing work of the team. Given the expertise they have built up in the networks in recent years, I think this is very positive.

You will also see that the capital investment is specifically for this year. That is to enable projects to continue. Through the course of this year, the team are doing further work to identify the capital projects for the future. I expect to return to the budget to seek capital funding for ongoing projects in future years.

THE CHAIR: Can you provide an update on any consideration given to establishing a wetlands at Yarralumla Bay?

Mr Rattenbury: Let me defer to Mr Walker on this one.

Mr Walker: There are a range of projects being considered, going forward. They include some work associated with the floating wetlands at Yerrabi Pond, in the Gungahlin area, and some swales being proposed to help mitigate impacts in Lake Tuggeranong. They are the ones that we are focused on at this point in time with the immediate funding. As the minister highlighted, we are looking at a range of mitigation options for reducing nutrient flows into the system across a number of sites.

The work also looks at catchments. Across the catchment, where are the nutrient loads coming into the various lakes across the territory? Those catchment plans will help to define where future infrastructure, wetlands or other mitigation—nutrient mitigation—tools are used. That is the work that is being planned and has commenced with the announcement of the recent budget.

MS CASTLEY: Minister, with over \$3½ million in the budget for Healthy Waterways, why is there no funding yet for a water office, despite that being one of your election promises?

Mr Rattenbury: That is a different program, Ms Castley. That is not funded as part of the Healthy Waterways program. Healthy Waterways is very specifically about improving the water quality in the various lakes and ponds around town, and the tributary streams that come into them. We are continuing work on the office for water. Consultation and policy work have been undertaken through the course of this year, and that policy work is continuing.

MS LAWDER: You mentioned Lake Tuggeranong and some work coming up this year addressing the nutrients coming into Lake Tuggeranong. Do you currently have any measurement of the efficacy of the GPTs, the bioretention ponds upstream from the entrance to Lake Tuggeranong that you are basing this work on? What measurement have you done?

Mr Rattenbury: There have been significant studies undertaken of the whole catchment, as Mr Walker was talking about. The approach very much now is looking at understanding where the nutrients are coming from, what is driving that and where

to target the various investments. In terms of the specifics on the measures for Lake Tuggeranong, I will ask Mr Walker whether he has any data to hand.

Mr Walker: Water quality monitoring across the lake is done at a range of different levels. I will step through a number of those, so that you have that information. This builds on the briefings that were provided to you and Ms Castley earlier.

Flow monitoring—water volumes—is undertaken specifically at Lake Tuggeranong. It includes some gauge levels that are used and routinely recorded for measuring water volume. Water quality monitoring is undertaken by the Upper Murrumbidgee Waterwatch program. That includes measuring items such as pH, connectivity, dissolved oxygen and various nitrates. That is reported through our Waterwatch and Catchment Health Indicator Program. That is available on our website and it is reported annually. It is also reported as part of our annual reporting cycle within our annual report.

We also undertake specific water monitoring at two sites in the lake during the warmer months. That is to pick up the nutrients associated with bacteria and algae. That program continues across, particularly, the summer period when, as I said, the temperatures are warmer.

They are the main monitoring regimes that we have in place. We also have some activities undertaken by the University of Canberra, which is part of our research program, and that picks up a host of other water measurements as well.

MS LAWDER: My question specifically was about the efficacy of the upstream treatments, the GPTs, the ponds and the bioretention areas, rather than in-the-lake monitoring. How do you know that the upstream treatments are working?

Mr Walker: The upstream treatments pick up the nutrients and trap the nutrients as designed. Also, we are trying to measure the outcome of that work—the capturing and efficacy associated with those particular treatments. There are multiple treatments in what we call a treatment chain. Those chains are designed to pick up the different levels of nutrients.

It is important that we measure the outcome of that; that is, whether we have reduced nutrients into the lake. That is the primary measure by which we determine the success of these types of programs. As has been reported previously, that includes some 1,900 tonnes of nutrients across our lakes, which we have modelled across that time.

MR BRADDOCK: As we go around all of our local lakes in the electorates, with Yerrabi Pond, I definitely welcome the floating wetland there. I have one concern in terms of the amount of ribbon weed overgrowth that occurs in that pond. There seems to be an issue in that Transport Canberra and City Services, who are responsible for the urban pond, are reluctant to manage that effectively and are not calling upon the expertise that lies within your directorate. Can you please go through some detail on how to manage that?

Mr Walker: Ribbon weed plays a very useful role within the lake system. It helps to

reduce blue-green algae outbreaks and provides a mechanism by which nutrients are absorbed. The very fact that you are seeing growth in ribbon weed is a consequence of it doing the job that it is meant to do. Unfortunately, as you know, ribbon weed dies; then you get the rotting smell of that dead weed.

We are working with Transport Canberra and City Services on the best way to remove that from the system. That is quite a complicated scenario in a lake setting. Other jurisdictions use a range of mechanical harvesting tools to facilitate that. That is something that at this point we have not progressed to. Certainly, the expertise within the Healthy Waterways team, our water scientists and our ecologists, is providing that sort of information to Transport Canberra and City Services, to look at what the solutions are and what can be put on the table. Acknowledging that they are relatively small spaces in Yerrabi Pond where that is occurring, with the addition of the floating wetland and other upstream actions that are undertaken, we might even see some reduction in that weed occurring.

MR BRADDOCK: Minister, the ACT Conservation Council's response to the ACT budget included some items about climate change. They said that the big-ticket items in the climate budget were positive but were unlikely to deliver the scale of emissions reductions on a par with the money invested. They were talking about the Callam Offices energy efficiency refit and the ESA vehicle replacement program. Do you have a response to that comment?

Mr Rattenbury: This is a debate that we need to have. With respect to the two projects that have been specifically referred to, the Callam Offices energy efficiency upgrade is very important. The government wants to reduce its own greenhouse gas emissions profile. Making our buildings more energy efficient is a really important part of that, in terms of both cutting down the fuels we are using now, where we potentially still have gas heating and cooling systems, and in reducing costs for government. Callam Offices is an odd building. Anyone who has been in there knows that, so there is some expense involved in that one. I am really excited that the Emergency Services Agency have taken on the zero-emissions challenge. We were some of the earliest adopters of low emissions, zero emissions, in emergency services vehicles.

They are necessary projects, but the underlying point that the Conservation Council makes is correct, in that we also need to make sure that we are scrutinising our projects, getting good value for money and trying to get the best bang for buck, to use that old expression, out of the projects we are investing in.

MR BRADDOCK: Do we need to look at changing the balance of the projects to ensure that we do achieve that bang for buck?

