



Debates

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Thursday, 23 October 2014

Mr Gough Whitlam AC QC (Motion of condolence).....	3527
Delegation to Hong Kong and Shenzhen.....	3542
Food Amendment Bill 2014.....	3545
Exhibition Park Corporation Repeal Bill 2014.....	3548
Executive business—precedence	3550
Red Tape Reduction Legislation Amendment Bill 2014.....	3550
Training and Tertiary Education Amendment Bill 2014	3559
Ministerial arrangements	3563
Questions without notice:	
ACT public service—bullying.....	3563
Brian Hennessy Rehabilitation Centre—closure	3565
Aged persons—concessions	3567
Hospitals—elective surgery.....	3568
Children and young people—disabilities	3570
Transport—light rail	3572
OECD livable cities report	3574
Arts—policy framework.....	3577
Planning—Calwell.....	3579
Men’s shed program—grants	3581
Supplementary answers to questions without notice:	
Territory plan.....	3584
Energy—renewable	3584
Personal explanation	3584
Papers.....	3585
Transport—light rail (Matter of public importance).....	3586
Adjournment:	
Arawang Primary School.....	3599
National Week of Deaf People 2014	3600
Diwali festival of lights	3601
Volunteering ACT	3601
Employment—penalty rates	3602
TEDxCanberra.....	3603
NationsHeart.....	3605
Unparliamentary language.....	3606
Schedule of amendments:	
Schedule 1: Red Tape Reduction Legislation Amendment Bill 2014.....	3608
Answers to questions:	
ACTION bus service—patronage (Question No 313)	3609
Alexander Maconochie Centre—Solaris program (Question No 323)	3610
ACTION bus service—patronage (Question No 326)	3612
ACT Housing—Spotless facilities manager (Question No 328).....	3612
Business—legal assistance (Question No 329)	3615
Crime—car tyre slashing (Question No 330).....	3615
Canberra Hospital—Adult Mental Health Unit (Question No 331).....	3616
Canberra Hospital—Adult Mental Health Unit (Question No 332).....	3617
ACTION bus service—park and ride facilities (Question No 334)	3617
Questions without notice taken on notice:	
Government—polling	3618

Thursday, 23 October 2014

MADAM SPEAKER (Mrs Dunne) took the chair at 10 am.

MADAM SPEAKER: Members, I ask you to stand in silence and pray or reflect on our responsibilities to the people of the Australian Capital Territory. Also, members, could I ask you to pray and reflect upon the situation of our colleagues in the Canadian parliament, their staff and the parliamentary staff.

Mr Gough Whitlam AC QC
Motion of condolence

MS GALLAGHER (Molonglo—Chief Minister, Minister for Health, Minister for Higher Education and Minister for Regional Development): I move:

That this Assembly expresses its profound sorrow at the death of the former Prime Minister, the Honourable Edward Gough Whitlam AC QC, a great reformer and an inspiring leader, who leaves a remarkable legacy, and tenders its sympathy to his family, friends and colleagues at their loss.

The entire Australian nation has been moved this week by the news of Gough Whitlam's passing. It has brought grief from Gough's home in the eastern suburbs of Sydney, to Indigenous Australians in communities around the country, and to Canberra—as our city and the backdrop to much of Gough's remarkable life.

In the Australian Labor Party we are mourning the loss of a Labor hero. It has been shown that in death, as in life, this visionary leader has the power to emote and to inspire.

The past few days have seen an abundance of eulogies by those who knew Gough well—their admiration impossible to convey in words alone. These accounts have come from Gough's political contemporaries, both friend and foe, from present-day leaders, the media fraternity, and Gough's closest friends and family. Some of the most enlightening and moving comments have come from those whose politics were not those of Gough, which itself shows the reach of his grand stature and personality.

It seems that nobody who came into contact with Gough walked away unaffected. There were no neutral feelings about this man, but even those with whom he fought the fiercest battles have praised his contribution to Australia this week. All sides have praised his courage, his vision, his reforming instincts, both for the Labor Party and for the country, and his parliamentary style. In each of these qualities Gough had very few peers.

Putting these fine qualities aside, I believe what sets Gough apart from other leaders of modern Australian history is shown in the outpouring of emotion from everyday Australians. This week thousands of Australians have expressed their thanks for the opportunities given to them and their families by Gough Whitlam's program of reforms: those who could access health care without fear of financial disaster, thanks to the first national health insurance scheme; those who made it to university on merit

and have gone on to careers they never thought possible, thanks to the reform of school funding and removal of university fees; women who, for the first time, had a Prime Minister vigorously defending them as equals, who spoke up for them on reproductive rights and issues like access to contraception; Indigenous Australians, who, for the first time, had a Prime Minister determined to end racial discrimination, deliver them equal rights and govern for them as equals in their own country.

Who can forget that significant time in 1975, immortalised in the Paul Kelly song *From Little Things Big Things Grow*, when he and Vincent Lingiari stood together, when they met and showed all of us there could be another way to live together in this great country. This week we have seen the grief of the Gurindji people as they remember the great white man who came and stood with them.

The list of reforms was incredibly long. In the 47-page “It’s Time” speech of 1972, some 200 promises were made, and most of them were kept. But for all the fury of the time, little of the Whitlam program seems radical today. And here lies, I believe, the true Whitlam legacy. Gough brought what had often been considered dangerous ideas into the Australian mainstream and welded them onto our value system. In 1969 he said to the national Labor conference:

When government makes opportunities for any of the citizens, it makes them for all the citizens. We are all diminished as citizens when any of us are poor. Poverty is a national waste as well as an individual waste. We are all diminished when any of us are denied proper education. The nation is the poorer—a poorer economy, a poorer civilisation.

Today in politics we argue over elements of these ideas but few disagree with those core principles. They are entrenched now in the Australian identity, in our concept and understanding of fairness, and their presence there is assured even now that we have lost that great champion.

The true challenge now, for those of us privileged to reach elected office, is to honour the legacy of positive change for which Gough Whitlam will always be remembered. His life has taught Australia not to fear reforming governments and social democratic principles. On the contrary, these are some of the great qualities which set Australia apart from other nations.

This is one reason Gough’s death is being felt so heavily in the Labor Party, as he was a giant of the movement. As with anything else, he was always willing to shake things up to achieve the changes he wanted, but the party would come to owe him for it. He changed Labor from what he described as “Australia’s largest pressure group” into an election-winning force and a transforming national government.

He attracted a young and revived membership, from which has been drawn much of the party’s senior leadership today. And whilst his own government was short-lived, the experience of the Whitlam government would greatly inform the success of great reforms made by Labor prime ministers since.

His visionary diplomacy with the People’s Republic of China is another aspect of this program, and has been high on my mind, having been in China just last week. Gough

saw the need to normalise relations with China a full two decades before he achieved it, and before he convinced the Labor Party to adopt it as policy. He led the Western world in repairing Australia's relationship with China. Indeed he showed that Australia could be a leader in the world.

As he did so, he confronted head-on the malaise of community attitude in much of Australia at the time. Written in the face of this sentiment and a full-blown attack from the McMahon government in Canberra at the time, this passage was sent from Whitlam in China:

The real test of success of our mission lies not with us but with the Australian people. It all depends upon whether Australia is mature enough and self-confident enough to face squarely the facts of life in our region.

The really serious aspect of Mr McMahon's outburst is that it rehashes all the old slogans which passed for foreign policy in the fifties and sixties. We must either grow up or fossilise ...

The anecdotes and stories which further illustrate his legendary turn of phrase have seemed almost never-ending in this week of reflection. But one of the lesser known aspects of Gough Whitlam's life was his deep connection to Canberra. He remains the only Prime Minister to have spent his formative years here, attending Telopea Park School and Canberra grammar.

He maintained long and enduring links with the Australian National University, including, among other things, the six months immediately following his dismissal as Prime Minister when he and Margaret lived at University House. Gough worked in the Department of Political and Social Change at the ANU from 1978 to 1980 and in 1982 Gough became an Honorary Fellow of University House.

I am also proud to say he is a past member, and probably the most famous member, of my first Labor party sub-branch, the great Canberra South sub-branch. Perhaps due to this Canberra connection, Gough was also a Prime Minister who believed in this city as a great national capital.

One vital reform to take place in the joint sitting of parliament after the 1974 double dissolution election was to give the territories representation in the Senate. His establishment of the Australia Council for the Arts and the National Gallery were further steps from which our city and our country have benefited ever since.

Both Gough's and Margaret's contributions to the social fabric of the city, at a time when it was barely recognisable to what we know today, have been fondly remembered in Canberra this week. Margaret was a fine advocate for the arts, the disadvantaged and for community life in the nation's capital. Last year we were able to name the beautiful new pavilion at the National Arboretum after Margaret Whitlam.

With Gough's passing we will seek to honour his memory appropriately in this city as well. As a place with so many students of political history, I have no doubt the community will give us plenty of guidance on what they see as the appropriate ways to do this—indeed, as they have already begun to do.

Madam Speaker, I am very proud to move this motion which records the Legislative Assembly's deep condolence to the Whitlam family and the recognition of a great leader and visionary. We have lost a great Australian, but the national outpouring of grief has brought with it a reaffirmation—perhaps a regeneration—of the principles he stood for. In death, as in life, there can be no silencing of such a towering figure in Australia's modern history. Gough Whitlam's legacy lives on in the millions of lives he touched.

MR HANSON (Molonglo—Leader of the Opposition): Madam Speaker, I rise on behalf of the Canberra Liberals to pay our respects to the former Prime Minister of this country, the Hon Edward Gough Whitlam.

Everyone who chooses politics as their calling does so with one aim—to make a difference. No matter what side of politics we support, there would be few who could claim to have achieved that goal to such an extent as Gough Whitlam. That is not to say that I agree with every change that Gough made, but change he certainly achieved.

Mr Whitlam was born in Kew in Melbourne in 1916. He moved to Canberra when he was 10 years old, was educated at Telopea Park School and Canberra Grammar School, and is still the only Prime Minister we can claim as having grown up here in the national capital. He is well known as a legal mind and a political warrior, but I would like to take a moment to recognise another, somewhat less known aspect of his public service—that of his time in our armed forces.

In 1942 he signed up to the Royal Australian Air Force and served as a navigator and bomb aimer. In 1943 he was posted to No 13 Squadron RAAF. The squadron patrolled Northern Australia, providing convoy escort and attacking Japanese positions and shipping. This was during a time when attacks on Australia were far more common than usually understood, and Gough was very much in the front line of our nation's defence. The Australian War Memorial's "50 Australians" projects recount his activities:

In April 1944 Whitlam went to Merauke, from where operations were conducted against Tanimbar and Aroe Islands. The next year he was flying from Truscott airfield in northern Western Australia as far as Soembawa. During 1945 his crew flew long routes, usually through Morotai. These operations extended to the Philippines.

The war was a busy period for Whitlam. Not only did he serve, he married, and also became committed to politics. After discharge he joined the Darlinghurst branch of the Labor Party, and was also admitted to the New South Wales bar. He was active in civic groups, including the Returned Servicemen's League.

It was only after this very formative experience that he finished his studies and was admitted as a barrister in 1947. After a promising legal start, he was increasingly attracted to politics. He joined the Labor Party but was not an immediate success. Indeed it took him three attempts to get elected, but when he did so he won convincingly, taking 66 per cent of the vote in the 1952 by-election for the seat of Werriwa.

By 1960 he was the Deputy Leader of the Opposition under Arthur Calwell. The “faceless men” incident, where it was broadcast for the first time how much power the faceless men in the ALP had at that time on crucial party decisions, became a cause that drove Gough to reform his party.

In 1967 Whitlam became Leader of the Opposition. He did not win the next election in 1969, but the ALP did gain 17 seats, coming within four seats of victory. In 1972 he led the now famous “It’s Time” campaign and won government. He then launched a program of very significant reform—not all of it popular and not all of it well executed, but it was certainly significant. He withdrew troops from Vietnam and ended conscription. His government recognised the People’s Republic of China and established the Department of Aboriginal Affairs. University fees were abolished and the health system was forever changed, with the introduction of Medibank, now known as Medicare. The Aboriginal Land Rights Act was passed, and the Prime Minister officially handed over the title deeds of traditional lands in the Northern Territory to the people at Wattle Creek.

His stature has grown to the point now where he is part legend, part politician and part man. And the further from that period we get, the harder it is to separate the truth from the myth. But any recollection of Gough Whitlam cannot ignore the dismissal, which in my view remains the most controversial political event in our nation’s history. It still divides opinion sharply, and historians and politicians will continue to debate it through the ages. But Gough Whitlam was not a man who shied away from controversy and few prime ministers leave behind such a record of reform.

Madam Speaker, one of the ways you can sum up a person’s achievements and legacy is to look to what others say of them. In this regard I would like to add some quotes in our own Assembly from others. Prime Minister Tony Abbott said Mr Whitlam’s government changed Australia and “set the tone” for the years to follow. He said:

Whether you were for him or against him, it was his vision that drove our politics then and which still echoes through our public life four decades on. In his own party, he inspired a legion of young people to get involved in public life.

The Attorney-General, George Brandis, announced the suspension of parliamentary business and said:

This is an extremely sad and consequential day in our history because regardless of one’s political views there is no doubt at all that Mr Whitlam was a giant of Australian history and Australian politics.

Former Victorian Premier Jeff Kennett, himself no slouch when it came to reforms, summed up Gough by saying simply, “So much achieved in such a short time.” The ABC summed him up as follows:

Until the end, Gough Whitlam was revered as the Labor Party’s elder statesman, a man of vision and energy. Famous for his “crash through or crash” style, he came to embody a period in Australian history which, for better or for worse, was one of rapid and unparalleled change.

That really was his legacy. Whether we agree on all the decisions or not, he certainly made a difference. And I certainly support the initiative of the Chief Minister to name a suburb in Canberra after Gough Whitlam.

On behalf of the Canberra Liberal Party, I pay my respects to the colleagues of Mr Whitlam, offer my condolences to his family and recognise the passing of an extraordinary Australian.

MR RATTENBURY (Molonglo): We have all heard a great deal about Edward Gough Whitlam in the last couple of days and I expect we will hear quite a bit more over coming days and weeks. He was by all accounts a man of charisma, dynamism and focus. His fans refer to him as the most important Prime Minister in Australian history and even his critics largely accept the breadth and long-term impacts of his social reforms.

The coverage and the eulogies that have flowed since Thursday have one thing in common: they catalogue a long list of achievements from a very short period of government. Gough Whitlam was only Prime Minister of Australia for 1,071 often turbulent days, but in that time he managed to deliver an impressive number of progressive political reforms which many believe catapulted the country into the modern era. To put it in raw numbers, the Whitlam government passed some 504 bills through both houses of government before running into their famous Senate troubles, and that total does not even cover the reforms made through executive action rather than legislation.

Gough had spent decades refining his policy platform and it was full of the kind of big ideas that Australia had not seen for a generation. Without wanting to reiterate too much what has already been said both here and in the media, the Whitlam program extended from free education to Indigenous land rights, from restoring diplomatic relations with China to famously ending Australian involvement in Vietnam, from a new national anthem to a new racial discrimination act, from introducing no-fault divorce to establishing the National Gallery of Australia.

I understand one of Gough's first acts upon taking office was to release conscientious objectors from prison, conscientious objectors who had protested against conscription at a time when young men were being sent to war but they still could not vote. He did that first because it was quick, it was cheap and it was right. He later also reduced the voting age to 18, thereby removing that disenfranchisement, whilst also stopping national conscription.

As he settled into government, Prime Minister Whitlam began to roll out his extensive program of larger reforms towards equity and fairness. While universal health care, Medicare—or, as it was then known, Medibank—and free university education are some of the big-ticket progressive items that the Prime Minister will always be remembered fondly for, we must not forget that he also delivered a sewerage system to the suburbs of Australia. As Gough himself once said, “I found Australia unsewered and left it fully flushed.” It is that kind of fundamental infrastructure program that is the hallmark of a good and useful government. It is the kind of project that will continue to deliver long after the government itself has been and gone.

It was this kind of long-term vision that truly transformed Australia in just a few short years and it is the kind of long-term vision that is largely missing from the contemporary election cycle. It is this long-term visionary approach that keeps me inspired in politics. It is what we are all here for: to help deliver the ideas from the people, for the people.