Mr Rattenbury: There will always be a subjective debate on that. We have to reduce our emissions right across the sector. These two projects will reduce our emissions. I take it from the Conservation Council's comments that they probably had some other priorities. These debates will go on about what we should do first.

Certainly, with the two projects that have come forward, it was opportune to do those at the time. Callam Offices is about to be revamped and re-used, so it makes sense to

do it now. It may not necessarily have been number one on the list, but you have to weigh up those factors.

Similarly, with the Emergency Services Agency, they need to replace vehicles. I would rather see them replace them now with the low-emissions options rather than going and buying the standard old diesel version which will last for another 10 or 15 years. Value for money and timing are factors that you have to weigh up in making these decisions.

MR BRADDOCK: The Conservation Council also mentions that the budget does not have enough funding for behavioural change and driving that through in the community in terms of emissions reductions. Is that something we need to be looking at?

Mr Rattenbury: What is clear is that, in reducing our emissions in the future, we need community engagement. There is no doubt about that. In many ways the move to 100 per cent renewable electricity was largely led by government. Whilst the community have been very supportive of that, they did not need to change their own behaviour, whereas the issues we are down to now, like the transition away from gas and the need to reduce our transport emissions, do require the community to take individual actions and individual decisions. By the community, I mean in the broader sense—householders, businesses and the like.

Clearly, we need to engage people to help us to make those transitions. We do have a number of investments already. We have things like our community zero-emissions grants. We have just revamped the emissions reduction website. We think that will make it a lot easier for people to access. We are investing in those measures, and I am sure there are other things that we will need to do in the future.

THE CHAIR: During previous inquiry hearings, we heard from one of the research councils. They suggested that the ACT was the perfect environment to do research around the social impacts of emissions reduction. Has any consideration been given to pilot projects around behaviour change and looking to do some innovative things in that space, to get the community on board around emissions reduction?

Mr Rattenbury: There certainly is. Some of that is built into the projects we are already doing, but there is always scope to do more. I am quite comfortable with picking up what other jurisdictions have already done. We have no need to reinvent the wheel. Looking at research coming from other jurisdictions is very valuable to us. It might be a case of picking something up and copying it, or adapting it a little bit for local circumstances. Mr Rutledge might want to add something on this point.

Mr Rutledge: I acknowledge the privilege statement. We build a level of behavioural insights. When we are talking about behaviour change programs, there are different elements to it. Some is actually about learning by doing, getting demonstration projects up and being able to see things in the field. Some of those demonstration projects could include emergency services vehicles; it actually tells the story to a different audience and helps industry to move along.

Behaviour change is also an outcome of our community zero-emissions grants. That

involves small grassroots campaigners and programs that normally harness a small group of people to make a change, and that has its own effect.

The minister has already mentioned the website. There were a lot of focus groups, and a lot of analysis of who was currently using our website, what recognition it had and how useable it was, in revamping the website. With the new website we have tried to switch it from what we think people should know to what people come to us to know. If we make it easier, we know that, with anyone's interaction with a website, there comes a point where you just give up. We do not want to reach that point. People should be able to make one, two or three clicks; about four clicks is about as far as you go before you have lost the audience. We needed to revamp our website so that everything was in the first three. That makes the information accessible.

Also, we need targeted programs, which are more labour intensive. I talked a little bit about this when we appeared with the Minister for Climate Action earlier in the week. With that energy literacy program, we will target very vulnerable Canberrans and get people who are skilled in this to work in their house and work out how they can use their property in a more energy efficient way. That is very labour intensive and it is pretty costly, but we know that, for the consumer or the household, it makes a real difference to their thermal comfort, their living standards and their bill prices. A positive spin-off from that is emissions reduction as well.

We do look to research, social research, behavioural insights where appropriate, trial, test and deliver, across the board. Knowing our audience and knowing Canberrans is where you started this question, Dr Paterson. We need to know who lives in our city and what their needs are at that time. I will give a really quick example. With the choice of appliance that you make, if your hot water service breaks or your fridge breaks and you are short of cash, you have to make a decision quickly, that day. Having the information either online or at point of sale to help people to make a smart choice, or easily accessible information, can make a difference to the next five to eight years, depending on the appliance.

We are looking for all of those opportunities that sometimes require partnering with business, sometimes just straight marketing and sometimes developing programs. That program could be delivered by government or through one of our community partners like St Vincent de Paul.

MS CASTLEY: Minister, in budget statements E you have added a target to reach 6,510 households to improve their sustainability through government initiatives. I am interested in how many households last year participated in schemes by changing one gas appliance as opposed to completely getting off gas. Do you have those figures?

Mr Rattenbury: Not off the top of my head, Ms Castley. Mr Rutledge is shaking his head as well.

Mr Rutledge: Ms Castley, we will take the specifics on notice. If we are talking about gas, your big energy user is your space heater, then it is your hot water system, then your cooktop. Switching out just your space heating can make a big difference in emissions and, more importantly, in bills. For most people that we are working with, bill reduction is the outcome they are looking for. Emissions reduction is a secondary

measure. Switching over space heating, then hot water and cooktop would be our order of priority at any point. As I say, that relates to bills and thermal comfort.

Total gas conversions is a really difficult question on which to find an answer—I know you have asked it in a couple of ways before—because there are different measuring tools. We have been to public housing dwellings, so we know about that. We know that every day Canberrans are making a choice to swap out an appliance, but disconnection data is very much a lag indicator, because some people will have their meter removed, some people will not have their meter removed and some people will change retailers. It is quite difficult to get that specific data.

We will do our best to get that information for you. As I say, when we are helping a vulnerable household, our priority is always space heating first, then we would do hot water and then we would do cooktop, in that order. Not every household has gas across all three, but that is the priority that we aim for.

MS CASTLEY: Minister, given that you require 10,000 households to disconnect totally from gas and it is difficult to measure that, how are we going to reach these targets? How can Canberra be sure that we are reaching the targets that you have set?

Mr Rattenbury: There are a couple of things there, Ms Castley. We have legislated greenhouse gas targets. I assume that is what you are referring to. We will need to meet those through a range of measures, through household and business—reductions in both gas usage and transport emissions. There is a whole—

MS CASTLEY: I believe there was a specific figure to get 10,000 households completely disconnected from gas per year. That was the figure I understood was the one we were reaching for.

Mr Rattenbury: That is not a formal target that we have. You are possibly recalling a series of scenarios that were done by the directorate to contemplate some of the ways we could get to the emissions targets that we have. That is maybe what you are referring to.