It was the Whitlam government that created the Great Barrier Reef Marine Park to protect it from oil drilling. Again, this long-term vision has protected this important national, indeed international, world heritage asset. The Great Barrier Reef, the largest coral reef ecosystem in the world, is now one of the best known Australian places in the world, contributing significantly to our national economy through tourism, in addition to its environmental significance.

Of course, I do not want to gloss over the problems that existed in either Whitlam the government or Whitlam the man. It is said his cabinet was unwieldy and inexperienced. He was, by most accounts, hubristic and self-important; and I am certainly aware of his indelicate statements about both Vietnamese refugees and his cabinet colleagues.

It would be remiss to let the moment of Gough Whitlam's death pass without reference to the current federal government. Earlier this week a comedy story appeared on SBS under the headline "Coalition plans to honour Whitlam's memory by slowly destroying everything he worked for". Like all good satire, it cuts close to the bone as the Abbott government systematically undermines so many of the achievements of the Whitlam era with university deregulation, the Medicare copayment or the reintroduction of knights and dames—which we managed to live without for four decades.

Because there is much to be impressed by I will end on another list. Gough Whitlam rolled out community radio and what later became Triple J. He granted independence to Papua New Guinea. He took France to the International Criminal Court to prevent nuclear testing in the Pacific. He created a department of Aboriginal affairs. He removed sales tax from contraceptives and abolished the death penalty.

I would also like to pay a short tribute to his late wife Margaret who, with Gough, formed a personal and political partnership the likes of which Australia had not seen before. Margaret was an outspoken advocate for women's rights, including abortion law reform, maternity leave and equal pay.

On behalf of the ACT Greens, I would like to express my sympathy to Gough's surviving family, particularly his four children—Antony, Nicholas, Stephen and Catherine—in this difficult and sad time. They must be extremely proud of their father, and can rest assured that he left Australia a better place than he found it.

MR BARR (Molonglo—Deputy Chief Minister, Treasurer, Minister for Economic Development, Minister for Housing and Minister for Tourism and Events): Edward Gough Whitlam transformed this nation. He was the most significant political figure in our country's history. He lived in the lifetimes of all 27 other Australian prime

ministers from Edmund Barton to Tony Abbott. He had a very strong connection to Canberra, as we have heard, attending Telopea Park high and then Canberra grammar. He joined the Labor Party in 1945. His mantra, I guess, the thing that struck true through his entire career, is summed up in this one simple quote:

When you are faced with an impasse you have got to crash through or you've got to crash.

In that speech, that most famous of all election policy speeches, in 1972, he was very clear in what he put forward to the Australian people: He said:

Men and Women of Australia!

The decision we will make for our country on 2 December is a choice between the past and the future, between the habits and fears of the past, and the demands and opportunities of the future. There are moments in history where the whole fate and future of nations can be decided by a single decision. For Australia, this is such a time.

And so it was. Australian politics, Australian history, is really divided now between a period prior to 1972 and the post-Whitlam era. His record of achievement is simply extraordinary. I suppose the simplest way to think of this is to imagine what this country would be like had he not been elected in 1972. In health and social security, we would not have seen the creation of Medibank. We would not have had the funding in construction, the hospitals and community health centres, the increased social security funding and the range of benefits and new services that were introduced in his government, the funding of grassroots social welfare organisations, the significant investment in the construction of new social housing and, in education, the establishment of the Australian Schools Commission, increased school funding and, of course, the abolition of university tuition fees and the passing of the student assistance acts to provide means-tested financial assistance for tertiary students. That decision was perhaps one of the most widely celebrated and, as the Chief Minister indicated, life-changing decisions.

I reflect upon my own experience as the son of teenage parents in country New South Wales, born in 1973. I am not sure my parents would have been able to go to university had that change not been instituted. They would never have had the opportunity to graduate, to get jobs, to come to Canberra, to be the people they were and to give me the opportunities that I have; and it all stems back to that decision in 1972.

The Whitlam government established commonwealth funding responsibility for universities. Controversially at the time it supported the provision of state aid to non-government schools. He returned land to the Gurindji people. He created the Aboriginal Land Fund and the Aboriginal Loans Commission. He established the National Aboriginal Consultative Committee and drafted the land rights act. He outlawed discrimination against Indigenous people and he funded legal services for Indigenous Australians. In foreign affairs, as we have heard, he granted independence to Papua New Guinea. He established diplomatic relations with China. He withdrew Australia's remaining troops from Vietnam. He completely re-orientated Australia's

relationship with Asia. He increased foreign aid spending, abolished the white Australia policy, improved support services for immigrants, introduced the policy of multiculturalism, took a stand against apartheid and, as Mr Rattenbury said, fought atmospheric nuclear testing in the Pacific. He negotiated new trade and international relations with Japan and engaged actively in the United Nations, signing a range of multilateral agreements.

He fought for equal pay for women. He funded support services for women and International Women's Year. As I mentioned yesterday, he instituted no-fault divorce. He established the Family Court of Australia and the single mothers benefit. He appointed a women's adviser to the Prime Minister, he established parental leave for commonwealth employees and he removed various restrictions on the oral contraceptive pill.

Economic policy was an area of some conflict and there were significant economic shocks that hit the world during the Whitlam government. But the decision he took that is often overlooked is that he began the significant dismantling of Australia's tariff war. He cut tariffs by 25 per cent across the board in the 1973 budget. He created and passed the Trade Practices Act. He created the Industries Assistance Commission and, through that difficult economic period, provided stimulus and targeted stimulus for areas of Australia suffering high unemployment.

Mr Rattenbury mentioned that his environmental credentials were significant in protecting the Great Barrier Reef. He ratified the World Heritage convention. He introduced environmental protection legislation. He negotiated treaties to protect vulnerable species and ecosystems. He established the Australian Heritage Commission and funded heritage conservation projects. He created the Australia Council for the Arts, importantly for Canberra he established the National Gallery of Australia, and he provided stimulus and incentives for the Australian film and television industries.

For younger Australians, perhaps one of the most significant legacies is the reform of Australian radio and the introduction of Triple J. In cities policy, he saw a role, an active role, for the national government in our cities. He protected and renewed inner city suburbs. He funded urban public transport projects. He connected suburban homes to sewerage and funded improvements to suburban areas.

In defence policy—it was terrific to hear Mr Hanson acknowledge his contribution here—he made a significant change in Australia's defence strategy. He created for the first time a unified Department of Defence, upgraded our military equipment and increased troop numbers.

But perhaps his greatest legacy is in democracy, the law and human rights, the passage of the Racial Discrimination Act, ending conscription and freeing draft resisters. He lowered the voting age. Young Australians aged 18 could vote. He enacted human rights protections through a range of international agreements. He abolished the death penalty and he enacted one vote, one value electoral reforms.

Again important for Canberra and the territories, he improved our democratic representation. He established the Law Reform Commission and the Australian Legal Aid Office. Perhaps on questions of symbolism, Madam Speaker, we owe Gough a great thank you for *Advance Australia Fair* as our national anthem, not *God Save the Queen*. We owe Gough for the establishment of an Australian honours system and the amendment of royal title.

It is an amazing array of achievements in such a short period of government. As Paul Keating said on the *7.30 Report* during the week, prior to Whitlam:

Australia was a post imperial outpost, effectively, in the post war years. In the years of the Menzies torpor, it was like sort of wading in molasses, you know. And to shock the system and change it, to change Australia's idea of itself is what Whitlam did.

This astonishing list of achievements was made possible only by his courage and vision. The legacy of his policy agenda long outlives his relatively short period as Prime Minister. There have been many tributes over the past few days. Edward Gough Whitlam was a hero to many, to all on the Labor side of politics, and many on the non-Labor side of politics. He transformed our nation. May he rest in peace.

MS BURCH (Brindabella—Minister for Education and Training, Minister for Disability, Minister for Multicultural Affairs, Minister for Racing and Gaming, Minister for Women and Minister for the Arts): I will rise on this condolence motion and say a few words with respect to Gough Whitlam. Gough Whitlam was an extraordinary figure in Australian politics and Australian history. His reforms were sweeping, particularly in the areas of health and education. It makes me proud as a minister for education that this great Prime Minister started his education here in our public school system at Telopea Park School. Our public schools have produced many ex-students of note who have gone on to be leaders, and Gough is undoubtedly one of the greatest.

This week on ABC news we saw that modern history students in New South Wales in their HSC exam were asked whether or not the Fraser government completely overturned the reforms of the Whitlam era. It is an interesting question, but the answer is obvious. Whitlam was in power for just three years, but the reforms he put in place endure to this day. They were sweeping, they were fundamental and they were irreversible. In almost 40 years since the dismissal, for 40 years conservative forces in this country have tried to unravel his reforms, but for 40 years they have failed—or indeed a more positive way of putting it is that, after 40 years, the Gough Whitlam legacy endures.

There was the recognition of China, free health care, university education for all, equal pay for women, abolition of the death penalty, the Family Law Act, the national sewerage program, voting for 18-year-olds, our own national anthem, Aboriginal land rights, the National Gallery, the Australian Heritage Commission, the Australia Council for the Arts and, as has been said, the Racial Discrimination Act. I think of what he did for Indigenous Australians, and I quote from his 1972 speech:

We will legislate to give aborigines land rights—not just because their case is beyond argument, but because all of us as Australians are diminished while the aborigines are denied their rightful place in this nation.

He achieved much in the three years and we will never see the likes of him again.

MR GENTLEMAN (Brindabella—Minister for Planning, Minister for Community Services, Minister for Workplace Safety and Industrial Relations, Minister for Children and Young People and Minister for Ageing): I thank Ms Gallagher for moving this motion today. It is with a mind full of some cherished memories that I rise this morning to pay tribute to Gough Whitlam. I was standing in front of Old Parliament House on 11 December 1975 when Gough proclaimed these famous words:

Ladies and gentlemen, well may we say “God Save the Queen”, because nothing will save the Governor-General.

If it were not for that day, Gough’s dismissal and the effect it had on my political thinking, I may not be here today as a member for Brindabella. Gough’s dismissal acted as the catalyst for my own entry into the political world and sparked my passion for progressive politics, showing me that I was not alone in my active beliefs in social justice and equity.

At 20 years of age at the time, I was working in the dispatch section of the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade. My friend and then union organiser David Lamont, who later became a member of this Assembly, came to get me from work to go to this historic event, advising me that the Prime Minister had been dismissed by the Governor-General. In fact I believe that most of if not the entire admin building accompanied Mr Lamont to hear that historic speech, as well as probably half of Canberra.

This part of Gough’s prime ministership is probably the only one which is most mentioned and remembered. However, it is certainly not what we would consider the most important aspect of his considerable legacy. The Hon Gough Whitlam achieved significant social reforms throughout his years as Prime Minister. Gough was, more importantly, one of the most revolutionary prime ministers of recent times. Through dramatic social reforms such as Medicare, legal aid assistance for those most vulnerable and free tertiary education, Gough Whitlam created a level footing for all Australians, no matter their family or socioeconomic background.

Gough was also a visionary in his views towards infrastructure and local government’s role in its implementation. Whitlam founded the Department of Urban Development and, having lived in developing Cabramatta when it was largely unsewered, set a goal to leave no urban home unsewered. The Whitlam government gave grants directly to local government units for urban renewal, flood prevention and the promotion of tourism.

Gough also initiated and funded the renewal of inner city areas as part of the government’s policy of providing affordable urban housing for working people and

protecting the heritage fabric of Australian cities. By the 1970s Glebe in Sydney had undergone significant decay and was seen by many as an eyesore in the city. The area was slated for wide-scale demolition to make way for a freeway planned by the New South Wales government. Once it came to power, the Whitlam government purchased a large tract of land that lay in the proposed freeway's path, effectively preventing its construction. The 700 buildings on the land were then restored, leading to the revitalisation of the area. I think this shows Gough's character supremely well—doing everything within his control to ensure the best possible outcome for the community.

Of course, these were not the only revolutionary ways Gough changed Australia for the better. Gough Whitlam also made many other legislative changes to ensure Australians had a safe, prosperous and equal future with environmental protection laws, land rights and racial discrimination acts being just a few of the more truly inspirational reforms at the time.

But there is a personal side to Mr Whitlam as well, and many would see or remember that particular footage of the dismissal speech on the steps of Parliament House. There were a couple of other people in the audience there too—the VIP protection guys that I got to know later in life: Bob Heggie, Peter Holden, Peter Hunter, who stayed in that role all the way through to Bob Hawke and also Paul Keating's time in office. They told us of the personal interactions of the then Prime Minister. He would return home to the Lodge after a long day and Margaret and he would cook them all a T-bone steak and join them in a glass of red towards the end of the night—a fantastic human being.

Of course, it is not only the chamber this week that acknowledged this larger than life man who will forever have a place in Australia's history books, and I think Gough would have taken great pride in the speeches delivered in the national parliament on Tuesday. I think it would be appropriate to take the words of the current federal Labor leader, Bill Shorten:

Gough's ambition went beyond his desire to serve our nation; he wanted to transform it—completely, permanently—and he did.

MS PORTER (Ginninderra): As those that have spoken before me on both sides of the chamber, I rise to pay tribute to Edward Gough Whitlam AC QC. Many would say that it was most appropriate that he was our 21st Prime Minister, as he dragged this nation, with many doubters kicking and screaming, into an era where many of us believe we came of age. A colossus in every sense of the word, from his towering stature, his soaring intellect, his expansive vision, his beautifully modulated voice, he was in every way a man of his times. Every time you were in his presence, every time you saw him, every time you heard him speak you just knew that this was a truly exceptional man, a man whose journey you wanted to share with sheer exhilaration and excitement of being along for the ride.

Whitlam, of course, was a man on a mission and many would say—and they were probably right, as many have said this morning—that he had a crash through or crash mentality. Many would say he tried to do too much in the three short years of his prime ministership. We heard from Minister Barr this morning that long list of achievements, and I must admit I got quite exhausted by the time he had finished the

achievements, thinking how one man could possibly have driven so many reforms in such a short time. However, there are many others who would say the country had waited long enough and we were impatient for him to just get on with it.

Whitlam's agenda was as diverse as it was broad and, as we have heard this morning, ranged from health to education, to infrastructure, to Indigenous land rights, to social equity, to a more just and equitable social security system, to Australia's place in Asia. Before the introduction of Medibank, now Medicare, many on low incomes dreaded the prospect of becoming ill. Even those who fought against its introduction, including many in the medical profession at the time, have now come to accept that universal healthcare is a right and not a privilege.

Similarly, when Whitlam came to power, only three in every 10 students who attended state or Catholic schools completed their secondary education, compared to 80 per cent of those who attended other independent private schools. Similarly, the income of your parents and their station in life was a greater determinant of whether or not you attended university than was your intelligence. A trebling of expenditure on education by the Whitlam government did much to address this appalling imbalance of opportunity and provide a pathway to gain qualifications necessary to assist a young person to aim high in choosing their direction in life.

But Whitlam was also committed to improving infrastructure, as we have heard, and would make life in the suburbs healthier and improve livability. Having lived in Sydney's far western suburb of Cabramatta for many years as the long-serving member for Werriwa, he was only too well aware of the weekly visits of the lavvy man. I recall living in such conditions during my adolescence in Wollongong. He determined that the fast-growing suburbs of Sydney, Melbourne and Brisbane were in dire need of sewerage and so set about providing grants to councils to fund this infrastructure.

There is probably no better example of Whitlam's crash through or crash mentality than his decision in 1971, as the then opposition leader, to go to China. The then Prime Minister, Mr William McMahon, accused him of kowtowing to the communists. Little did McMahon know that in the weeks following Whitlam's visit, Henry Kissinger was to secretly visit China to arrange Richard Nixon's historic visit.

Who could ever forget the iconic photo of Gough Whitlam symbolically pouring the red sand from his hands into that of Vincent Lingiari. His legacy of the first land rights act will long be remembered as one that resonates so much with me, as I had lived and worked in Yirrkala on the Gove Peninsula, one of many communities that benefited from his reforms.

Like many, I have some personal stories. In November 1995, I joined many true believers in the members dining room of the provisional Parliament House where Gough was, of course, the guest of honour. Just before he was about to speak I went out to the toilets, where Margaret was telling all and sundry that, if they did not want to listen to two hours of Gough, they should not go back to the dining room. After Gough's speech, predictably long, Margaret was back in the ladies loo, again telling us all that she had kept on telling him, "Gough, they do not need you to speak for two hours anymore."