MS CASTLEY: No, I believe it is 60,000 households by 2025 off gas. That is—

Mr Rattenbury: That is not a formal government target. As I say, it is probably a scenario. A series of scenarios were put together to contemplate some of the pathways we would need in order to get to the targets that we have.

MS CASTLEY: What is the government's formal target?

Mr Rattenbury: We do not have a formal target for the number of households to get off gas. We have a greenhouse gas reduction target, which is legislated for 2025, and we have also made it clear that our intent is to move away from fossil fuel gas by 2045. The government is currently developing the strategy to get us to that place, but we have not formalised that strategy. We have set the goal, and part of that is being really upfront with the community very early, and saying that this is the future direction, so that people can start to make choices when they are replacing appliances. The most cost-effective way to do it is simply to replace with a non-gas alternative at

the time of changeover.

MS CASTLEY: If we are not going to reach the 2025 targets for gas, is buying carbon credits an option?

Mr Rattenbury: The premise of the question is wrong, in that there is no specific gas target for 2025. There is a greenhouse gas reduction target, and that comes from a range of places—transport emissions, gas emissions and the like—and we are working hard across all of those sectors to meet our 2025 target at the moment. In terms of buying carbon offsets, the government has, in the climate change strategy, a policy of not purchasing offsets. We would rather invest our money in reducing our emissions than simply buying carbon pardons at this point in time.

MS LAWDER: I have a question about the announcement the minister made earlier this year, I think in April, about an investigation into ACT lakes and waterways water quality by the Commissioner for Sustainability and the Environment. I wondered whether it will look at previous reports and recommendations and whether those other recommendations have already been addressed. For example, there was a report on Lake Burley Griffin called *A healthier, better functioning lake by 2030* by the ACT government. I am interested to know whether the recommendations in that report have been addressed and where I might find them. And will that be looked at as part of the commissioner's next investigation?

Mr Rattenbury: Let me start on the broad and then come to the very specific question. In terms of the remit for the commissioner, yes, she can look at all those previous investigations. If I remember rightly, the terms of reference actually point her to those.

The key driver starting this next shift was that the commissioner for the environment last did a report on the urban lakes and waterways in 2010. It was a really important report. It steered a lot of the Healthy Waterways work over the last decade. My view was that, a decade down the track, with all that investment we made in the Healthy Waterways program, it was very appropriate to ask the commissioner to have another look. So the key reference was: starting with that 2010 report and all the work that has been done since, have we made progress? Are we doing the right things, or do we need to change direction? That is the broad remit for the report.

In terms of the specific report on Lake Burley Griffin, I might see if Mr Walker can help me out.

Mr Walker: That will be a good one to take on notice at this point. I do not have any further information at hand to be able to add to that.

MS LAWDER: Thanks. Minister, you mentioned the terms of reference. Are they publicly available?

Mr Rattenbury: Yes. They should be, yes.

MS LAWDER: I will have a look for them.

Mr Rattenbury: If, for some reason, you can't find them, let me know and we will make sure that they are available. They should be.

MS LAWDER: If there are recommendations from previous reports that have not been addressed, what will be the process? Will they be recommendations again in this investigation, in this report? How do we keep track of all the previous recommendations and whether they have been implemented?

Mr Rattenbury: The directorate does keep track of those sorts of things. For me, part of this report is for the commissioner to ask that exact question. If she finds that there are things that have not been followed through, she will, I imagine, draw that to the attention of both the government and the community through that report.

MS LAWDER: And would they have—

THE CHAIR: Ms Lawder, hang on. You have had multiple supplementaries. We might go to another substantive.

MS LAWDER: My substantive question is on output 2.4, around water. It says:

... explore and implement best practice approaches ...

I am interested in water sensitive urban design. Can you outline what is best practice water sensitive urban design? And what is the ACT government doing to implement that?

Mr Rattenbury: Mr Walker.

Mr Walker: Water sensitive urban design is language that is used to describe a range of different treatments to ensure the permeability of water and to encourage the wise use of water across a whole range of landscapes. It includes things as simple as drainage into and from existing infrastructure. The Healthy Waterways project in itself is part of water sensitive urban design.

As you would appreciate, the Living Infrastructure Plan highlights the links to permeability. The water sensitive urban design process is around how we support development in re-use, ensuring that water is put back into the system. Importantly, that means we do not see loss of water through a whole range of hard surfaces and the transportation of nutrients into our waterways, but it goes through the ground and is reabsorbed back so that nutrients are not ending up in our system.

We set targets within the planning and development work. Those targets provide further direction and achievement by developers in the re-use and recycling application of water.

MR BRADDOCK: Mr Walker, I wholeheartedly agree with the intent of water sensitive urban design, but I would like to draw your attention to examples of good quality design and bad quality design. One example is Mabo Boulevard in Bonner. It has been quite weed infested and has not contributed to, let's say, the beautification of the suburb. I would like to make sure that the directorate is ensuring that it does good

quality water sensitive urban design.

Mr Ponton: Minister, perhaps I could respond to that. As Mr Walker has said, we are always looking at ways to continue to improve. With the current systems—this is drifting into another portfolio area, the planning space—the work that Mr Walker does in terms of water sensitive urban design is reflected in the planning provisions. Given that we are currently undertaking a comprehensive review of the planning system, it is timely now for us to have a closer look at what is leading practice, to make sure that that can be incorporated into that new system.

In response to the specific example that you have mentioned, another key component of this is implementation and ongoing maintenance. That is something that we are, and have been, turning our minds to. We continue to engage with other colleagues across the government and the public service, such as Transport Canberra and City Services, where we get feedback in relation to maintenance in certain areas. Once we are aware of those, we look at what has worked and what has been more difficult to maintain. That then feeds back into the ongoing policy review.

It is important to note, and this is a good example, that we do not put policy in place and set and forget; we look at what is working and what has been posing maintenance challenges and other challenges. That is an important consideration as we move forward.

MS LAWDER: Are the stormwater treatments, including water sensitive urban design, audited? And, if so, against what standards?

Mr Rattenbury: We might have to take that on notice, Ms Lawder. The stormwater system is managed by Transport Canberra and City Services. I think it sits with the roads team—at least, it used to; I can't remember the structure these days. We can probably get some information from them to provide to you.

MS LAWDER: Thank you.

MR BRADDOCK: I want to go to “expanding Healthy Waterways”. I have a number of detailed questions here, and I am happy to go back over them if necessary. Is there an FTE attached to that? Is there going to be an element of behavioural change included in that program? Is the H2OK still funded? How are you going to make sure that the outcomes from expanding Healthy Waterways are maintained and evaluated? Is someone able to give me some more details on that program?