Margaret, a strong, fulfilled woman was not only his greatest support but also his greatest critic. Their relationship was one of those enduring relationships that withstood the stresses of political life because, I believe, of their great love and respect for each other and for their children.

I also spoke with him and Margaret at the Order of Australia conference dinner some time ago. I was with Ian, and as soon as he recognised Ian he said, “Your father, Douglas, was a returning officer at Merrylands west branch and a very fine returning officer he was, too.” These were two of Gough’s great qualities: the ability to immediately put you at your ease and of course his incredible memory, which was legendary.

I also had the privilege of being a delegate to the ALP national conference in 2007 where both he and Margaret were invested with life membership of their beloved party. He insisted on walking to the podium, even though he entered in a wheelchair, and he was assisted to the stage by his long-time friend, John Faulkner.

I extend my condolences to Gough’s family and friends. I am proud to be able to stand in his shadow.

DR BOURKE (Ginninderra): In 1944 at the National Press Club in Washington, then PM John Curtin said:

I am the leader of the radical party in Australia, I believe predominantly that government should be the agency whereby the masses should be lifted up.

Ben Chifley, in his light on the hill speech at the 1949 New South Wales Labor Party conference, said:

I try to think of the Labour movement, not as putting an extra sixpence into somebody’s pocket, or making somebody Prime Minister or Premier, but as a movement bringing something better to the people, better standards of living, greater happiness to the mass of people. We have a great objective—the light on the hill—which we aim to reach by working for the betterment of mankind not only here but anywhere we may give a helping hand. If it were not for that, the Labour movement would not be worth fighting for.

The Australian Labor Party believes that the purpose of government is to build a better society.

Throughout human history, our tradition as human beings has been to want to take care of each other. In our hearts, we know that it is the right thing to do, the decent thing to do. In our heads, we also know that taking care of everybody is the sensible thing to do, that a just and fair society breeds peace and prosperity for all. We seek to achieve this change through democracy and with respect to human rights. Our beliefs are in contrast to our opponents, who believe in the power of one, the freedom of business and the ascendancy of the strong.

My inaugural speech spoke of Gough Whitlam as one of the heroes who inspired me to join the Labor Party. His vision for a better society, a better Australia, changed our social and political landscape forever. And as I said, the Whitlam government fostered Australian participation in international agreements and international organisations. By ensuring Australia was a party to these agreements, the Whitlam government initiated Australia's first federal legislation on human rights, the environment and heritage. Whitlam laid the foundations of modern Australian life with the Family Law Act, the Australian Legal Aid Office, the Consumer Affairs Commission, the Racial Discrimination Act, Medibank, the Trade Practices Commission and the Australia Council. On 16 August 1975 Gough Whitlam, as Prime Minister, formally handed the Gurindji people at Wattle Creek in the Northern Territory title deeds to part of their traditional lands.

Could we even imagine an Australia without these progressive social changes? These changes are mighty, national monuments to Gough Whitlam. But they are not his greatest legacy. His greatest legacy is the means by which these monuments were erected—the Australian Labor Party.

Gough found a party introspective, divided and backward looking. His achievement was to transform it into a modern, progressive party, a party true to the core beliefs expressed by Curtin and Chifley, a party able to deliver those reforms which Australians craved, a party that continues to deliver those reforms, as we have done here in the ACT with the Stanhope and Gallagher Labor governments. I think this is Gough Whitlam's greatest legacy and I am proud to be part of it.

MS BERRY (Ginninderra): Gough Whitlam was a prime minister who firmly believed in the role of federal government to provide the resources, authority and leadership needed to deal with the problems that affected the living standards and opportunities of Australians. He recognised the consequence of poor investment in infrastructure and accordingly invested for the future of our communities. He championed issues and ideas that were seen at the time as radical. He moved us to become a more modern and progressive nation and a fairer and more equal nation.

I was happy to hear Mr Gentleman mention the work that the Whitlam government put into Glebe. Glebe was a part of New South Wales where I spent the first years of my life and had it not been for the changes that the Whitlam government implemented all those years ago it certainly would be a very different place to the city that it is today.

The Whitlam government also provided a significant boost in funding to state governments for the construction of new homes for low income earners. And in 1974-75 the construction of 3,500 homes was funded. The changes the Whitlam government enacted in health care were transformative. The introduction of the universal healthcare system was met with ferocious opposition, with many opponents arguing it was a socialist takeover and that the freedom of Australian citizens was at stake. Today we find ourselves needing to ferociously defend our universal healthcare system as a fundamental right for all Australians.

The Whitlam government also sought to ensure the Australian social security system provided an adequate safety net for those who needed it most and enacted specific changes to support opportunities of security for women. Mr Barr also mentioned the Whitlam government's introduction of FM radio to Australia and established 2JJ, now known as Triple J. This was a station that was specifically designed to support Australian music and connect with young Australians.

These are just a couple of achievements that the Whitlam government was able to make and these achievements alone, by any measure, are major. But they only represent a snapshot of what Gough Whitlam and his Labor government achieved. Whether we realise it or not, we have all benefited from the legacy of Gough Whitlam's leadership and the achievements of his government, and we still do today. I am very proud of how much he and his government achieved in such a relatively short period. He was ambitious for Australia. He led us to become a more modern and progressive nation and he will continue to be an inspiration for generations to come.

I send my sincere condolences to the family and friends of this wonderful human being. Vale Edward Gough Whitlam, a leader who tirelessly fought for a fairer society. You will be missed but your achievements, ideas and inspiration will live on.

Question resolved in the affirmative, members standing in their places.

Delegation to Hong Kong and Shenzhen

Statement by minister

MS GALLAGHER (Molonglo—Chief Minister, Minister for Health, Minister for Higher Education and Minister for Regional Development) (10.55), by leave: I am pleased to advise the Assembly on the outcomes of the delegation I led last week to Hong Kong and Shenzhen—the third visit I have made to China in just over a year. During a very full three days, I was able to meet with numerous trade and tourism representatives, senior Chinese officials, investors and businesspeople, both in Hong Kong and in the technological powerhouse of Shenzhen. I take this opportunity to thank all of the hosts for the hospitality shown to us and for the keen interest expressed—once again—in doing business and building new relationships with Canberra.

We know the importance of forging strong relationships and building cultural understanding with countries in our region. This delegation has taken another important step forward in the high-level relationship between the ACT and China. This helps pave the way for our businesses, universities and educational institutions to grow their own connections with counterparts in China—a means for new opportunities for innovators and entrepreneurs in both countries.

At the city-to-city level, last week's mission achieved one of its key goals—signing of an MOU for friendship exchange and economic cooperation with the city of Shenzhen. Shenzhen was the first and is one of the most successful of China's "special economic zones". It is home to some of the largest tech companies in the world. Its population numbers around 15 million and its economy is significant, not just in China but in

global terms. Despite these differences in scale, there are important similarities between our cities—most importantly our common focus on excellence in innovation and technology and our commitment to education and the sharing of knowledge. We also share the reputation within our countries of being amongst the most livable cities.

With the relationship formalised by the MOU, businesspeople, officials, universities and others in both cities have a new channel through which to pursue new partnerships. The MOU focuses on exchange and cooperation in technology, innovation and education. It fits very closely with the government's ambitions under the digital Canberra strategy and study Canberra initiative. It will also present new and exciting opportunities for Canberra to seek to attract investors to some of our key projects.

In the technology sector, I met with Huawei and the Huaqiang Group with the objective of exploring the synergies between Shenzhen and Canberra in the areas of digital city, technology applications and R&D precincts. I discussed potential partnerships, collaboration and commercialisation of innovation and investment opportunities through establishing partnerships with Canberra-based businesses.

We know a number of Canberra-based innovative ICT businesses are on the cutting edge of digital and other high-tech projects and I expect that this deal will help them build and establish themselves in a major overseas market. One opportunity is through better connections with the enormous resources available in companies such as Huawei and ZTE for the commercialisation of those new technologies. Where opportunities present for our best and brightest to excel abroad, we need to encourage it to happen. This invariably leads to new initiatives and benefits on their return.

One initiative both cities agreed to at the signing of this agreement was a Canberra-Shenzhen intern program to facilitate the exchange of some of the best and brightest students of both cities. With financial contributions from both governments, university students will be given the opportunity to study while immersed in the culture of another country, and to refine their work in world-leading research environments. We expect this initiative to build new connections in science, technology, engineering and mathematics disciplines. We also know it will create more people-to-people connections and will help to foster long-term friendship through the advocacy of our young people—all vital ambassadors among their peers. As a companion initiative to the study Canberra program, and building on the university exchange announced with Shanghai earlier this year, I look forward to seeing the interest of our student community when the government seeks nominations soon.

As with past delegations, I had the opportunity to meet with a number of influential investors and business leaders at roundtable meetings. I outlined some of the key projects anchoring development in the city in the coming years—in particular, city to the lake and capital metro. I also met with hotel developers and potential investors on investment opportunities that exist in hotel and recreational infrastructure development in Canberra. During these discussions I emphasised the importance of private sector investment to the urban renewal process of Canberra—not only in developments such as residential buildings and retail, but also in flagship public infrastructure projects.

The progress made during this short visit to Asia is an important next step in the government's objective of maximising the benefits to the ACT of Asia's economic expansion. As we said in response to the commonwealth white paper on the Asian century, it will be the cities and regions which foster closer ties, embrace cultural exchange and create the conditions to grow trade which will enjoy the most success in this era.

The ACT's unique economic advantages—our exciting IT sector, smart and agile workforce and a high level of cultural literacy—are well recognised and respected among our Asian neighbours. Making the most of these qualities requires an active and ongoing strategy, and my trip has made further progress against the key deliverables set out in that framework: exporting education, close city-to-city relationships, forging new business and investment ties, and supporting student networks.

As we look ahead to expanding this agenda, the government will continue to work locally with our business and education sectors to develop relationships in China and other countries in the region. Missions led by the Deputy Chief Minister are also directed toward this goal. For us there is a clear and vital connection back to the priorities of growing and diversifying the ACT economy and broadening its base. A greater international engagement is a key source of strength, growth and employment at a time when commonwealth employment and expenditure continue to be cut.

Reflecting more broadly on this vision for engagement in Asia, it is appropriate that I pause to again reflect on the true trailblazer in this relationship—the catalyst for much of Australia's national prosperity in the last 40 years, Gough Whitlam. He saw the need to normalise relations with China a full two decades before he achieved it—and before he convinced the Labor Party to adopt it as policy. In reflecting on the change he was able to institute in office, Whitlam reflected on the fact that, at least in this instance, his timing was very fortunate. He said that his decisions would have been much the same regardless of timing, but that it was, to quote, “a great thing for me and my colleagues just not to have to waste time pushing against the wind on matters like China ... a relief to be moving on the wave of great events rather than swimming against the tide”. The relationship we enjoy today with counterparts in China owes more to his vision than any other, and as current beneficiaries we retain a strong sense of gratitude in carrying it forward.

In conclusion, I would like to acknowledge the Australian consul-general in Hong Kong—and in Guangzhou, which also represents Shenzhen—and their staff, for the support they provided to the mission, and Tourism Australia and Austrade, who are also keen participants in the program.

Overall, with the student exchange that we have announced and will proceed to advertise for shortly, and with the MOU that we signed with the mayor of Shenzhen, great opportunities will flow from this short but important mission.

I table the following paper:

Chief Minister's delegation to Hong Kong and Shenzhen, China, October 2014—Statement by Minister.

I move:

That the Assembly takes note of the paper.

Question resolved in the affirmative.

Food Amendment Bill 2014

Ms Gallagher, pursuant to notice, presented the bill, its explanatory statement and a Human Rights Act compatibility statement.

Title read by Clerk.

MS GALLAGHER (Molonglo—Chief Minister, Minister for Health, Minister for Higher Education and Minister for Regional Development) (11.04): I move:

That this bill be agreed to in principle.

I present to the Assembly the Food Amendment Bill 2014. The cafe, restaurant and food service sector is an important part of Canberra's economic and social fabric. There are more than 2,500 registered food businesses in the ACT, each offering employment opportunities and delivering earnings to the economy. As a sector dominated by small players, it is critical that the regulatory environment in which food businesses operate is sufficient to ensure food safety while not imposing excessive red tape.

Opposition members interjecting—

MS GALLAGHER: Sorry, Madam Speaker; I cannot hear myself.

MADAM DEPUTY SPEAKER: Mr Hanson!

MS GALLAGHER: It is with this in mind that I present the Food Amendment Bill.

These amendments build on a range of government actions to reduce red tape to support efficient and effective regulatory outcomes and reduce the burden on community organisations. These reforms will have real impact across the ACT community by directly addressing concerns about compliance requirements for what are assessed as lower risk activities. These changes are not a shifting of the regulatory burden between government, business and the community, but are a genuine reduction in red tape for the ACT.

The bill I am presenting today has the overarching aim of reducing the regulatory burden on food businesses, and on non-profit community organisations that sell food for fundraising purposes. I would like to stress that all of the measures presented in

the bill have been carefully assessed against public health objectives. As the Minister for Health, I am keen to protect the existing high standards of food safety enjoyed by the Canberra community when eating out. To allow the Health Directorate to put in place the administrative arrangements needed to support the bill, the commencement date has been delayed. The bill will commence no later than six months after notification.

I would like to begin with the amendments in the bill that relate to the non-profit sector. As members would be aware, non-profit community organisations play an important role in the ACT. These organisations are run for the benefit of their membership or wider community, not for the purposes of generating profit. They deliver a range of services, including welfare, education, sports, arts, worship and culture, and help combat social exclusion and enhance the wellbeing of the Canberra community.

To enable the delivery of services, many non-profit organisations rely on funds raised through the sale of food at community stalls. The amendments I am presenting today aim to reduce the regulatory burden placed on these organisations when selling food for fundraising purposes.

The Food Act as it currently stands captures many of the food-related activities—

Opposition members interjecting—

MS GALLAGHER: Madam Speaker, we do not usually have heckling during the presentation of a bill. I would ask that members respect what has been custom and practice in this place.

MADAM DEPUTY SPEAKER: Thank you, Ms Gallagher. Come to order, members.

MS GALLAGHER: The Food Act as it currently stands captures many of the food-related activities undertaken by non-profit community organisations. For example, many are required to register and have a food safety supervisor. Following concerns about the burden imposed by these requirements, I announced an exemption in November 2013—specifically, that non-profit community organisations that sell food for occasional events such as a fundraising barbecue, and which only provide lower risk foods, would be exempt from the requirement to register and appoint a food safety supervisor. The Health Directorate has been regulating community fundraising food stalls in line with this direction.

The bill I am presenting today seeks to further deregulate the non-profit community sector. Under the proposed amendments, non-profit community organisations will be removed from the operation of the act when selling food for fundraising purposes, unless operating at a declared event. The exemption will apply regardless of the types of food being sold.

This amendment will better allow these organisations to sell more nutritious options such as fruit salad and rice dishes, which are potentially higher risk but also healthier for us. The amendment is aimed at minimising the incentive that currently exists for

non-profit community organisations to sell only foods that are lower risk but less healthy to avoid registration. This approach aligns with the government's towards zero growth healthy weight action plan, a key pillar of which is the promotion of healthy eating.

In deregulating non-profit community organisations, I propose to include a power for the Minister for Health to declare an event at which all food-related activity is covered by the act. Such declarations would be made in respect of large public gatherings, such as the National Multicultural Festival, at which the potential impacts of unsafe food handling are significant. All community organisations and food businesses operating at such events will be required to complete a streamlined registration process, including free online food safety training.

I would like to assure members that the Public Health Act will also continue to apply to community organisations that undertake food-related activities. This act allows a public health officer to seize unsafe items, including food, to prevent or mitigate a public health risk. I have also instructed the Health Directorate to implement enhanced education and awareness-raising activities to ensure community organisations have ready access to critical food safety information and resources.

In deregulating non-profit community organisations, it is intended that only those food-related activities that are undertaken for the purpose of fundraising are exempted from the Food Act. Organisations that conduct food-related activities primarily to provide a food service, rather than to raise funds, will continue to be captured by the act. For example, a school canteen with volunteer staff will still be required to register and have a food safety supervisor.

I would now like to turn attention to the amendments in the bill that relate specifically to food businesses. Among the changes being proposed is the removal of the notification requirement under the Food Act. Currently, food businesses that are exempt from registering under the act must instead notify their details to the Health Directorate.