Mr Rattenbury: Yes; I am happy to kick off on a few of those and my colleagues might follow through with me. In terms of the FTE, yes, Mr Braddock. As I said earlier, the initiative specifically commits to four years of staff funding in the budget this year, which is very positive in terms of continuity, job security, retention of expertise and the like. So, yes.

“Yes” is also the answer to your second question: “Is there behaviour change work involved?” What has been very interesting is that the research work that has been done by the University of Canberra focusing on the Lake Tuggeranong catchment, for example, has identified that a lot of the nutrient load is coming from eucalyptus leaf

litter that comes into the drains at particular times of the year. There are now trials going on, working with communities, to encourage people to not rake leaf litter and things like that into the drains. That sort of work is being trialled in some specific areas in Tuggeranong at the moment.

In terms of the H2O campaign, yes, that continues as well. That is an important part of that behaviour change at work. Were there other questions?

MR BRADDOCK: How many FTEs are attached to that expanding Healthy Waterways program?

Mr Walker: Five.

MR BRADDOCK: Fantastic. Also, how is the performance of that program being monitored and evaluated?

Mr Walker: In all the programs that we do in the Healthy Waterways space, we have a structured evaluation program. As I highlighted to Ms Lawder, that looks at some of the water quality components, but also, in terms of behavioural change, using some survey techniques to assess whether we are seeing that behaviour change. We will continue to do that as part of the Healthy Waterways program and the H2OK program. And, yes, we are evaluating that work as the program continues to roll out.

THE CHAIR: Given that the waterways that we are discussing are very central to our community, is there any move to educate children in our community about the importance of our waterways and how to care for our waterways, as part of behaviour change or education?

Mr Walker: Part of H2OK, and a piece of the work that we did previously, was about getting kids to tell their story and their relationship to waterways. That was a highly successful program. It was framed around DrainART. It enabled kids to highlight the connection between what goes into the stormwater system and what comes out into the lakes.

That has been a highly successful program here in the territory. We will look at opportunities to continue that, particularly with our colleagues in the catchment groups. That will help us to continue to roll out these important behavioural change components. It is a very similar program to what has occurred in other jurisdictions where the focus has been on reducing plastics going into the ocean et cetera. That is the sort of approach we will be taking with schoolkids.

MS CASTLEY: I would like to ask you about the climate change act. The last update to the Assembly was that the review was due to be completed in September this year and tabled in October. I have not seen it yet. I am wondering whether the 10-year review was completed? I believe it is now 12 months later than expected. And who was consulted, other than the Climate Change Council?

Mr Rattenbury: I think the first thing we need to discuss is this: since you started asking me questions on this, you have mischaracterised the timing of the review. The act requires the review to be completed as soon as practicable after the 10th year

following the act coming into force. That was the end of 2020. As we have discussed before, that was the caretaker period, the introduction of the new government and then the Christmas break. The work was commissioned in March this year. It is now underway. It is running a little behind the timetable you just described, but I expect it to be tabled in this calendar year. It is close to being tabled.

MS CASTLEY: I am disappointed that it is taking so long to do this. It is a 10-year situation that surely needs updating. And it would be a high priority for this government.

Mr Rattenbury: It is important work that needs to be done, Ms Castley. But it is also about the outcomes. The bottom line is that the ACT has met, and in fact slightly exceeded, its 2020 emissions reduction goal. If we take performance as the key measure, the ACT government has done extremely well.

The other thing is that we do have the preliminary results of the report, and they indicate that the act is fit for purpose. I can assure you that things are reasonably on track, and I look forward to sharing the full report with you in due course.

MS LAWDER: I have a question about the guidelines for recreational water quality. I understand that they were updated in 2014. That was partly as a result of recommendations from a report from the Office of the Commissioner for Sustainability and the Environment. I am wondering whether the issues about recreational water quality were addressed in full in the 2014 update to the guidelines. Another recommendation was that the recreational water guidelines be updated every five years. Has there been another update? Or is there one planned?

Mr Rattenbury: That is a very interesting question, Ms Lawder, which I will see if Mr Walker can help us with. There is quite a bit of history in that one. We will see how we go; we may have to take it on notice.

Mr Walker: Let me make a couple of comments. We do have a draft lakes and ponds plan that will be proceeding through to cabinet shortly. That plan articulates the recreational and other measures associated with the lakes and ponds in the territory. It highlights the importance of those lakes and ponds for pollution control.

It was remiss of me not to have mentioned already that the lakes and ponds in the territory have been designed explicitly to capture stormwater, and therefore any nutrients that are in the catchment find their way into those stormwater retention bases, our lakes and ponds. Recognising that as their primary purpose, the lakes and ponds management plan articulates where areas are suitable for recreational purposes, whether that be swimming or something else. Health undertakes water quality monitoring in those recreational areas so that we are aware when the water quality is not suitable for recreational activities. That material, that process, is live and will come forward this year.

MS LAWDER: Are you aware of whether the issues identified in the 2012 report—I repeat, the 2012 report—were addressed in the 2014 guidelines that were updated?

Mr Walker: I will take that on notice.

Mr Ponton: I will just add something if I may, Ms Lawder. I understand that those particular guidelines are owned by our colleagues in Health. In taking that on notice, we will need to check in with our colleagues in Health. They are not guidelines that are administered or prepared by EPSDD.

MS LAWDER: Okay. Thank you.

THE CHAIR: Minister, I have a question for you in your capacity as Minister for Gaming. I am wondering about the \$5 million allocated for the building energy efficiency upgrade fund. Has that funding been allocated or have clubs already started applying for that fund?

Mr Rattenbury: Yes. That is an interesting program. It sits in both my portfolios, the energy portfolio and the gaming portfolio. The money has been allocated. The program design is just being finalised. I expect the invitation for clubs to start applying to go out within a week or so. It is just being wrapped up now in terms of making sure that the final program details are sorted.

The intent is that eligible clubs can undertake energy efficiency upgrades, building on improvements. They can install rooftop solar or battery systems. There are a range of options available to them there. It will also support clubs to transition away from gas.

Individual clubs will be able to obtain rebates of up to \$75,000. There will be an expectation of a co-contribution, and that will vary, depending on the size of the club. With the smaller clubs, it will be one for one. With some of the bigger clubs, it will be a two or a three for one contribution. They are the details that are being finalised at the moment.

THE CHAIR: Have you got any indication from the clubs as to what their priorities are or what the uptake might be?