Generally speaking, businesses captured by the notification requirement are those that handle or sell low-risk food, for example prepackaged shelf-stable items such as potato crisps, plain breads and biscuits, or are involved in food transport. Their day-to-day activities are unlikely to contribute to foodborne illnesses; hence the requirement to notify is seen as overly onerous.

Businesses that handle or sell foods that are potentially hazardous, such as foods that require temperature control, will not be affected by this amendment. These businesses will still be required to register under the act. Food businesses that sell food at a declared event will also continue to be regulated.

The second amendment included in the bill will enable the Minister for Health to exempt a food business from the requirement to appoint a food safety supervisor. As members may recall, in the lead-up to the commencement of the food safety supervisor scheme, concerns were raised at the compliance burden associated with requiring every food business to have at least one person with advanced food safety training. It was felt this requirement was disproportionate to the public health risks

presented by some food-related activities. This amendment, coupled with the existing provision that allows a food business to be exempted from the requirement to register under the act, will provide the flexibility to reduce the regulatory burden on businesses on a case-by-case basis.

The third amendment will provide for multiyear registrations under the act. Currently, all food businesses must register annually. As a red tape reduction measure, the proposed amendment will allow registrations to be granted for up to three years, thereby reducing the paperwork burden on businesses.

As part of the ACT government's effort to enhance collaboration and openness in the way we govern, the Health Directorate is establishing a food regulation reference group. The reference group will engage with food businesses, public health groups and consumer bodies on issues of food regulation, including the changes proposed in the bill. Going forward, this will ensure a collaborative and transparent approach to food regulation in the ACT.

Two supplementary amendments are also proposed in the bill. The first will narrow the offence of interfering with a closure notice from "a person" to "the proprietor of the affected food business". The Health Directorate has encountered instances where food businesses have taken steps to hide or obscure closure notices. This amendment will place the onus on the proprietor to ensure closure notices remain correctly displayed.

The second of the supplementary amendments will amend the time limit in which the Chief Health Officer has to place a conviction on the register of food offences from 21 days to "as soon as possible". Past experience has shown that it can be difficult to obtain, verify and publish offence information within the 21-day limit, especially in instances where a food business lodges an appeal.

Madam Deputy Speaker, this bill reflects the ACT government's commitment to red tape reduction and also that "food safety matters". The amendments proposed in the bill will do much to relieve the compliance burden on food businesses and deregulate non-profit community organisations from the Food Act, while still protecting the Canberra community from the risk of foodborne illnesses.

I commend the bill to the Assembly.

Debate (on motion by **Mr Hanson**) adjourned to the next sitting.

Exhibition Park Corporation Repeal Bill 2014

Mr Barr, pursuant to notice, presented the bill, its explanatory statement and a Human Rights Act compatibility statement.

Title read by Clerk.

MR BARR (Molonglo—Deputy Chief Minister, Treasurer, Minister for Economic Development, Minister for Housing and Minister for Tourism and Events) (11.14): I move:

That this bill be agreed to in principle.

Today I introduce the Exhibition Park Corporation Repeal Bill 2014. This bill will repeal the Exhibition Park Corporation Act 1976. That act established the Exhibition Park Corporation as a statutory authority that administers Exhibition Park in Canberra.

The repeal will allow for the integration of the functions, staff, assets and liabilities of the corporation into the Territory Venues and Events area of the Chief Minister, Treasury and Economic Development Directorate.

Some may recall that the government brought forward a similar bill in 2009 for the same purpose. I foreshadowed then that I would revisit this matter, and, Madam Deputy Speaker, here we are. Although unsuccessful five years ago, clearly the last five years have demonstrated the ongoing resource pressures that have been faced by the corporation.

The government maintains, as I have all along, that managing EPIC alongside other territory venues is the best way forward. The governance and business obligations on the corporation are onerous considering its very small size. Integration creates opportunities to share expertise across territory venues, particularly in relation to event planning, sales and marketing, security, insurance and other management issues. Efficiencies may be achieved through streamlining supplies and services, contracts and shared use of equipment and resources.

The repeal will provide a governance structure that more closely aligns with community expectations of the management of government facilities. EPIC is the venue for many not-for-profit events, causing additional challenges for the corporation to provide a commercial focus at EPIC. Each year, EPIC provides significant community support in kind, which is at odds with the obligation to make a commercial return as is expected of a corporation. I am pleased to advise this morning that the government will continue to provide such in-kind support following the repeal. This support amounted to almost \$700,000 in 2013-14.

The range of iconic events associated with Exhibition Park will not be affected by the change. It will be business as usual for Summernats, the Royal Canberra Show, the National Folk Festival, the Capital Region Farmers Market, Lifeline's book fairs, the craft and quilt show, and of course the many dog shows and other events and activities held at Exhibition Park that add colour and life to our city.

The development of the low-cost tourist accommodation project at Exhibition Park, which will bring much-needed accommodation for school groups and the general public, will also not be affected by the change and will be operational in 2015. Let me also be very clear that the staff of Exhibition Park are already public servants and they will remain so after the change.

I am pleased to advise that the repeal is expected to deliver savings to the budget as a result of the board being abolished. Based on current board costs, these savings are in the order of \$140,000 over four years. I can also advise the Assembly that notwithstanding that their roles will come to an end, the board members are supportive of this change.

To enable a smooth transition from being a corporation to being part of a directorate, the repeal bill includes a number of consequential amendments to the Financial Management Act 1996, the Financial Management Regulation 2005 and the Taxation (Government Business Enterprises) Regulation 2003.

This government is committed to regulatory reform. I have been committed to this process for some time, and this repeal bill is in line with the work that we are undertaking and continue to undertake to remove outdated and unnecessary legislation. This should have been done five years ago but I am pleased it will be done now, and I commend the bill to the Assembly.

Debate (on motion by **Mr Smyth**) adjourned to the next sitting.

Executive business—precedence

Ordered that executive business be called on.

Red Tape Reduction Legislation Amendment Bill 2014

Debate resumed from 5 June 2014, on motion by **Mr Barr**:

That this bill be agreed to in principle.

MR SMYTH (Brindabella) (11.19): Aren't we living the life of red tape reduction here in the ACT Assembly, with a rash now of bills delivered this morning? One of course was the bill just tabled by the Minister for Health, the Chief Minister, which in fact will get rid of red tape they put on last year. It is kind of the red tape hokey-pokey: we put some red tape on and we take the red tape off, and then we say, "Aren't we good? We've got rid of red tape." It is just sensational. I loved the speech:

These amendments build on a range of government actions to reduce red tape to support efficient and effective regulatory outcomes and reduce the burden on community organisations.

That is what they said when they introduced the bill. The community organisations said, "This is putting red tape on us. This is making it harder for us to operate. Won't you listen to us?" And what did the government say? "No, we won't." And here we have the outcome. I can imagine that the Chief Minister thought she was being heckled during the delivery of her speech. It is kind of ludicrous to say that it is an initiative to reduce red tape—tape that you have put there in the first place.

Of course, then we had the Deputy Chief Minister introducing the Exhibition Park Corporation Repeal Bill, and also getting rid of red tape and legislation. There is just a plethora of bills now, Madam Deputy Speaker. You may think I am making light of this. Well, yes I am, because it is a joke.

We will be supporting the Red Tape Reduction Legislation Amendment Bill that we are debating this morning. That is not to say that we believe this government is solving red tape in our city; rather, I think this bill is a better measure than doing

nothing. And that is not saying much. After 13 years in office, if we measure the amount of legislation that this government has put in place, what is happening today is paltry in comparison to what it has done. It is a shame that it is being lauded as some sort of achievement because if it was really interested in getting rid of red tape, it would have been doing a lot more a lot earlier than this.

The bill today will amend the Casino Control Act, the fair trading and gaming machine acts, the Hawkers Act, the Magistrates Court Act, the Fair Trading (Motor Vehicle Repair Industry) Act, the Magistrates Court (Fair Trading Motor Vehicle Infringement Notices) Regulation, the Magistrates Court (Sale of Motor Vehicles Infringement Notices) Regulation, the Pawnbrokers Act, the Planning and Development Regulation, the Public Unleased Land Act, the Race and Sports Bookmaking Act, the Registration of Deeds Act, the Sale of Motor Vehicles Act, the Second-hand Dealers Act, the Security Industry Act, and the Tobacco Act. When you read them out like that, it might even sound a bit impressive, but really what you have here is just simple tinkering.

We need to go back to where the Treasurer started. In September last year the Treasurer stood up in this chamber and announced proudly:

The red tape reduction panel, which I chair—

so this is all the Treasurer's work; he has been busy, and here we are 13 months later—

has overseen the abolition of registration labels for light vehicles, has increased the majority of business licences to a three-year maximum term and is reviewing police checking and business signage processes. In addition we have established the fix my red tape website to allow businesses to bring red-tape issues to the government's attention 24 hours a day, seven days a week.

Who would have thought it? The truth is that here we are in the mid-term of this Assembly and, while having an announcement that it will reduce red tape, this is a bill that does not go far enough. This bill and the previous initiatives amount to the government doing nothing more than tweaking the red tape they have put in place over the last 13 years.

If you look at what is happening in the main list of bills in the amendment—the list of bills that I read out—you will see that it is about easing the notice that you have to give people of the licence. In the case of the casino and the Gaming Machine Act you have to have your licence up in one spot instead of in all spots for the gaming rules. For hawkers, you have to have your licence in your pocket instead of having it on display. It is not a serious attempt. If this is all they can find then they are clearly a government that have run out of puff.

I will give a bit of history. In fact given that the Treasurer's first red tape reduction announcement was to get rid of rego stickers, in the lead-up to last year's election, Madam Deputy Speaker, you really have to question whether Mr Barr even knows what red tape is. He has been talking about these red tape initiatives since the beginning of this term. He tabled this bill during this year, and here we are debating it now.

As I have stated, and I will repeat it, this bill does not get rid of nearly enough red tape. It merely tweaks, in fact, the government's own red tape. And what of the red tape website the Treasurer speaks about? How effective is it? I will remind members that the last time we asked about it—and these are the government figures—the number of issues raised from the public were four and the red tape reduction action taken was zero. Possibly the Treasurer can update us when he comes back to discuss this.

What are the cost benefits? We get further insight into this Treasurer's insincerity on his push to cut red tape. He noted just last November that his overriding goal on cutting red tape is to "identify and consider". There you go: "identify and consider regulations that impose unnecessary burdens, costs or disadvantage on business activity in the territory". When we asked the Treasurer how he measures the impact value of his red tape reductions, he responded by saying this:

... the focus of the Panel has been on improving efficiencies in response to concerns raised by industry, rather than quantifying the exact value of the red tape being removed.

So we do not even have any analysis of what the value of this red tape being removed is. There it is: the government is saying it will do something but it still cannot quantify what it is doing. And it is the Treasurer's own committee; it meets several times a year. One would not know what is discussed at those meetings; you would have to say it cannot be a great deal if this is all that has come out of it.

There is a genuine lack of leadership on this issue. As management guru Peter Drucker once said, "You can't manage what you can't measure." Then again, Mr Drucker also said, "Effective leadership is not about making speeches or being liked; leadership is defined by results not attributes." I think our Treasurer has got it front to back. If you look at the results so far, it certainly is defining his leadership.

I remind members that in the lead-up to last year's federal election the chamber of commerce "too big to ignore" campaign focused quite a bit on red tape as a major concern for small businesses. It was a very effective campaign. You can see that the federal government has responded strongly to that. For the first time the Minister for Small Business—Bruce Billson—is in cabinet, and that is a tremendous outcome. We hear across parliaments—we have heard it in this place—that small businesses are the engine room of the economy. It is about time they got the attention that they deserve, and it is great to see that Mr Hanson has a dedicated small business shadow minister to make sure that those concerns are raised. And that is a great thing.

In September last year the Productivity Commission report looking into the interaction between small businesses and governments noted that there was a need to improve government regulatory agencies' relationship with small business by maintaining an effective and facilitative regulatory posture. It noted that they needed to keep compliance requirements simple and readily understandable, they needed to develop better data sharing and data collection across government agencies to avoid duplication and they needed to reduce the cumulative compliance burden which includes taxation compliance. We could talk about lease variation charges and land tax burdens in that regard; we have had those debates.

It also noted that they needed to reduce the cumulative compliance burden, which includes employment compliance. So let us bring up the payroll tax—all the confusion that that caused. What a debacle this government has been, just in the last budget, for small businesses in the ACT.

You would remember, I am sure, Madam Deputy Speaker, that in that debate I said that we had asked, when given the briefing, “Was there any analysis done on the impact of this bill and would the subsequent changes to the payroll tax actually lead to the creation of more businesses or less businesses?” The government had done no analysis. It was simply a grab for the cash. They had worked out they could make \$10 million and they took the cash without even working out whether the “genuine employer” exemption had actually fostered business in the ACT and therefore made a stronger economy—which, of course, means the government gets its share through other forms of taxation. But no; that work was not done.

The poor revenue commissioner was sent out to discuss it with all the contractors to see where it left them, and we had backflip after backflip. It was meant to start on 1 July, then it was 1 October and now it is 1 January, which I think is an admission of the abject failure of the bill. The government may well get their \$10 million but they cannot tell us whether or not it leads to a loss in another part of the economy, and that makes it bad regulation.

The third thing that the Productivity Commission said was that regulatory compliance processes should be made simple, transparent and accountable. You have only to look at the lack of this in the late development fees and charges calculation. What a debacle that has been from this government. There is a two-year window. If you are in the window, you are fine; if you are on either side of the window, bad luck. We know about the big bills, the big fees and charges calculations, for all those that purchased blocks earlier, particularly when the GFC was at its height, when they could not get clients for the buildings that they had proposed to build. But the government blithely ignores that, and that is the problem.

When you look at what is hurting business—and the Productivity Commission normally does a good job with these sorts of things—this government gets a fail on all of those initiatives. On all of these counts, this government has failed. On taxation compliance, on employment compliance and regulatory compliance, this is a government that does not get the job done.

As I said before, this bill does not cut a great deal of red tape; it merely tweaks it. The problem with red tape is systemic. What Mr Barr is doing is nothing more than mistaking the trees for the woods.

MR RATTENBURY (Molonglo) (11.31): The Greens will be supporting this bill today. It is a very short and simple bill to amend a range of legislation across many different areas of government as another small step towards making life simpler for people who engage with government processes without watering down necessary requirements that exist in a range of areas that are regulated.

The areas being amended in this bill include licensing in relation to both casino employee licences and sports and race bookmaking licences. Licences will now be able to be issued for three years rather than the unspecified period in current legislation, which will reduce work for both the licence holder and the government in issuing these licences.

The amendments to the Gaming Machine Act will reduce requirements for licensed premises from the need to display a copy of their gaming licence at each and every entrance to a gaming area and will instead only require one copy of the licence to be displayed at the premises near just one entrance.

The Sale of Motor Vehicles Act is being amended similarly in that motor vehicle dealers and operators will still need licences but will not need to display a notice with seven-centimetre-high text stating the licensees' name, type or premises.

The Hawkers Act is being amended in a similar way, as is the Pawnbrokers Act. We see a consistent theme here in seeking to ensure that minutiae specified in the legislation is removed. The level of detail of how many centimetres high a sign needs to be and the like is removed as it is clearly not required to meet the consumer awareness requirements we want to fulfil.

There are also amendments in the area of advertising. The amendment to the Fair Trading Act and the Fair Trading Regulation in relation to motor vehicle sales and repairs will allow advertisers to now omit their licence numbers from advertisements. I think we will all welcome that change. It has always seemed odd to me that in a 30-second radio ad that bit of information needed to be jammed in, and this will be an improvement that is perhaps the one people will most notice—although they perhaps will not know why they notice it.

When it comes to outdoor dining the amendment proposed for the Planning and Development Regulation relates to the current need for businesses to lodge a development application for any outdoor furniture or fixtures in their outdoor dining areas. This bill relaxes that requirement and instead only requires development approval for furniture or fixtures outside their premises that are not temporary—that is, they cannot be removed within 48 hours. This means that businesses do not need a development approval to have retail stands or displays, chairs, tables or umbrellas outside.

It is interesting to note that this particular change in process has been arrived at by the existing exemption for use of unleased land for community gardens. This bill aligns the definition of “outdoor dining area” with the definition used in the Smoke-Free Public Places Act, which is important as it is vital that any new legislation is compatible with the large array of legislation that applies in the ACT.

Another simple but very helpful amendment in this bill is the one that applies to the Public Unleased Land Act, which relaxes the requirement for a location plan and will mean that land use permit applications can be submitted with a site map which can be hand drawn if necessary as long as it is to scale. At the moment the act requires any

outdoor dining application to be accompanied by a professionally drawn site plan, which can be very expensive and, indeed, prohibitive for some small or micro businesses.

The bill and subsequent government amendments introduce amendments to the Registration of Deeds Act 1957. I understand that current requirements mean there is a duplication of verification of certificates by way of the requirement for witnessing already being embedded in other legislation such as the Powers of Attorney Act. Comments have been made about this both in the minister's introductory remarks and in the explanatory statement so I will not speak further about it.

This bill removes unnecessary regulation and some duplication of government requirements. These are all relatively minor amendments, yet they are all requirements that are time consuming for business operators as well as the government so their removal is a positive thing to be doing. On that basis the Greens will be supporting the bill.

MR WALL (Brindabella) (11.35): I will speak very briefly in my capacity as the shadow minister for small business. Red tape has become over a number of years a term beaten around by all sides of politics about what they are doing to make business easier. But we never actually discuss or look at what red tape is and what it means. The businesses I doorknock and visit on a regular basis—the hundreds I have seen in the last 12 months—describe red tape as the things that take their focus away from what they do best, the things that prevent them from running their business.

When you look at this bill and what red tape it seeks to reduce and where the benefit is going to be delivered, it is clear that most of the red tape being removed from legislation will make life easier for government rather than for business. The impact of the red tape that is being reduced in extending the period for which you can hold a licence or the number of permits you need to show will not even be noticed on the ground by a small business in the territory.

Will this bill result in savings for a business other than the small changes made around outdoor cafe furniture? No. Will it allow a business to have the freedom to employ an additional person? No. Will it allow them to operate more freely in the market that they currently operate in? No. That clearly highlights that this red tape reduction bill and this government's aim at trying to reduce red tape are clearly political spin rather than delivering any firm action in making it easier to own or operate a small business in this territory.

It is about time there was a real commitment to and a real focus on getting out of the way of small businesses particularly and making some meaningful changes to our legislative framework that will encourage employment, encourage investment and reduce the operating costs that are all too often a burden for businesses in this city.

As I have already said, the opposition will be supporting this bill, and any attempt to reduce red tape should be encouraged. But I think the kind of encouragement the Treasury and the government are giving through this bill is on par with simply just being involved. It is certainly not commendable on its merits over and above anything

other than being a poor attempt. We look forward to the next red tape reduction bill hopefully being a little bit more substantive in its impact for small business but, need I say, we will not be holding our breath.

MS GALLAGHER (Molonglo—Chief Minister, Minister for Regional Development, Minister for Health and Minister for Higher Education) (11.38): I will be closing the debate as responsibility for red tape and regulatory focus has moved into my portfolio responsibilities. I acknowledge the contributions to the debate from those who have spoken before me. The ACT government has an ongoing commitment to reduce red tape and the efforts of the regulatory reform panel to identify regulations that impose unnecessary burdens, costs or disadvantage on business activity within the territory. This bill reflects the work of the panel to date and demonstrates the government's willingness to work with industry to improve the business environment in the ACT.

The government has always acknowledged the importance of regulatory reform and regulatory reduction in stopping inefficient and ineffective regulatory outcomes. The bill proposes amendments to a number of acts and regulations to reduce red tape for business and the community—in particular, for the establishment of outdoor dining facilities on public unleased land, extensions of certain licensing periods, business signage requirements and removing duplication of statutory declarations when lodging deeds of power of attorney.

Specifically the bill will amend the following 16 acts and regulations: Casino Control Act 2006, Fair Trading (Motor Vehicle Repair Industry) Act 2010, Gaming Machine Act 2004, Hawkers Act 2003, Magistrates Court (Fair Trading and Motor Vehicle Repair Industry Infringement Notices) Regulation 2012, Magistrates Court (Sale of Motor Vehicles Infringement Notices) Regulation 2005, Pawnbrokers Act 1902, Planning and Development Regulation 2008, Public Unleased Land Act 2013, Race and Sports Bookmaking Act 2001, Registration of Deeds Act 1957, Sale of Motor Vehicles Act 1977, Second-hand Dealers Act 1906, Second-hand Dealers Regulation 2002, Security Industry Act 2003, and Tobacco Act 1927.

In relation to key aspects of the bill, the outdoor dining covered in the bill provides for a simplified and streamlined approval mechanism for outdoor dining areas for businesses such as restaurants and cafes on public unleased land. The bill will allow businesses intending to place semi-fixed objects in outdoor dining areas to apply for a permit under the Public Unleased Land Act rather than having to go through a DA process. Applications for permits will be assessed by the Office of Regulatory Services. As defined in the bill, semi-fixed objects are objects that may be locked down or bolted into the ground or pavement or attached to a permanent building by a socket, a sleeve or a bracket that are able to be disconnected or removed within 48 hours as well as returning that place to the condition it was immediately before the object was installed. An example of this is an umbrella that could be removed within 48 hours and the area could be restored within 48 hours to its original condition. On the other hand a concrete barrier is not likely to be restored within 48 hours to the original condition.

As to extension of licence periods, the bill will amend the Casino Control Act and the Race and Sports Bookmaking Act to extend licence periods from two to three years. These amendments are in response to a recommendation from the panel which found

that administration of annual licence renewals is time consuming and costly for business. The extension of licence terms is also in line with the Justice and Community Safety Legislation (Red Tape Reduction No 1—Licence Periods) Amendments Act, which amended a number of acts to extend the maximum length of various licence periods.

Reduction in regulatory requirements for certain licences relating to signage, display of licences and advertising is also in the bill. Under the Hawkers Act, hawkers will no longer be required to display their licence or an exemption to operate near a commercial business and will only have to produce the licence or exemption at the request of an authorised person.

In relation to the Pawnbrokers Act, the Sale of Motor Vehicles Act and the Second-hand Dealers Act, the amendments remove requirements for separate signage indicating that a licensee is a licensed dealer as the licensee will still be required to display the licence in a prominent place at premises where business is carried on under the licence.

Under the Tobacco Act licensees that sell tobacco products will only have to display the licence on the business premises but will not have to display the detailed conditions that accompany the licence.

For the purposes of the Gaming Machine Act, gaming machine licensee details will now only need to be prominently displayed in the main entry of a gaming area and not at every entry and exit to a gaming area.

With regard to the Security Industry Act, the Fair Trading (Motor Vehicle Repair Industry) Act and the Sale of Motor Vehicles Act, the bill will lift requirements for these businesses to display or state their licence number in all advertising material. These amendments will reduce administrative costs to businesses without reducing the effectiveness of action to regulate activities.

In relation to statutory declarations, the bill will remove the duplication of statutory declarations attached to the deed for registration if the power of attorney contains certification as required under the Powers of Attorney Act.

These changes reflect the combined work of the ACT government and the ACT business community. Comments were made earlier about how it is all designed to make ACT government work easier. These are ideas that have come forward through the roundtable and the panel that have been put in place to look at these. They have been advocated for by business. These reforms will have impacts across both business and the ACT community by directly addressing concerns around duplication, time delays and additional expense.

Most importantly, these changes are not shifting the regulatory burden between government or business or the community but are a genuine reduction in red tape. These amendments are also a demonstration not only of how the government is listening to concerns where there are concerns raised about over-regulation but also what can be achieved through the ongoing collaboration between the ACT government and business community.

Regulatory reform and red tape reduction will continue to be ongoing priorities for the government, and I look forward to seeing further reforms that will arise through our continuing engagement with the business community. I would, however, caution against people seeing red tape reduction or the cutting of red tape as something that always needs to happen. I think it needs to be part of standard government and business processes, but there are also at times very good reasons to have what has now become colloquially known as red tape, for example, in areas like food safety, industrial rights, occupational health and safety and professional standards. These are all areas where regulation exists for good reason. We should not just get suckered into thinking that all reduction of red tape is necessary or required or that it is all good. We have regulation for a purpose.

The explanatory statement for the bill that was tabled has been amended to reflect some changes that were requested by the scrutiny committee in scrutiny report No 20, and there are two minor amendments to move in the detail stage. I present a revised explanatory statement to the bill.

Question resolved in the affirmative.

Bill agreed to in principle.

Detail stage

Bill, by leave, taken as a whole.

MS GALLAGHER (Molonglo—Chief Minister, Minister for Health, Minister for Higher Education and Minister for Regional Development) (11.46): by leave: I move amendments Nos 1 and 2 circulated in my name together [*see schedule 1 at page 3608*]. I present a supplementary explanatory statement to the government amendments.

The amendments remove the requirement under the Registration of Deeds Act for statutory declarations verifying execution of a deed when lodging a deed for registration. These amendments build on those contained in the bill relating to statutory declarations attached to the deed when lodging a deed for registration of powers of attorney. Minor technical amendments are included to clarify an existing provision of the Registration of Deeds Act 1957 and update drafting of references to the Registrar-General and entry of deeds on the register.

The second amendment removes the requirement under the Registration of Deeds Act to provide a statutory declaration verifying due execution for registration. This will include powers of attorney executed by companies where the certificate is not required or not available. Powers of attorney executed by companies are executed in accordance with section 127 of the commonwealth Corporations Act 2011 where no witness is required to execute the document. Other deeds, such as retirement and appointment of trustees, are required to be registered under the Registration of Deeds Act pursuant to the Trustee Act. The opportunity to remove additional unnecessary requirements in relation to deeds was raised by industry, the Property Council and the Law Society following presentation of the bill. We have worked with industry to develop these amendments.

Amendments agreed to.

Bill, as a whole, as amended, agreed to.

Bill, as amended, agreed to.

Training and Tertiary Education Amendment Bill 2014

Debate resumed from 25 September 2014, on motion by **Ms Burch**:

That this bill be agreed to in principle.

MR DOSZPOT (Molonglo) (11.49): The opposition will be supporting this bill. The bill amends the Training and Tertiary Education Act 2003 and makes a number of consequential changes to a range of other legislation affecting the delivery of vocational education and higher education in the ACT.

The VET sector has been subject to a number of reforms over the last several years, with most linked to reform of legislation at the federal level. Unlike some other jurisdictions, the delivery of vocational education in the ACT has been well regulated and well delivered. The standard of courses delivered through CIT and the numerous private registered training organisations, RTOs, has generally been of a consistently high quality.

Two major changes in the VET sector have included the establishment of a national VET regulator and TEQSA, the regulator of higher education providers. The national VET regulator, known as the Australian Skills Quality Authority, has, since 2011, been the national regulator of RTOs throughout most states of Australia.

It is suggested that the ACT's participation in the national VET system has benefits for employers, workers and students, and indeed will allow any qualification achieved here in the ACT to be held in equal recognition everywhere in Australia and hopefully might lead to streamlining in licensing requirements between states. I know in the delivery of RSA, responsible service of alcohol, training, there has been a need for those who wish to work in both ACT and New South Wales licensed premises to get separate licences. I hope the legislation goes some way to eliminating that unnecessary burden for a large number of students who take casual jobs in restaurants and bars.

TEQSA, the Tertiary Education Quality and Standards Agency, has responsibility for the regulation of higher education providers and accreditation of their courses. With the changes to commonwealth legislation, it is no longer necessary for the ACT to maintain a separate legislative framework for higher education providers, and it is intended to also reduce red-tape duplication.

The minister has already outlined other aspects of the bill, including clarity around the powers and obligations of the Director-General of the Education and Training Directorate in respect of probationary periods for apprenticeships and traineeships. These all seem sensible changes.

Under this bill, the ACT Accreditation and Registration Council will be abolished. One would assume this is part of the red-tape reduction the bill's explanatory statement refers to. As advised earlier, the opposition will be supporting this bill.

MR RATTENBURY (Molonglo) (11.53): The ACT Greens will be supporting this bill before the Assembly today. As Mr Doszpot has noted, the training and tertiary education industry, including vocational education and training, the VET sector, is undergoing a range of quite significant changes at the moment, with more no doubt to come. It is therefore essential that the ACT is keeping pace with developments in the commonwealth arena, and I understand that this bill is just one part of this bigger picture.

The bill before us seeks to align ACT legislation with relevant changes to commonwealth legislation to avoid duplication and clarify oversight processes to the sector, which I am sure will be welcome. But it is just as important that government, both federal and local, maintain an ongoing watch over the sector and the many existing registered training organisations, especially if we are to see, as many expect, new players enter the ACT market. Therefore, it is going to be increasingly important to facilitate the Education and Training Directorate's implementation of ongoing reforms to ensure we maintain and enhance quality, efficiency, transparency, equity and access in the ACT VET sector, in line with similar reforms at the national level.

We have a strong and vibrant education sector in the territory, and we are all rightly proud of both our institutions' and our students' results. And we need to recognise the important economic and social benefits that the education sector brings to the city. I know we will have more bills and amendments in this place over the coming months regarding the changes touched on earlier. University funding, deregulation, uncapped fees—while these are all federal issues, they impact on our community and certainly warrant discussion in this place.

More directly related to the ACT and the bill before us, however, are the processes already in train to open up the VET sector to HECS-style loans for diploma level courses and increasing funding to support students to receive certificates III and IV level education. We need to ensure that CIT remains a foundation of the government's commitment to the learning capital as these changes roll out and provide the appropriate guidance and oversight to all VET sector providers.

I appreciate the work the minister is putting into this transition, and the recognition of the need to step our way through this challenging environment with more care perhaps than some other jurisdictions that jumped in boots and all a few years ago and are now having to go back and fix some of the unforeseen problems.

I also support the Education and Training Directorate's ongoing role relating to policy making for vocational education and training and streamlining of the Australian apprenticeship systems in the ACT. As the explanatory statement makes clear, with the repeal of the ACT Accreditation and Registration Council it is necessary and appropriate to give functions previously assigned to the council in relation to vocational education and training, and undertaken by the directorate on the council's behalf, to the director-general, beyond what is offered by the national Australian Skills Quality Authority.

At a time when we are seeing increasing levels of youth unemployment and underemployment, and proposed measures that could see young people left stranded without any social welfare support for some extended period, we need to work together to make sure that we provide certainty for young people in the education and training sector but also, with government working with the education sector in partnership, to ensure that we continue to provide accessible, quality training opportunities for our young people. As I said, the Greens will be supporting the bill today.

MS BURCH (Brindabella—Minister for Education and Training, Minister for Disability, Minister for Multicultural Affairs, Minister for Racing and Gaming, Minister for Women and Minister for the Arts) (11.56), in reply: I am pleased to speak once again on this bill. The amendments in this bill revise the ACT legislation in response to reforms to the vocational education and training and higher education sectors at a local and national level. I want to thank members for their words of support in this chamber this morning. The reforms have included nationalising regulation of providers, increasing quality vocational education and training provision, reducing red tape in the higher education sector, harmonising the Australian apprenticeship system and engaging more directly with stakeholders for the provision of advice to government.

Reforms to the regulation of vocational education and training and higher education providers have resulted in the establishment of national regulatory bodies. These bodies are established under commonwealth laws which effectively override ACT legislative provisions for the registration of vocational education and training and higher education providers. In response, this amendment aligns ACT legislation to those changes to commonwealth legislation.

Provisions in ACT legislation dealing with the registration of training providers and accreditation of VET training courses have been repealed or updated to align with the commonwealth's National Vocational Education and Training Regulator Act 2011. Provisions in ACT legislation dealing with the registration of higher education providers and accreditation of their courses have also been repealed or updated, in this case to align with the commonwealth's Tertiary Education Quality and Standards Agency Act 2011.

The bill repeals the ACT Accreditation and Registration Council, as the council's major functions were the registration and accreditation of VET higher education providers. Consequential amendments are also made to provisions in other legislation that refer to the registration and accreditation powers of the council. Likewise, the Construction Occupations (Licensing) Regulation 2004, which deals with the conditions under which an individual without a licence may provide construction services, refers to an obsolete definition of an accredited course.

This bill will make similar consequential amendments to a range of other legislation. The bill clarifies the long-held role of the Education and Training Directorate in ensuring that government funding is directed towards quality VET training. This role has been carried out in conjunction with the council's registration and accreditation functions and the director-general's regulatory powers over apprenticeships and traineeships.

As part of the function of promoting quality vocational education and training provision, the bill provides that the director-general has the power to visit premises of a registered training organisation conducting VET courses. The bill will also repeal the council's function to establish university advisory panels to advise the Minister for Higher Education, as this is an unnecessary duplication of resources.