Mr Rattenbury: We have certainly got a lot of interest. There is a lot of enthusiasm from the clubs to be involved in this program. It is an opportunity for them to meet several goals. One is that it is cost-reducing for them. Reducing those costs helps with diversification because they do not need to have as much income from poker machines to pay some of their fixed costs. Also, their members are very interested in this work. Their members want to see us acting on climate change and they want to see their clubs acting on climate change. A lot of the clubs have spoken about that support from their members—and their staff as well.

Also, it is a terrific opportunity for them to potentially upgrade some systems that are coming to the end of their lives.

MR BRADDOCK: I have a question on budget statements E, page 28. This is just a case of walking me through the change in accountability indicators in this table.

Mr Rattenbury: Sure.

MR BRADDOCK: The discontinued indicator is about the number of businesses

supported by energy, water and waste programs, which range from 750 to 254. That has been discontinued and replaced with a new indicator speaking about businesses improving sustainability for participating in government initiatives, which only numbers around 150. I am just trying to understand the change in indicator and why there has been what appears to be a dramatic drop in the number of businesses being supported.

Mr McGlynn: I have read the privilege statement and agree to it. There is one change made in businesses and one made in households. The basis for that change is to shift from a measure which is about whether we had an interaction with a business or a household to one about whether we can conclusively say that an investment was made as a result of the interactions that we have had with them.

In the past, if we had a workshop or a meeting with someone, that might count as an interaction and therefore the numbers are quite high. But in some of those cases we could not then verify in the long term whether an investment was made to actually reduce their emissions. So those indicators are shifting to much more rigorous indicators of definite action being taken that we can verify. That is why the numbers are lower—because we need to make sure that we have the ability to verify that outcome in the end.

MR BRADDOCK: What would be the ratio of interactions to actual businesses improving their sustainability? Is it in the vicinity of four to one?

Mr McGlynn: We do not know. It is one of the things we are doing some work on, to try to make sure that we have better follow-up for those sorts of things. We wanted to make sure that the indicator was much more clearly targeted at something we could measure—effectively, as a clear emissions reduction rather than a discussion, if you will.

MS CASTLEY: I have got a question, Minister, about zero-emissions vehicles. Budget statements E talks about 50 charging stations and a master plan, a charging master plan. It has mentioned these 50 charging stations every budget for the last couple. I am wondering: are we now up to receiving, I think it is, 150 charging stations this year or are you just pushing the 50 out each time? And can you talk me through what is the master plan and when it will be delivered?

Mr Rattenbury: I would be delighted to. They are two slightly different things. The master plan is based on some research that the directorate has commissioned which seeks to look at where electric vehicle ownership is, where electric vehicle journeys occur, which is start and end points. That is designed to identify the places we most need charging infrastructure in the ACT. That is, I guess, a broader mapping of the need.

That work is now completed and is about to be published. That is going to be published ahead of the second thing which you have asked about, which is the actual implementation of the 50 charging stations. That is about to go to a request for tender in the next couple of months and we expect to see those installed in this financial year. In terms of your reference to them being referred to in several budgets now, it was actually only a 2020 election commitment, so it can't have been referred to that many

times.

MS CASTLEY: I think we heard that there has been something like a thousand registrations of electric vehicles this year, which is excellent. Canberrans are taking it up. Do you not think that this should have been hurried up a little? Where on earth are people expected to charge their cars when they go out if this is truly what we are pushing for a zero-emissions target?

Mr Rattenbury: Most people currently charge their vehicles at home. Here in the ACT, with the high rate of detached residences, most people have the ability to charge it in their garage, in their driveway, and the range of every vehicle on the market means that if you are just doing your day in Canberra you do not need a public charging station. You will almost always have enough range.

Nonetheless, your underlying point is a really important one, which is that having public charging stations gives people confidence, it helps overcome range anxiety and it helps people to know that if somehow they forget to charge before they leave home they can get themselves out of trouble. That is why we are moving to install these 50 charging stations across the city.

MS CASTLEY: I note that you are also wanting to put some legislation in place to make sure that there is infrastructure for vehicles in multi-unit residential places and commercial buildings. If that legislation comes in, who will be responsible for the increase in electricity charges? If it is a multi-unit building and there are 100 residents and only one has an electric vehicle, does that get distributed across all people?

Mr Rattenbury: This is work that does need to be built. What we have got in mind with that legislation is that it is specifically about going down the lowest cost pathway. If you think about the construction of a large multi-unit building with a couple of storeys, a basement car park, it is obviously much cheaper to put the electrical wiring in as you are constructing the building than to try and retrofit it later. So what we are trying to do is futureproof those buildings. How the charging, the payment for the use of electricity, then gets done is detailed work that still needs to be resolved, but what we want to do is make sure that the infrastructure is being provided in a way that is a pretty minor, marginal cost at that construction point. That is the intent behind that policy.

MS CASTLEY: And how many charging stations, public ones, do we have now?

Mr Rattenbury: Across the ACT? I am looking at my colleagues to see whether anyone knows. We might have to take that on notice.

MS CASTLEY: Thank you.

Mr Rattenbury: There are a few different types; there are the Tesla-specific ones, then there are the more general ones. There are some that are provided by the private sector for the use of their customers only, like at hotels and things, and then there are some publicly available ones. Let us get you that breakdown. I just can't think of the numbers off the top of my head and I don't know that any colleagues can.

Mr Rutledge: No, I do not have the number off the top of my head either, but the other thing is that community people, EV enthusiasts, love sharing their charging infrastructure in their own garage. So not only are there all the types of publicly accessible charging infrastructures that the minister mentioned; there are websites where you register your garage and say, “If you are a visitor to our city you can actually park in someone else’s garage as part of that sharing economy.”

But back to a further point on who pays for charging and the electricity bill, that is a really interesting question and I do not think anyone in Australia has worked that out yet, because there are different business models and different payment plans. At the moment most charging infrastructure is being installed where the business is making a loss and either no-one is paying for the electricity or the electricity is hooked up to the hotel, as the minister said, or hooked up to a business.

I imagine in the future, if you project, say, five years down the track, it will be like paying a road toll in Sydney, where we will all have a chip and the payment plan will work itself out. But at the moment there are as many business models as there are car owners. At the moment most people are making a loss and most of it is done as a sharing thing or an add-on for another purpose. But that will change as uptake changes.

MS CASTLEY: I just find it staggering that no-one knows how many there are, that is all. Public charging! It is a big deal.

THE CHAIR: The minister said that they would take the question on notice.