The ACT has agreed to implement national harmonisation principles for Australian apprenticeships. An aim of the harmonisation principles is to ensure that compliance requirements for Australian apprenticeship training contracts are nationally consistent. In response, this bill provides the director-general with the power to determine probationary periods for training contracts that align with nationally agreed probationary periods. Jurisdictions have agreed on probationary periods in the range of 60 to 90 days.

Currently there are no legislated probationary periods for apprenticeships and traineeships in the ACT. Under the current legislation, training contracts can only be cancelled by the director-general. This amendment will enable an employer or an apprentice or trainee to end their training contract before the end of their probation period without requiring formal application or approval from the director-general.

In addition to simplifying the compliance requirement for training contracts, this bill recognises the removal of a layer of bureaucracy between stakeholders and government. Since 2010 the council's advice functions have been replaced with effective direct consultation between government and stakeholders. The transformation reflects substantive changes to the training and tertiary education landscape at both the national and local level. Improved engagement between government and stakeholders is a key element of reform in the ACT VET and higher education sectors.

The bill repeals the council's functions to inquire into, and advise the minister on, issues about VET and higher education. The bill also realigns the council's inquiry and advice functions to the director-general. This enables the directorate to consult directly with stakeholders about VET training issues.

The changes made by this bill provide recognition of the wide-ranging changes to the training and tertiary education landscape at both the national and local level since the Training and Tertiary Education Act 2003 was enacted in 2007. As members are aware, our training system has become part of a national training system, with benefits to be gained from improved mobility for workers, less complexity for employers and opportunities for streamlining processes. The bill continues the government's ongoing efforts to deliver an efficient and high-quality vocational education and training sector for all Canberrans.

In closing, I would like to thank all those involved in drafting these amendments. The work was comprehensive and I think it reinforces the faith I have in Education and Training Directorate officials that they know their business and how to make these changes as easy as possible. Indeed I take the opportunity to thank all those involved in the ACT vocational education and training sector for the work they do and the benefits they bring to the ACT.

Question resolved in the affirmative.

Bill agreed to in principle.

Leave granted to dispense with the detail stage.

Bill agreed to.

Sitting suspended from 12.03 to 2.30 pm.

Ministerial arrangements

MS GALLAGHER (Molonglo—Chief Minister, Minister for Health, Minister for Higher Education and Minister for Regional Development): Minister Burch is absent from question time today on a personal matter, and I will take all questions that relate to her portfolio.

Questions without notice ACT public service—bullying

MR HANSON: My question is to the Chief Minister. Chief Minister, the people matter survey 2014 of 6,299 ACT public service respondents showed that between 10 and 20 per cent had experienced bullying and 20 to 30 per cent witnessed bullying. The Commissioner for Public Administration said that this shows “bullying remains an issue across the ACT public service”. Chief Minister, why is it, despite the exposure of bullying in your public service, that “bullying remains an issue across the ACT public service”?

MS GALLAGHER: I thank the Leader of the Opposition for the question. It was with my approval that this whole-of-government public sector survey was undertaken to examine issues of how employees felt about their workplace. It was using the Victorian government’s survey methodology. It is the first time that it has been done.

It was important, in discussions with the former Commissioner for Public Administration, who had put to me that we should do a whole-of-staff survey, to really understand some of the issues from an employee’s point of view. I do not have all of the ratings here before me, but from memory the ACT public service rated alongside state counterparts for issues within the workplace. Unfortunately, bullying and perceptions of bullying and harassment remains one of those issues.

What the staff survey allows us to do is report back to staff and continue to focus on this and to explore, through the evaluation of the RED framework, how we can provide as safe a workplace as we can for all of our employees. I do not think anyone in this place condones bullying. Unfortunately, it does happen in workplaces and there are workplace grievances between employees. I think you will find that in any organisation, large or small. But this has been an issue that has been identified by the survey for future priority and focus.

MADAM SPEAKER: Supplementary question, Mr Hanson.

MR HANSON: Chief Minister, are public servants in the ACT public service too scared of reprisals to report more incidents publicly given the high rates of staff experiencing or observing bullying but low rates of reporting?

MS GALLAGHER: I do not believe so, although it is always an issue that we cannot ignore. From my experience, and there are different levels at which you can report concerns that you have in your workplace, certainly in the areas I am responsible for I am aware how proactively they are managed within the relevant directorates. This survey would indicate that perceptions of bullying or harassment issues between, say, how managers and employees within particular units are working remain something that we need to focus on across the whole of government. It is not unusual for the Victorian public service, the New South Wales public service or indeed, I would argue, probably any organisation that undertakes surveys like this—any large organisation that undertakes surveys like this. There is no reason why the ACT government is any different from any other organisation.

What we can do is try to identify what the problems are and then respond. That is exactly why this survey was done. I remember saying at the time we commissioned this survey, “I don’t want the headline out of it to be beating up the ACT government service.” In large part, it is an extremely efficient, professional service, but where there are problems we should be able to listen to staff, respond to staff and deal with all of those matters appropriately. That is what this survey—

Mr Coe interjecting—

MS GALLAGHER: This is self-reporting by employees. That is not the—

Mr Coe interjecting—

MADAM SPEAKER: Order, Mr Coe!

MS GALLAGHER: Thank you, Madam Speaker. That is exactly why we have undertaken this survey and why we will continue, despite knowing full well, going in eyes open, that politics would be made out of it.

MADAM SPEAKER: A supplementary question, Mrs Jones.

MRS JONES: Minister, what targets have you set for improving on bullying? When will those targets be met? And has the no wrong door policy now been rolled out across the entire ACT public service?

MS GALLAGHER: There is no acceptable level of bullying. That is the answer: there is no acceptable level of bullying. Bullying is not condoned in the ACT public service and, where it is identified, it is responded to very swiftly and appropriately. I am aware there are cases of employees who feel that those complaints have not been dealt with properly. I think the CIT stands as an example there where we have gone back and done a thorough investigation into all of the concerns that have been raised.

In terms of the RED framework and rolling that out, it has been effective and it continues to be evaluated. We will have a look at what that says when it comes back as to whether we need to make further improvements in this area.

MADAM SPEAKER: A supplementary question, Ms Berry.

MS BERRY: Chief Minister, how does the RED framework assist with addressing bullying in ACT government services?

MS GALLAGHER: I think the most important result of having the RED framework is consistency across the ACT public service, a consistent message, a consistent process for handling issues that are covered by the RED framework—and there is a whole range of them, not just dealing with behaviour within the workplace—but also I think the feedback that we are getting from staff is that it has certainly enabled them to be better informed about the processes. The RED officers within workplaces are certainly working hard to continue to roll out that message.

As to other changes we are making across the ACT public service, I will be bringing some legislation to the Assembly very shortly. The creation of the ACT public service code of conduct and the new performance framework assist us with the job. But I believe there have been gains made in the last few years. There is more work to do, but overall the ACT community is very well served by a professional public service. Where there are examples of bullying and harassment, from the Head of Service and the directors-general down, they know that is something that is not condoned by the ACT government.

Brian Hennessy Rehabilitation Centre—closure

MRS JONES: My question is to the Minister for Health. Minister, the *Canberra Times* reported on 17 October that Brian Hennessey house has been slated to close. This rehabilitation centre is an inpatient facility providing a recovery-focused model of care for mental illness with a rehabilitation setting. The centre currently has supported accommodation for up to 30 people with varying mental health needs as well as rehab, extended care, respite care and subacute facilities for residents. Given the significant gap this will leave in the delivery of case-managed care, what support will be available for clients who rely on this centre when it is closed?

MS GALLAGHER: I welcome the question from Mrs Jones and her interest in mental health services in the ACT. Brian Hennessy Rehabilitation Centre has been flagged for closure. This fits in with the building of the new University of Canberra hospital and the secure mental health unit. We are aware there will be a need to provide other services for those clients who may not be appropriate to go to either of those two facilities and that that will require further movement into supported accommodation and supports provided around that.

We are very aware of that; that is why the planning for this has been underway for some time. I know some information sessions were held in October to start talking with residents and carers and staff, and that will continue. I am hopeful that the amount of time we have will ensure that people feel they have had the information they need to prepare for the change that will be coming.

I have visited Brian Hennessy Rehabilitation Centre. Whilst the service provided there is excellent and for many people it has been their home for a long time—and I do not want to take anything away from that—in terms of the facility itself and the state of the facility, it is not appropriate at all for the long term. If we were not moving down this path, it would need essentially a complete rebuild to make it appropriate for long-term mental health rehabilitation and care. I have no doubt this is the right path to go, but I am not discounting some of the anxiety and concern that will present for carers—I have spoken with some of them—for individuals themselves and for staff who care for those people day in, day out.

I am happy to keep talking with you, Mrs Jones. I am very happy to organise for you to visit Brian Hennessy Rehabilitation Centre if you would like so you can see for yourself, but there is a lot more work to be done. We will need to enhance services to care appropriately for those residents.

MADAM SPEAKER: A supplementary question, Mrs Jones.

MRS JONES: Minister, currently what is the average length of stay for clients in the facility and will the supported accommodation be case managed?

MS GALLAGHER: Yes, there would have to be a level of case management for any individual that transitioned into supported accommodation. As I said there are probably going to be a range of exit placements. They might not all be appropriate for supported accommodation. With respect to the length of stay, I will take that on notice. I am aware of people who have been there for many years, and there are some who are there for much shorter periods of time. I am very happy to provide that.

MADAM SPEAKER: A supplementary question, Mr Smyth.

MR SMYTH: When precisely will Brian Hennessy House close?

MS GALLAGHER: It would not close before the University of Canberra public hospital was due to be operational, which is not before 2017, or during 2017, and before the secure mental health unit was operational. There may be a gradual transition for clients depending on what their particular needs are, but those decisions have not been taken. There would not be any closure prior to appropriate support services being available. Health are working really hard to make sure the consultation process and discussion—not just consultation but information sharing and understanding of what people's concerns are—is done with enough time to address all those concerns. That is why the process is well underway now.

MADAM SPEAKER: A supplementary question, Dr Bourke.

DR BOURKE: Chief Minister, could you tell us more about the processes for staff within Hennessy house as a result of this relocation?

MS GALLAGHER: In terms of the staff who work in the Brian Hennessy rehabilitation service, they form part of the broader ACT Health employees. There

would be no question about jobs for those individuals, as we are growing our mental health service capacity, not shrinking it. In fact one of my biggest concerns in the mental health service system at the moment is the workforce shortage that we experience, and getting suitably qualified staff. Retaining those staff is a major challenge for any mental health service. Particularly, as we start new services like the residential forensic service at the secure mental health unit, which we have not run before, it presents certain challenges. Staff need to be right at the forefront of the discussions over the transition arrangements. They are key information holders and they certainly need to be part of the process; they have been to date and they will continue to be.

Aged persons—concessions

MS LAWDER: My question is to the Minister for Ageing. Minister, in a response Mr Doszpot received from the government on 7 October 2014 in relation to pensioner concessions, Ms Gallagher stated that the ACT government is currently undertaking a review of the concession program. Minister, when will the community be consulted in this process, and what form will those discussions take?

MR BARR: Madam Speaker, I have responsibility for the concession program within the Treasury portfolio. That work is underway. There will be community consultation. Some of that consultation flows from previous ACT government consultation in relation to the targeted assistance strategy. We will undertake further engagement with the community over the coming months, with the expectation of completion of the review in 2015.

MADAM SPEAKER: A supplementary question, Ms Lawder.

MS LAWDER: Minister, can you guarantee that no seniors will be worse off under the changes?

MR BARR: I am not playing rule in or rule out games ahead of a review.

MADAM SPEAKER: A supplementary question, Mr Doszpot.

MR DOSZPOT: Minister, will this review address the negative impact on seniors of the government's plan to triple the rates?

MR BARR: The government is not tripling rates. So the question is wrong. It is wrong in fact.

MADAM SPEAKER: A supplementary question, Dr Bourke?

DR BOURKE: Minister, could you tell us some more about the breadth of the concessions program which is offered to aged persons in the ACT?

MR BARR: The program is extensive, offering a range of benefits across the diversity of ACT government programs. Most particularly, a new initiative that was part of the 2014-15 budget provided further stamp duty cuts for people looking to

downsize, people over the age of 60, as part of the ACT government's agenda to abolish stamp duty—one of the worst taxes that is levied by state and territory governments.

Mr Hanson interjecting—

MR BARR: That is a very important reform.

Dr Bourke: A point of order.

MADAM SPEAKER: A point of order, Dr Bourke.

Dr Bourke: The minister is unable to complete his answer because he is being interrupted by the interjections from the opposition, which is disorderly.

MADAM SPEAKER: I will have to draw Mr Hanson's attention to the good order of the place. If you do persist in shouting across the chamber, you are likely to distract members and you will not get the answers that you are looking for. Mr Barr.

MR BARR: I have completed my answer, Madam Speaker.

Hospitals—elective surgery

DR BOURKE: My question is to the Minister for Health. Minister, could you update the Assembly on how the ACT is performing in relation to surgery in the ACT public hospital system?

MS GALLAGHER: I thank Dr Bourke for the question.

Mr Hanson interjecting—

MS GALLAGHER: I was just waiting for the first interjection from Mr Hanson. It took three seconds. A new report released by the Australian Institute of Health and Welfare this week showed that Canberra's public hospitals performed a record number of elective surgeries in the 2013-14 year. This is a great result. It is a 50 per cent increase in access to surgery over the last 12 years, despite only a 17 per cent increase in the population over that time.

To put the number of operations in perspective, there were 11,781 elective procedures performed in that year. In our first full year of government we provided a total of 7,661 operations. This marks the fourth consecutive year that more than 11,000 operations were performed in a 12-month period. We have been focusing very much on elective surgery wait times across the public health system.

We have developed partnerships with several local private hospitals, which is certainly helping, and there have been about 1,000 procedures now performed in the private system. The hospitals are planning to perform 12,000 elective surgery procedures in 2014-15 and for the first two months of this financial year 2,170 elective surgery procedures have been performed, which is a 10 per cent increase compared to last year.

We are also continuing to see very good improvements in the number of people waiting too long for care with a 67 per cent reduction in long-wait patients, which is a very good result. The median wait time is also improving, although, as I have said a number of times in this place, I do not think the median wait time actually reflects whether the elective surgery program is tracking well, because there is no consistency of management of elective surgery waiting lists across the country.

These improvements are really encouraging, and credit must go to the doctors and nurses and theatre scheduling staff across the system who have worked hard to deliver these results for the ACT community.

MADAM SPEAKER: Dr Bourke, a supplementary question.

DR BOURKE: Minister, what other initiatives is ACT Health considering in an effort to continue to improve the delivery of elective surgery in the public health system?

MS GALLAGHER: As members will know, there have been recommendations in this place to develop a single waiting list by integrating the two hospitals and getting their waiting lists managed more effectively across the ACT. This has been agreed to by the ACT government. The central wait list we are hoping to commence in early 2015. This has also been a recommendation through the territory-wide surgical services team, which is now progressing this particular initiative and which is being led by a doctor himself in consultation with all of the surgeons across the two hospitals.

The aim is to develop and coordinate a centralised wait list. It will include a centralised area to receive and process all requests for admission for elective surgery, streamline the process of placing patients on to the appropriate elective surgery waiting list, ensure compliance with the elective surgery and waiting time policy, and work collaboratively with all of the surgical service providers in the delivery of the publicly funded program.

We are also working on changes to ear, nose and throat services in the ACT, which is the area which continues to experience the longest waits for non-urgent operations. The demand for it is very significant and it continues to grow at a rapid rate. ACT Health is prioritising working with the ENT surgeons to manage the growth in demand so we can ensure patients get their operations as soon as possible. I am hopeful that we will be able to announce further detail on this in the near future.

MADAM SPEAKER: A supplementary question, Ms Porter.

MS PORTER: Minister, how has ACT Health worked with the private sector in the delivery of elective surgery?

MS GALLAGHER: I thank Ms Porter for her supplementary question. We have worked very closely with the private sector—it has been a good result—over the last four years. The major area of work has been in ear, nose and throat surgery. There have been, 1,098 elective surgery procedures performed in the private sector since this

partnership commenced. That has been, of course, with Calvary John James Hospital, a couple of other providers and also at Queanbeyan hospital where they have now performed more than 100 operations under our agreement with Queanbeyan hospital.