MS LAWDER: I want to return to a question about the Healthy Waterways program. There were, I think, 20 projects in the first phase, and we talked about two coming up, Yerrabi and Tuggeranong. Do all of the original 20 infrastructure projects comply with municipal infrastructure standards, specifically MIS08, and will the new projects comply with the municipal infrastructure standards, especially MIS08?

Mr Rattenbury: Mr Walker.

Mr Walker: The standards that have been used and developed are certainly the standards that have been accepted by Transport Canberra and City Services, which is where the assets’ owners actually are. I will take on notice the particular standard that you have mentioned and come back to you with some clarity on that, but I can assure you that the infrastructure standards, the built standards, are at best practice level and are consistent with the guidelines and directions through our Transport Canberra and City Services group. It is important to understand that, while EPSDD builds the asset, we then transition them to TCCS. That process ensures that we have only the best standard assets, moving forward, in that space.

MS LAWDER: As EPSDD are in charge of the building of those infrastructure projects, would it not be EPSDD’s responsibility to ensure that they comply before they get handed over to TCCS?

Mr Walker: Of course. The reassurance we have is that we have standards set through the various regulatory mechanisms, the infrastructure builds will comply with

those standards and the final step in that is the assurance check by Transport Canberra and City Services as the assets are handed over. I will confirm the particular standards.

Mr Ponton: I was just going to add: in terms of Mr Walker's talk about the asset owner, also there is the regulatory role of TCCS. TCCS does include specific requirements in relation to these, which are then incorporated through the development assessment process; so there is that regulatory side to make sure that the standards are being met and then the asset owner also needs to be satisfied that it meets the requirements.

MS LAWDER: Is there certification of compliance required as part of the handover of water sensitive urban design projects or assets? Is that certification required at the handover to the ACT government by whoever may be building them? Is that included in your annual reporting? How could I see any of these certification of compliance documents?

Mr Walker: We will take that question on notice and provide you with some advice on the information that is available and give you visibility of that information.

MS LAWDER: Just to clarify, if they do not comply with MIS, including MIS08, could you explain why it was appropriate to build them not to that standard? Could you take that on notice?

Mr Walker: Yes, we can, certainly. The position is that, yes, they do comply with that standard and we are continuing to work with our colleagues in TCCS to make sure that all future projects continue to comply with that. We will provide that reassurance to you.

THE CHAIR: We heard from the Conservation Council that they saw a gap in exploration and understanding of biodiversity in the ACT. I was wondering, just in terms of discussion around the ribbon weed and the waterways, in the review that the commissioner is doing is there a look at the biodiversity of the plants in the waterways?

Mr Rattenbury: I anticipate that the commissioner will look at those things; it is certainly within the terms of reference. One of the recognised benefits of the various pieces of infrastructure that have been constructed, particularly the sorts of wetlands, the naturalised drains, is that they are a positive for biodiversity. You get birdlife, insects and a range. My broad observation would be that these assets have been positive for biodiversity. I imagine that this will come out of the commissioner's findings. I am sure it is something that she will look at as part of her investigations. When I say that I assume she will, of course the commissioner is independent in that sense and, whilst we provide her with terms of reference, she conducts her investigations as she sees fit and, as you know, she will get input from a range of stakeholders.

Mr Walker: Could I just add to that comment from the minister? All the anecdotal reports from our catchment groups, from our community, have already identified significant biodiversity values and assets coming back into those wetlands and environments, significant species reappearing, from frogs to birds. They are

demonstrating a good, positive biodiversity outcome, and our key tool for measuring that change is of two types.

Firstly, we have the Nature Map process, which is a citizen sign-ups portal enabling people to capture wildlife and biodiversity records and report that. With the high expertise of the ACT community, we have got lots of people that are particularly passionate about recording new species and new information in their backyard or nearby. That is currently our key evidence base for what biodiversity, and where.

The other part of that is part of our Waterwatch program. Invertebrates are collected through the Waterwatch program and our citizen surveillance program has hundreds of samples of invertebrates and biodiversity that is collected as part of that program. So those things combined give us a great story around not only the water quality outcomes but also the biodiversity outcomes from having these healthy waterway assets in and around Canberra.

MR BRADDOCK: In paper E, page 36, under the budget technical adjustments—to drill down right into the details—second from the bottom is a line item called “Termination of redundant BIF initiative”, the better infrastructure fund. I was wondering if someone could please enlighten me as to what that initiative might have been and why it is now redundant.

Mr Rattenbury: Mr Rutledge, I suspect.

Mr Rutledge: The better infrastructure fund was a budget initiative a few years ago, and that initiative has ended. That funding was used to just do minor upgrades to better infrastructure or to infrastructure projects. In our space it is largely around parks and conservation in EPSDD’s portfolio. It has been reframed and it has still got the same acronym, but I can’t think why we changed the name. It is still roughly around [\\$2 million](#) a year that we put into general maintenance, over and above the maintenance built into our capital works projects. It is a technical adjustment because it is the end of one full-year initiative but additional funding has been taken up for that.

MR BRADDOCK: If I look halfway up the page I see “Revised funding profile EPSDD 2020-21 BIF”. That has about \$500,000 moving around.

Mr Rutledge: Yes.

MR BRADDOCK: Where would I find the \$2 million item that you are talking about?

Mr Rutledge: I will find that for you and provide that on notice.

MR BRADDOCK: Thank you.

Mr Rutledge: There have also been some changes in our assets. As assets get transferred from us to TCCS then of course our maintenance spend on those is also reduced. I will get a little table done up for you and put it through to the committee.

MR BRADDOCK: Thank you.

MS CASTLEY: My question is about the zero-emissions vehicles for government. In the budget you outline an objective to support agencies transitioning to zero-emissions vehicles—I know you touched on it earlier—with all new leases being zero-emissions vehicles where fit for purpose. Can I ask: how many vehicles have been bought by the ACT government since 2019 that are not zero emissions?

Mr Rattenbury: While my colleagues help me find the numbers on that, the purpose of that policy was that when we started the transition in 2019 there were some types of vehicles that were simply not available as zero-emissions vehicles. For example, the fire trucks that would go up to the top of Namadgi may not be suitable for use as zero-emissions vehicles, or some of the vehicles that the rangers drive, certainly at that point, from an availability point of view. That is the reason that that caveat is in the policy.

What we were really wanting to do in that first instance was to target what you might call the low-hanging fruit, the easy changeover, the passenger sedans that are travelling around the city with Education Directorate staff or community nurses. That is the policy rationale. I am not sure if we will have the numbers today or whether we will have to take that on notice, but Mr Rutledge or Mr McGlynn may know.