I am very happy that these arrangements are working well and look forward to continuing these arrangements as they provide good value for money for ACT taxpayers and ensure that people have their operations quicker.

MADAM SPEAKER: Supplementary question, Mr Hanson.

MR HANSON: Minister, what is the tendering process for those public surgeries being conducted in the private system?

MS GALLAGHER: I will check this, but I believe there is an approved panel, so it did go out in a public tender process. People were approved to be on a panel and then, as particular work lists become available, whether they are neurology or ear, nose and throat surgery, they are let to providers on the approved panel. If that is not correct, I will come back and update the Assembly.

Children and young people—disabilities

MR DOSZPOT: My question is to the Minister for Health. Minister, recently families of children with a disability were told that changes will be made to the administration of healthcare needs of students at schools for children with a disability, resulting in learning support assistants doing the work that registered nurses currently do. Would you advise what consultation took place, minister, with the families about these changes and what was their reaction to these changes?

MS GALLAGHER: As Mr Doszpot will be aware, over the last two years we have been undertaking consultations with the Education and Training Directorate, parents and staff with respect to students in a couple of schools across Canberra where the healthcare access at school program works, the HAAS program.

Mr Doszpot: There was only one that didn't have it, and you promised to—

MS GALLAGHER: That is right. Please let me update the Assembly before you answer your own question. There was extensive consultation with Malkara School, Woden School and Black Mountain School. The new arrangements have been put in place, with the oversight of a registered nurse but with implementation, training and care being provided by LSAs. I understand that in the last week there have been some discussions with parents at Cranleigh School. And from the staff and parents there has been some frank feedback to both the education directorate and the Health directorate about people's concern with the consultation process and information. They were concerned that they were not involved in the original consultation process around this.

My commitment is that we need to get that right before any changes occur. But I have to say that the feedback from where the changes have been implemented has been very complimentary. So let us not cast too much concern over the program, but there are concerns about the consultation process, and we need to get those right.

Mr Doszpot interjecting—

MADAM SPEAKER: Order, Mr Doszpot! You have asked your question.

MS GALLAGHER: With respect to Cranleigh, the proposal put on the table was to transition to the HAAS program during term 4, during this term. A joint letter was sent to families advising them of that change. There has been a meeting in the last week. I have certainly been given feedback from a parent—not a lot of parents, but one parent—who has been in contact with me about concerns with this. I have sought further advice from Health and education to make sure that those concerns can be addressed, and addressed smoothly with the best interests of the child at heart.

MADAM SPEAKER: Supplementary question, Mr Doszpot.

MR DOSZPOT: Minister, what training will be provided to learning support assistants to ensure that they can assist children with complex medical needs, and will this training be equivalent to the training given to the registered nurse?

MS GALLAGHER: The learning support assistants will not be registered nurse trained, and that is not the model that has been implemented with success in the other schools already. The process is that the registered nurse works with the family and with other health professionals to agree on a plan for a particular student. The registered nurse then trains the learning support assistant. There are three trained for each child; that allows for people to have holidays and take leave during the school day. They will not work as nurses, but they will be able to complete health tasks under the direction of a registered nurse—tasks not dissimilar to the tasks that parents undertake often for these children without necessarily being a registered nurse.

There is a lot of training that goes in. The LSAs are supported until they feel comfortable to take on this care. If they are not, that is addressed further. The feedback I have had about concerns that have been raised by parents before this program, and then after they have agreed to go with it, is that they have been very satisfied, as have the LSAs and the schools in terms of the ability to care for the complex needs of these children.

I agree that if there are concerns at Cranleigh School—every child in this area needs to be cared for differently because their medical needs are always different. If there are students that this program is not going to work for, we need to understand that. We need to get that process right. I understand the concerns that have been raised. I know that Health and Education will be working with those families to address any concerns they have.

MADAM SPEAKER: A supplementary question, Mr Wall.

MR WALL: Minister, what is the government's rationale for removing registered nurses from the territory's specialist schools?

MS GALLAGHER: The origins of the HAAS program has been looking at similar models that work interstate. These are similar models to what worked in Queensland and South Australia and, indeed, internationally and have been piloted with great success. There have been issues when the medical needs of a student become very dependent on one particular individual in a school, and that is the basis of having three people trained for each child that requires this program so that there can be some flexibility if people leave work, have holidays, are sick or need breaks during the day.

We are very keen to make sure that families feel supported through this process. As I said with the other schools—Black Mountain, Woden and a couple of students at Malkara who are under the HASS program already—the response since it has been implemented has been very positive from the parents and from the staff and the school communities.

I am aware of the concerns and I am going to work to address them. But the program itself is working pretty well. We need to make sure that people are supported through these changes. If it is not appropriate for a particular student, then so be it.

MADAM SPEAKER: A supplementary question, Mr Wall.

MR WALL: Minister, was this decision taken as part of a cost-saving measure?

MS GALLAGHER: I do not believe so. I certainly have not seen anything that would indicate that was the case. I think there is a genuine question about needing to utilise the workforce we have available in the best way we can. If some of these support and caring tasks can be performed by people less qualified than a registered nurse, but suitably trained, then that is an efficient use of taxpayer funding as well. But no, it was not motivated by dollars.

Transport—light rail

MR COE: My question is for the Chief Minister. It was published today that the ACT government spent \$114,000 on lighting at a site at which all lights, wires, pipes and poles will have to be removed to make way for the light rail track and city light rail terminus. Chief Minister, how is it that your government's directorates are not across the route alignment for your flagship infrastructure project?

MS GALLAGHER: It actually falls under the Territory and Municipal Services Directorate. But I can assure Mr Coe that when I saw the work being commenced I sought assurances from TAMS that the work was urgent and needed to be done and could not be delayed considering the upheaval that will occur in the near future for capital metro. I received advice that that was certainly the case.

MADAM SPEAKER: A supplementary question, Mr Coe.

MR COE: Chief Minister, how is that TAMS spent \$114,000 on a project in which none of the items would be recoverable following the inevitable ripping out of the poles and wires to make way for light rail?

MR RATTENBURY: I will take the details on behalf of the Chief Minister as this does fall within the TAMS portfolio. I am actually very pleased that Mr Coe asked this question because it provides an opportunity to correct a number of factual inaccuracies that have been put forward by Mr Coe.

Twenty-four lights have been removed, and 19 new lights are being installed at that location. This has been done because the lights are faulty. There are problems with the electrical wiring. The advice that I have from TAMS is that the decaying electrical cables are a public safety issue. It is not a matter of government agencies not talking to each other. This is actually a direct safety issue that needs to be addressed in the immediate term, and that is why TAMS have moved on it.

I notice that Mr Coe, as his enthusiasm has grown for this story, has lessened the amount of time that these lights will continue to stand there. His latest press release actually said that they will be taken out in less than 12 months. Less than 12 months was the accusation in Mr Coe's press release.

What I can assure Mr Coe is that I have double-checked this and the advice between both TAMS and the Capital Metro Agency is that this area will not see construction for capital metro until early 2017 at the earliest. Those lights have at least 2½ years of useful life. The interesting part is that if the government did not replace these lights I can almost guarantee Mr Coe would put out a press release damning the government for not addressing issues of public safety.

The other thing I will add to this is that the poles are being inserted on bases such as they are—

Mr Coe interjecting—

MADAM SPEAKER: Order, Mr Coe! I cannot hear Mr Rattenbury.

MR RATTENBURY: They are temporarily being put in place so that they can be removed at a later point in time and reused. A great deal of thought was put into this to minimise the amount of duplicative work that needs to be done whilst addressing the important public safety issue that needs to be tackled by TAMS in a timely manner.

MADAM SPEAKER: A supplementary question, Mr Smyth.

MR SMYTH: This is to whichever minister wants to answer. Ministers, how many other instances are there where redundant, wasteful infrastructure upgrades, such as the \$114,000 spent on the lighting infrastructure, are taking place along the light rail alignment that will need to be ripped up?

MR RATTENBURY: I reject the premise of Mr Smyth's question that redundant work is being done. As I outlined in my previous answer, this is work that needs to be done. As I said previously, the Canberra Liberal Party would no doubt be criticising the government if we were not addressing the safety issue that needs to be addressed.

I assure the Assembly that the Capital Metro Agency and Territory and Municipal Services work very closely together. There is constant engagement between officers in both agencies and close cooperation taking place on these sort of projects, to absolutely minimise any overlap in work and make sure that redundant work is not being done. I actually reject the characterisation of this work as redundant work, because it is safety work that needs to be tackled in the immediate term.

MADAM SPEAKER: A supplementary question, Mr Smyth.

MR SMYTH: Minister, are you therefore saying that part of the \$114,000 is recoverable after the implementation of the light rail, and how much of the \$114,000 will be recovered?

MR RATTENBURY: Yes, I indicated that already. In my earlier answer I said the lights are being installed on platforms that mean they can be removed at a later point in time and reused at another location. TAMS has a series of lighting works that constantly need to be done across the city, so the intent is to make these installations reusable at a later point in time when they are removed from Northbourne Avenue.

OECD livable cities report

MS BERRY: My question is to the Minister for Economic Development. Minister, earlier this month the OECD named Canberra as the most livable city in the world. What action is the ACT government taking to ensure Canberra retains this ranking and, in particular, to ensure that our economy continues to make a positive contribution to this ranking?

MADAM SPEAKER: The Minister for Economic Development, Mr Barr, being careful not to announce new government policy.

MR BARR: Thank you, Madam Speaker, for the warning and thank you, Ms Berry, for the question. The government will continue our tax reform efforts to cut stamp duty, abolish insurance tax and reduce payroll tax. We will be attracting new investment into our economy, sourcing that locally, nationally and internationally. We will continue our infrastructure investment in health, in education, in transport and in municipal services. We will continue to pursue growth in our economy, in the higher education sector, in the tourism sector, through professional services and in the construction sector, and we will continue to support job creation, particularly in our knowledge economy, by promoting innovation.

That is what good governments do: they support the economy, they support growth and they support jobs. It is pleasing to see that the OECD ranking has acknowledged this and affirmed the ACT government's economic record, even if those opposite cannot bear to hear about it.

MADAM SPEAKER: A supplementary question, Ms Berry.

Members interjecting—

MADAM SPEAKER: Order! I cannot hear. If members who have voices much stronger than Ms Berry's interject, I am going to have to get her to repeat what she says. Ms Berry.

MS BERRY: Minister, one of the measures of wellbeing in the OECD report was jobs. What action is the government taking to boost job growth in the territory?

MR BARR: Jobs will always be at the heart of what the government is about. The OECD ranking acknowledges the strength of our jobs market—10 new jobs every day for 10 years. That is our record and that is what we will continue to focus on. It is the work of this government and our support for jobs that has enabled the ACT to rate so well.

We have had two significant shocks to our economy: the election of the Liberal Party federally and the global financial crisis. Instead of sitting back and allowing our community to suffer, as those opposite get very agitated about whilst their colleagues go about decimating our economy, this government and the Labor Party have acted proactively to ensure that our economy continues to produce jobs whilst the Liberal Party cuts them. At least this economy is continuing to produce jobs, and we are seeing that in the latest jobs figures. We are seeing that the rest of the economy continues to produce jobs while those opposite descend into a rabble trying to defend their federal colleagues' disdain for this city.

MADAM SPEAKER: A supplementary question, Mr Hanson.

MR HANSON: Treasurer, why didn't you bother mentioning the rates increase when you provided your answer on your tax reform?

MR BARR: Because rates are the most efficient form of taxation that government at this level can levy. To enhance our city's productivity and to ensure that the deadweight loss of inefficient taxation is removed, we are abolishing stamp duty, we are abolishing tax on insurance and we are cutting payroll tax. They are the worst taxes we levy, and we are transitioning to the most efficient tax that we have available to us—that is, municipal rates. That transition is endorsed by every economist in the Western world—a move away from inefficient transaction taxes and a move to broad-based land taxes. That is good economic policy. It is a great pity that those opposite are such economic ignoramuses that they are not prepared to embrace sensible tax reform.

MADAM SPEAKER: Supplementary question, Dr Bourke.

Opposition members interjecting—

MADAM SPEAKER: Dr Bourke, you have the floor.

DR BOURKE: I was just waiting for the noise to calm down, Madam Speaker.

MADAM SPEAKER: I understand that entirely.

Mr Coe interjecting—

DR BOURKE: I am being interrupted.

MADAM SPEAKER: Order, Mr Coe!

DR BOURKE: Minister, health and education were also measures of wellbeing in the OECD report. How does the ACT government support these two vital areas?

MR BARR: They are the two biggest areas of investment by this government, health and education, and they are the two areas, I note, that the Liberal Party is cutting at a federal level—cutting health and cutting education.

Opposition members interjecting—

MR BARR: They can sigh and moan opposite, but we know—

Opposition members interjecting—

MADAM SPEAKER: Order! The opposition will come to order.

MR BARR: and every Liberal Premier and every Liberal Treasurer around this country knows, that the federal Liberal government—

Mr Hanson interjecting—

MADAM SPEAKER: Mr Hanson!

MR BARR: That the federal Liberal government's cuts to health and education are bad for this country.

Opposition members interjecting—

MADAM SPEAKER: Mr Smyth!

MR BARR: Don't take my word for it: take Mike Baird's word for it; take Denis Napthine's word for it; even take Campbell Newman's word for it.

Mr Hanson interjecting—

MR BARR: Those three, that troika of conservative premiers, know that the federal Liberal cuts to health and education are bad. It contrasts markedly with the approach of this Labor government, which invests more in health and education than any other government—

Mr Hanson: Ignoramus.

Dr Bourke: Point of order.

MADAM SPEAKER: Withdraw that, please, Mr Hanson.

Mr Hanson: Madam Speaker, I note that in answering a question, Mr Barr—

MADAM SPEAKER: No, I do not want that. I am asking you to withdraw.

Mr Hanson: I do withdraw—

MADAM SPEAKER: Thank you.

Mr Hanson: but—

MADAM SPEAKER: Thank you.

Mr Hanson: In doing so, on a point of order, I ask that you perhaps review the *Hansard*. When Mr Barr called the opposition economic ignoramuses, which prompted my response, there was no call from anyone to withdraw that.

MADAM SPEAKER: I did contemplate it at the time. I will not review the *Hansard*, because I did contemplate it at the time and I thought that the qualification of “economic ignoramus” was not the sort of thing that I would call to order. To call someone an ignoramus generally, simpliciter, seems to me to be more offensive than the comment. But I am guided by the Assembly. I actually thought the term “economic ignoramus” was near the knuckle, was in the cut and thrust of debate. But to call someone an ignoramus without qualification like that is of a different order. That is why I have asked you to withdraw.

Mr Hanson: Madam Speaker, certainly I do not limit my view of Mr Barr to being only an economic ignoramus, so—

MADAM SPEAKER: I asked you to withdraw, and you have withdrawn.

Mr Hanson: I do withdraw, but he is certainly not only an economic ignoramus.

MADAM SPEAKER: Thank you, Mr Hanson; don’t push your luck.

MR BARR: I think he might have, Madam Speaker.

MADAM SPEAKER: I am in the hands of the Assembly. If the Assembly thinks that “economic ignoramus” needs withdrawing, I am happy for them to withdraw.

Arts—policy framework

MR SMYTH: My question is to the acting arts minister because we never get an answer from the real arts minister. Minister, will you please outline for the Assembly the strategy to deliver the arts policy framework which your government is so proud of?

MS GALLAGHER: I thank Mr Smyth for the question. The overarching philosophy of this government is to allow the arts to flourish, to encourage the arts, to be a believer in the arts, to support artists, to back them when they are controversial, particularly when they cause offence to the Canberra Liberals.

Mr Smyth: On a point of order, Madam Speaker—

Members interjecting—

MADAM SPEAKER: I would like to hear Mr Smyth's point of order.

Mr Smyth: We can have that stuff; it is fine.

MADAM SPEAKER: Mr Smyth, you have a point of order.

Mr Smyth: Under standing order 111A I ask that the minister be concise and directly relevant to the subject matter. The subject matter was the strategy to deliver the arts policy.

Mrs Jones interjecting—

MADAM SPEAKER: Stop, Mrs Jones. On the point of order, I do not uphold the point of order. The Chief Minister was talking about how the ACT government supports artists. Chief Minister.