Mr Rutledge: I will make an additional couple of preliminary comments before I go to the numbers specifically. One is that the ACT government rarely owns vehicles. We do own vehicles, but many of them are leased vehicles over a three or four-year period. We do have some owned vehicles and they are normally our specialist vehicles, where, at the moment, there is not a viable zero-emissions alternative on the market.

As the minister has said, fire trucks are one example of where we are doing a demonstration. I know that our colleagues at TCCS are really pressing the market, both on buses and also even on garbage trucks, which is a unique challenge. I think it is a unique worldwide challenge but it is one that our colleagues in TCCS are pressing.

The other one that I think is really interesting for us is that we have an enormous number of utes, and part of it is about working out whether or not our fleet use justifies the need for those utes. That is a bit of the analysis that we are doing. Sometimes the user likes to use a ute for the one time a year that they might actually go off road, but for 364 days of the year they are just driving on sealed roads. So we are doing some fleet analysis right across the fleet. TCCS has a lot, we have a lot and ESA have a lot, so we need to analyse the way we use our fleet.

The other thing that I will just throw into the mix that has made it really difficult for fleet managers Australia-wide right now is that, because of COVID, transport has been disrupted and the way we use fleets has been disrupted. Two things that have happened in Australia are that a lot of fleet managers, including our own, have not turned over their fleets as quickly because COVID has created a challenge—a challenge for right now but also a question of how we are using our fleets both now and into the future.

That is not unique to the ACT government; that is just a phenomenon that is

happening at the moment. What we have seen more recently is the number of extensions of leases as fleet managers are doing either of two things: one, waiting to see how the fleet will be used into the future or, two, waiting for vehicles to come online.

The final element that I will add is getting EV charging infrastructure installed throughout different places, as the minister mentioned. Community nurses were early adopters of EVs and that has meant that at community health centres we have needed to do charging infrastructure. Charging infrastructure is difficult in its rollout and we are doing that. And that is all off campus.

In the Nara Building, which you will be familiar with, as part of its refit there will be up to 50 EV charging points installed. We think it is probably the largest EV bank of charging infrastructure in Australia. That is all happening as well.

To the specifics of your question, the ACT government as a whole has re-leased 87 petrol vehicles. That is where the case has been made that there is not an electric passenger vehicle viable in that space. So 87 is the number of ICEs since 2019, but I expect that once we come out to COVID normal, once more vehicles are available on the market, we will see another rapid uptake, as we have seen across the general community.

MS CASTLEY: If you could get me the diesel numbers, that would be appreciated. You have talked about analysing the way we use the car fleet or the fleet of government vehicles. I know that in recent times something like 40 diesel buses were purchased and they drive around town empty. How do you justify, Minister, the emissions from those diesel buses and why aren't more electric ones being purchased and prioritised—possibly smaller options like they have out at Ginninderry? There has got to be a better way to handle our emissions.

Mr Rattenbury: That is part of the transition, and the government has taken the decision to not purchase any more diesel buses. We have been clear that if we do need to get any more diesels they will be on a lease. Minister Steel can provide you with more of an update, but TCCS is currently out in the market looking for a supplier for zero-emissions buses. So we are right at that transition point.

As to your point around buses driving around empty, yes, they have been during COVID because we have needed to plan other—

MS CASTLEY: Not just during COVID.

Mr Rattenbury: Other times as well, yes, of course. There are times when there are not passengers on buses. But that is because part of providing a public transport service is that you need to provide a regular timetable and sometimes people do not show up.

MS LAWDER: My question follows on a bit from Ms Castley's point. The ACT government purchased 40 new diesel buses in 2019, not that long ago, and they purchased them for \$21 million—did not lease them. I would imagine that the lifespan of those buses would be 20 or 25 years. How does purchasing 40 diesel buses

contribute towards your net zero-emissions transport strategy?

Mr Rattenbury: Clearly, it does not, but that is part of the transition and the policy to not purchase any more diesel buses was taken up in 2020.

MR BRADDOCK: I have a further question in terms of that purchase of ICE vehicles. There was the Auditor-General's report into the ACT government's vehicle emissions reduction strategy and it mentioned that there could be greater efforts made around making sure that the electric vehicles could actually have been utilised instead of ICE. What has been the directorate's response to that?

Mr Rutledge: I think these are some of the challenges that I mentioned to the question from Ms Castley around that. There are two things. We have made a greater effort to get our fleet managers together more often to do two things: make sure that everyone is aware of the ICE alternatives and make sure there is an analysis.

On the EV, the zero-emissions alternatives, there is the knowledge around where ACT government infrastructure for charging is available and then also sharing of vehicles. I think there is often a fear of taking on an EV because you are unsure of it, and so trialling vehicles between directorates has been part of that. As I said—and the Auditor-General pointed to this too—once we get out of COVID and there is more certainty in the fleet market and more certainty in the availability of charging then there will be zero reticence to take on zero-emissions vehicles. I think the Auditor-General pointed that out in his report.

As it becomes more commonplace, I should just add this: we have the largest EV fleet in Australia—over 160 EVs since 2019. We are doing more than any other organisation in Australia on the transition to zero-emissions vehicles. That means that we hit the challenges first and we solve the challenges first but we are well in advance of any like-sized organisation in Australia.

MR BRADDOCK: I will pass you the bouquets, but I would just ask that the trend of leasing ICE vehicles continue ever downwards.

Mr Rattenbury: That is the goal. That is definitely the goal.

MS LAWDER: I have a question about water quality, specifically at Lake Tuggeranong, one of my favourite—

Mr Rattenbury: I appreciate your focus on this, Ms Lawder. It is an important point.

MS LAWDER: Minister, earlier you mentioned eucalyptus leaves, for example, washing down.

Mr Rattenbury: Yes.

MS LAWDER: Is there a project planned or underway to identify the fine-scale nutrient sources, such as pollutant types and percentages washed off roads or through the stormwater system, and will they be available in GIS mapping layers at any time in the future?

Mr Rattenbury: That is very specific. Certainly, that information I gave you earlier about the eucalyptus leaves has come as part of that University of Canberra research work which is looking to identify the point sources throughout the catchment. As to whether they would specifically go onto a GIS map, I am not sure if anyone has contemplated that. Mr Walker, you might add anything that you know about it.

Mr Walker: The first comment would be that, in our planning for the new phase 2 of the Healthy Waterways program, we have touched on the need for catchment plans. Those catchment plans will go down to the sorts of nutrient inputs that you have just highlighted and try and pull together the information that exists and the research that Minister Rattenbury has already highlighted.

All of our planning work would incorporate GIS information. We have a group of people across our conservation research evaluation team that provide exceptional quality GIS and data layers to inform our various plans. I suspect, although these plans are yet to be developed, that we will incorporate spatial information into those plans.

MS LAWDER: I am looking for things like flow, water quality data, potential nutrient sources such as street tree types, mowing areas, sports ovals et cetera, directly connected to the drainage paths. That is what I would be looking for in that GIS information. To follow on from that, is the upcoming project for Lake Tuggeranong looking at which areas in the catchment have insufficient water quality treatments in place at the moment, and how are you identifying those?

Mr Walker: That will be the catchment planning process, which will identify the key inputs into the lake where we would need to manage and mitigate nutrients. That being said, the establishment of the existing Healthy Waterways assets was effectively at the edge of the lake. We are talking about treatments further up the catchment. That is why we will keep referring to the proposition of a catchment plan, because we can start to tackle the range of different sources of nutrients coming into the system. That will play an important role in managing all of the lakes across the ACT as we develop the plans.

MS CASTLEY: Minister, I have a question about how many different directorates waterways crosses over. I do not understand why it is spread so far and wide. It must be incredibly difficult for our government officials to work collaboratively together.

Mr Rattenbury: It is a good question. It is exactly why we took a policy to the last election of contemplating creating an office for water, to bring these staff together. I would say that our staff do collaborate really well. Sometimes the beauty of being a relatively small government is that a lot of people do know each other. They know where each person works. My view is that we can do better in terms of our water coordination, and that is why we are investigating changes to the governance process.

We have some good initiatives in place. The regional catchment management group—I think I have that title right—involves, at a larger catchment level, Queanbeyan-Palerang Regional Council, the National Capital Authority and the Yass Valley Council. There are various groups involved. There is some good coordination

going on at the bigger catchment level. The ACT government, at the moment, does rely a lot on goodwill and good relationships. I think we can improve on that by looking at our governance mechanisms.

MS CASTLEY: I hope that the office for water is not just another one and that it brings it all together so that we can work efficiently.

Mr Rattenbury: That would be the plan, yes. It was lucky that we took that policy to the election, wasn't it?

THE CHAIR: I have a question around the ACT government commitment to the Molonglo Valley group centre being 100 per cent electric. What are the challenges in achieving that? What do we need to put in place to achieve that?

Mr Rattenbury: Mr Ponton may be able to help with this from a planning point of view. The macro answer to the question is: the really important part is being clear about it upfront and integrating it early into the planning process. The second will be working with the commercial operators who will come into the district, to make sure that they both understand the policy and have access to alternative technologies. The third will be perhaps a little bit of flexibility, as we are doing with the CIT at Woden. Because students in the cooking areas potentially will still need to learn while using gas, we will use a small number of gas tanks in the short term. There will be some of those policy considerations as well. Mr Ponton, in terms of the design of the centre, are you able to add to that at all?

Mr Ponton: Yes; that is a key component of the work that the team is currently undertaking in the planning space for the Molonglo commercial centre, and looking at the best mechanism to give effect to that. That is likely to be through the Territory Plan. It is likely that we can deal with that through a technical amendment to the Territory Plan, which is a much faster process, given that it is consistent with the concept plan which is already in place, and consistent with government policy. We are working through the legalities of that, in making sure that the technical amendment process is the right process. That means we could build that fairly soon, as part of that ongoing planning for the centre.

MR BRADDOCK: In terms of the use of glyphosate, or Roundup, as it is commercially known, in the territory, I would be interested in any information you have as to the levels in the ACT waterways, whether it is an issue or is having an impact, and how progress has been made on removing it.

Mr Walker: Roundup, glyphosate, is used across the territory. It is one of the key weed control treatments that is available to us. We have been working extensively on a range of multiple integrated weed management processes to mitigate and reduce the use of chemicals. That includes things like steam control of weeds and physical removal. There are a range of integrated approaches that can be used to reduce chemical use in the environment, and that is something that we have been pursuing quite strongly with Minister Vassarotti in the environment portfolio.

In relation to the impact and use around waterways, it is one of the key chemicals in the use of weed treatment in waterways. The reason that it is used and preferred is that

it actually breaks down very quickly with water. Roundup, as a general principle, is easily broken down by water. When that chemical is looked at by Icon—and Icon do water quality assessments through their treatment plants—there is no indication that the chemical is persistent in the water environment. As I said, it breaks down very quickly.

MS CASTLEY: Minister, I want to go back to the beginning of my gas questions. You mentioned formal targets. What are they? If we do not have nice, firm targets for getting off gas, what do you mean? Where are the goals to get us off gas? It seems wishy-washy now, I guess.

Mr Rattenbury: That is your commentary. We have legislated greenhouse gas reduction targets. They are in the greenhouse reduction act in the ACT. They are interim targets. We have them for 2025, 2030, 2040 and, of course, carbon neutrality by 2045. It is something that our federal government is struggling to commit to, but we have done it in the ACT, and we have done it for some time. We also have the interim targets. So we have very formal, legislated targets. They are very clear.

MS CASTLEY: But if you cannot tell how households are getting off gas, I think it is important for people to understand why they would bother. We really want to get these—

Mr Rattenbury: I am not sure which bit of it is not clear to you, but we have those very clear targets. We have indicated very clearly to the community that the ACT needs to transition away from fossil fuel gas use. We are communicating that to the community. Despite your party calling us crazy for doing that at the election, we are indicating to the community as early as possible that this is the transition we need to make.

We have a formal government policy to develop a detailed transition pathway. That is due by 2024. The work on that is already underway. As that comes out, we will provide more clarity to the community. But in the meantime we are helping them to start that transition by doing things like providing interest-free loans through the Sustainable Household Scheme. We have supported the Ginninderry development to be able to go gas-free. We are supporting public housing tenants to come off gas by our investment in the vulnerable household scheme. We have a range of practical measures in place.

MS CASTLEY: Will we meet the—

THE CHAIR: Ms Castley, stop. That is the end of the questions for this session.

MS CASTLEY: Can that one be taken on notice, please?

Mr Rattenbury: I did not actually hear it.

MS CASTLEY: Will we meet the 2025 targets?

Mr Rattenbury: That is our goal, Ms Castley. There is no need to take it on notice. We are striving to meet that 2025 goal. We met our 2020 goal. In fact, we exceeded it.

But we need to keep working hard to get to our 2025 goal.

THE CHAIR: Thank you, Minister. I would like to thank everyone for your attendance today. If questions have been taken on notice, please respond within five days to the committee secretary. Thank you very much for your time today.

The committee adjourned at 11.01 am.