MS GALLAGHER: Thank you. In the interests of being concise, I have completed my answer. If there is anything further I can provide and update the Assembly on, I will be very happy to have the Minister for the Arts do that on her return. But we have been long and proud supporters of the arts in this city. Indeed, as you travel around the city and you see all the beautiful art work that is on display, when it is not wrapped in the Canberra Liberals' political material, you will know that it is the progressive side of politics that backs the arts and it is the conservatives that seek to rein it in and censor it and ensure that the creative arts cannot flourish in this town.

MADAM SPEAKER: Mr Smyth, a supplementary question.

MR SMYTH: Minister, as you cannot answer the question, will you table by close of business today a copy of the strategy to deliver the government's arts policy framework?

MS GALLAGHER: I would be more than happy to provide Mr Smyth with all the appropriate links and information available on the ACT government's arts policy and programs that are available.

Mr Smyth: No, no, no—the strategy.

MS GALLAGHER: You are in an eternal search for the strategy. You could almost make a movie out of it, Mr Smyth, in whatever area of government, the never-ending—

Members interjecting—

MADAM SPEAKER: Order, Mr Barr! Do not encourage Mr Smyth.

MS GALLAGHER: search for a missing strategy. I would be very happy to provide that information for the member.

Mr Barr: I hope I would never be accused of encouraging Mr Smyth.

MADAM SPEAKER: Order! I just did. A supplementary question, Ms Lawder.

MADAM SPEAKER: A supplementary question, Ms Lawder.

MS LAWDER: Minister, what is the total funding for the arts policy framework in this year's budget?

MS GALLAGHER: I will take that on notice and provide the information to the Assembly.

MADAM SPEAKER: A supplementary question, Ms Lawder.

MS LAWDER: Minister, could you update the Assembly on the targets and time lines of the arts policy framework?

MS GALLAGHER: I refer members to arts.act.gov.au. A wide range of information is available there for members, including funding, arts in the ACT, community participation, policy, projects and resources. It seems to cover all of the issues you have raised today. I know you all have tablets in front of you; I encourage you to use them.

Planning—Calwell

MR WALL: My question is to the Minister for Territory and Municipal Services. Minister, in September this year I wrote to you about the need for time-limited car parking to be installed at the Calwell shops, as well as the need for a pedestrian crossing to improve safety and an upgrade of existing line markings. I have since been advised by traders at the Calwell shops that as a result of my correspondence to you, the installation of three-hour parking will occur. Minister, will you advise the Assembly when this work will be completed?

MR RATTENBURY: Coincidentally, Mr Wall, I actually just signed my reply letter to you this morning. You should receive it as soon as it gets emailed to you. I recall from signing it this morning that the works will be completed within this calendar year. I cannot remember the exact date, but you will receive it in the next 24 hours.

MADAM SPEAKER: A supplementary question, Mr Wall.

MR WALL: I eagerly await the correspondence.

Minister, will the other upgrades I requested in my letter be installed, such as the upgraded line markings and the pedestrian crossings? If so, when; if not, why not?

MR RATTENBURY: After consulting with the traders at Calwell shops, TAMS has identified that there is a need to upgrade some of the line markings and related infrastructure works. That will, again, be taking place within this calendar year.

MADAM SPEAKER: A supplementary question, Mr Doszpot.

MR DOSZPOT: Minister, what other government resources will be directed to ensuring the new time limited parking arrangements are enforced?

MR RATTENBURY: If I understand Mr Doszpot's question correctly, will parking inspectors go there and actually enforce the time spots? Yes, that is the way that it works. It sits within the responsibility of the Attorney-General, through the Office of Regulatory Services, but parking inspectors do patrol the city in a range of areas. As members will recall, this year the government has increased the number of parking inspectors available in the territory. If members of the public are aware of particular areas that are problematic they can call Canberra Connect and an extra enforcement effort from parking inspectors can be sought. Certainly, on a range of occasions when constituents write to me, TAMS works with ORS to provide additional enforcement in order to ensure that the parking regulations in place are adhered to.

MADAM SPEAKER: A supplementary question, Ms Berry.

MS BERRY: Minister, are there other ways the Canberra community can get in touch with Territory and Municipal Services about issues with car parking or line marking?

MR RATTENBURY: I thank Ms Berry for the question. There is, of course, Canberra Connect, which is an incredibly efficient way to get things done. I think most Canberrans find it a very reliable service. In fact, it is far simpler than having a member write to me and then having to go through the whole ministerial process and then all the way back to the member. TAMS will, in fact, respond very quickly.

Mrs Jones: Sometimes.

MR RATTENBURY: There are occasions, I admit, where something is not done in the first instance through Canberra Connect, but we find the vast majority of people get very good service by either ringing Canberra Connect or using "fix my street", the online portal.

For members' benefit, "fix my street" is now available in a mobile format. This particularly helps TAMS because if somebody uses their mobile phone to lodge a request, they can also track in GPS coordinates at the time which further assists TAMS to go to the specific location. I get letters from those opposite saying, "Oh, there's a pothole in McCulloch Street Curtin." McCulloch Street Curtin is a fairly long street, so a general letter like that often results in me having to write back saying, "Can the constituent please contact TAMS?"

I encourage those opposite—whilst I am sure there is some electoral benefit in writing vast numbers of letters to the government—to encourage their constituents—

Opposition members interjecting—

MR RATTENBURY: The catcalling across the chamber seemed to be, “You never do anything in response.” We have actually just demonstrated an example. But the point is that it is far more efficient to get things done through Canberra Connect or “fix my street”. That is why the government has put these systems in place and that is why TAMS works very hard to deliver through those systems.

Men’s shed program—grants

MS PORTER: My question is to the Minister for Community Services. Minister, you recently launched a men’s shed grants program. Can you inform the Assembly about the purpose of these grants?

MR GENTLEMAN: I thank Ms Porter for her question and her keen interest in the men’s shed program across the territory. The ACT government recognises that men’s sheds provide much-valued social opportunities, health benefits, social support and camaraderie for men of all ages and backgrounds, abilities and cultures.

The Assembly would be aware that there is a reluctance by some men to face personal issues such as depression, health and isolation, particularly after significant life-changing events such as retirement, serious illness, family breakdown, financial stress and perhaps drug or alcohol issues. So initiatives such as men’s sheds, targeted at providing help to older men, provide a much-needed opportunity for our society to engage with the older, tougher generation on these issues and assist them and their families by providing support and tackling some of these difficult issues.

The initiative to provide more men’s sheds in the ACT was an ACT government commitment in the 2012 election. This government set aside \$200,000 to undertake a feasibility study and design study to assess the need to establish additional men’s sheds across Canberra.

The findings of the feasibility study have identified further opportunities to work with men’s sheds and provide some useful recommendations about the most beneficial ways in which the ACT government can support the existing community of men’s sheds.

The government recognised that further assistance could be provided to support men’s sheds and, through this support, provide strong benefits to the broader community. As was recommended in the feasibility study, the government has now developed the new men’s sheds grants program, which will provide assistance to support the ongoing operations of men’s sheds in Canberra. Applications for the inaugural 2014-15 ACT men’s sheds support grants program opened on Friday, 10 October and will close on Monday, 17 November.

This grants program has been established in recognition of the fact that the men's sheds initiatives have delivered strong and positive benefits within our community. The aim of this new grants program is to support those ACT sheds that welcome men from all cultural, social and economic backgrounds to conduct programs developed by and for men. The ACT government recognises a men's shed is a community-based, non-profit, non-commercial organisation that is accessible to all men and whose primary activity is the provision of a safe, friendly and healing environment where men are able to work on meaningful projects at their own pace and in their own time, in the company of other men. A total of \$100,000 is available under the 2014-15 men's sheds support grants program.

MADAM SPEAKER: A supplementary question, Ms Porter.

MS PORTER: Minister, what funding proposals might the men's shed grants program consider?

MADAM SPEAKER: Could you repeat that question please, Ms Porter?

MS PORTER: Yes. What funding proposals might the men's shed grants program consider? In other words, what types of things would the grants program consider?

MADAM SPEAKER: Thank you. That is a much better way of doing it. Otherwise I was getting into the hypothetical space.

MS PORTER: What types of things?

MADAM SPEAKER: That is a perfectly reasonable question. Mr Gentleman.

MR GENTLEMAN: The men's sheds operating in the ACT may apply for the non-recurrent grant of up to \$15,000. The ACT government may fund the full cost of a project. However, applications which include a co-contribution from the applicant are also encouraged. The applicant's contribution may be in cash or other funding assistance or any kind of assistance such as providing voluntary labour or supplying materials. These one-off grants will allow eligible applicants to seek support for projects that help establish a men's shed, provide for facility improvements, purchase tools and equipment or for the purchase of materials.

Since February 2012 the ACT government has provided in excess of half a million dollars in direct as well as indirect funding for men's sheds. Funding activities have included the upgrade of the Majura men's shed and the construction of the Tuggeranong men's shed. Indirect assistance to men's sheds across Canberra has also included the provision of subsidised accommodation, maintenance of facilities and waiving of development application fees.

MADAM SPEAKER: A supplementary question, Ms Berry.

MS BERRY: Minister, how might these grants enable older men to overcome social isolation?

MR GENTLEMAN: Like the rest of Australia, Canberra is experiencing a rapid increase in the age of its population. It is anticipated that between 2011 and 2019 the total male population in Canberra will increase by 11 per cent. In comparison, the male population aged over 65 years is anticipated to increase by 47 per cent.

Men's sheds provide social, community and health and benefits and offer older men in the Canberra community a place where they can find camaraderie, social support and opportunity for participation. Men's sheds offer many opportunities to assist older men overcome social isolation, including friendship and company, the opportunity to participate in social activities with men of similar age and interests, to learn and share skills and experiences and to give back to their community. So you find that a lot of men's sheds create objects that they can give back to the community, such as toys or machinery that has been repaired.

The connection between keeping physically and mentally active by engaging in interesting activities are beneficial to men who have experienced social disadvantage, mental illness, trauma and loss to promote better mental health and help reduce mental decline as people age.

A men's shed may be seen as a modern version of the backyard shed. In the men's shed you might find men restoring furniture, restoring bicycles for a local school or making a children's cubby house for Camp Quality to raffle. You may also see men talking over tea and coffee or learning a new carpentry skill or using new technology.

Initiatives such as the men's shed, which are targeted at providing help to older men, really do assist in our community. There are a couple of important points to remember when looking at men's sheds. Men's sheds are places where men, often beyond retirement age, remain productive members of our community.

MADAM SPEAKER: A supplementary question, Dr Bourke.

DR BOURKE: Minister, in what other ways is your directorate supporting the community sector to build its capacity and infrastructure?

MADAM SPEAKER: Dr Bourke, which capacity in infrastructure?

DR BOURKE: My question was: in what other ways is your directorate supporting the community sector—of which Men's Sheds is a part—to build its capacity and infrastructure?

MADAM SPEAKER: It is a bit of a long bow, but I will allow it.

MR GENTLEMAN: The community sector and support section infrastructure grants program was established in 2007 to build capacity within the community sector to deliver programs effectively and efficiently with three categories for funding. We look at community support and capacity, non-fixed infrastructure and equipment, and capital works and fixed infrastructure.

The community participation group in the Community Services Directorate is responsible for the implementation of the grants we have talked about and has introduced a more flexible approach through which targeted funding can be distributed.

The ACT Men's Shed support grants program is the first of numerous specific grants programs to be implemented in 2014-15 under that series of grants. Other specific community support and infrastructure grants to be implemented this year include the digital Canberra grants program, financial support to Volunteering ACT, the community sector reform project and a general program to assist community groups upgrade their facilities and equipment.

Ms Gallagher: Madam Speaker, I ask that all further questions be placed on the notice paper.

Supplementary answers to questions without notice

Territory plan Energy—renewable

MR GENTLEMAN: I have some matters arising from yesterday's question time. In response to Mr Hanson's question regarding the status of the Weston groups in the master plan, I can confirm that the master plan is being finalised and anticipate it will be released by the end of this year.

In response to Ms Lawder's questions on the Community Services Directorate's use of renewable energy, I draw the member's attention to the subscript against the zero figure in the report, which advises that the ACT Property Group purchased 7,530 megawatt hours of green power on behalf of the ACT government, representing five per cent of all the ACT government's energy consumption for 2013-14.

Further, I can confirm to Ms Lawder that renewable resources are being used in this financial year. The Community Services Directorate was included within the purchased ACT government allocation of green power. The ACT Property Group did not provide a break-up per directorate for annual reporting purposes.

I can also confirm for Ms Lawder that there are areas of CSD, such as West Belconnen Child and Family Centre, that generate substantial amounts of their own energy requirements through photovoltaic cells and small-scale wind turbines.

Personal explanation

MRS JONES (Molonglo): I would like to make a personal explanation as per standing order 46.

MADAM SPEAKER: Do you claim to have been misrepresented?

MRS JONES: Yes, just slightly.

MADAM SPEAKER: Please proceed.

MRS JONES: The hardworking Minister Rattenbury spoke into the *Hansard* that it was said across the chamber, “You never do anything in response,” which I would never claim. Minister Rattenbury does indeed sometimes take action, significant action, based on the letters he gets from across this side of the chamber. In fact, I posed the question, “So you have never done anything for electoral gain?” I should have added “to serve the local community of course”.

Auslan interpreter

MS LAWDER (Brindabella): Madam Speaker, I seek leave of the Assembly to have an Auslan interpreter on the floor next to me during an adjournment speech today.

Leave granted.

Papers

Ms Gallagher presented the following paper:

Annual Reports (Government Agencies) Act, pursuant to section 13—Annual Report 2013-2014—ACT Public Service—State of the Service Report (incorporating the Commissioner for Public Administration)—Corrigendum, dated October 2014.

Ms Gallagher presented the following papers:

Subordinate legislation (including explanatory statements unless otherwise stated)

Legislation Act, pursuant to section 64—

Race and Sports Bookmaking Act—

Race and Sports Bookmaking (Operation of Sports Bookmaking Venues) Direction 2014 (No 1)—Disallowable Instrument DI2014-266 (LR, 13 October 2014).

Race and Sports Bookmaking (Sports Bookmaking Venues) Determination 2014 (No 2)—Disallowable Instrument DI2014-259 (LR, 13 October 2014).

Race and Sports Bookmaking (Sports Bookmaking Venues) Determination 2014 (No 3)—Disallowable Instrument DI2014-260 (LR, 13 October 2014).

Race and Sports Bookmaking (Sports Bookmaking Venues) Determination 2014 (No 4)—Disallowable Instrument DI2014-261 (LR, 13 October 2014).

Race and Sports Bookmaking (Sports Bookmaking Venues) Determination 2014 (No 5)—Disallowable Instrument DI2014-262 (LR, 13 October 2014).

Race and Sports Bookmaking (Sports Bookmaking Venues) Determination 2014 (No 6)—Disallowable Instrument DI2014-263 (LR, 13 October 2014).

Race and Sports Bookmaking (Sports Bookmaking Venues) Determination 2014 (No 7)—Disallowable Instrument DI2014-264 (LR, 13 October 2014).

Race and Sports Bookmaking (Sports Bookmaking Venues) Determination 2014 (No 8)—Disallowable Instrument DI2014-265 (LR, 13 October 2014).

Race and Sports Bookmaking (Sports Bookmaking Venues) Determination 2014 (No 9)—Disallowable Instrument DI2014-258 (LR, 13 October 2014).

Totalisator Act—

Totalisator (Commission on Totalisator Betting) Determination 2014 (No 1)—Disallowable Instrument DI2014-268 (LR, 13 October 2014).

Totalisator (Licence Fee) Determination 2014 (No 1)—Disallowable Instrument DI2014 269 (LR, 13 October 2014).

Mr Barr presented the following paper:

Official Visitor Act, pursuant to section 17—Official Visitor for Homelessness Services—Annual Report 2013-14.

Transport—light rail

Discussion of matter of public importance

MR ASSISTANT SPEAKER (Dr Bourke): Madam Speaker has received letters from Ms Berry, Dr Bourke Mr Coe, Mrs Jones, Ms Lawder, Ms Porter, Mr Smyth and Mr Wall proposing that matters of public importance be submitted to the Assembly. In accordance with standing order 79, Madam Speaker has determined that the matter proposed by Ms Berry be submitted to the Assembly, namely:

The important contribution the investment in light rail makes to creating Canberra as one of the world's most liveable cities.

MS BERRY (Ginninderra) (3.37): As we recognised in this place yesterday, Canberra has been declared one of the world's most livable cities by the OECD and Australia's most livable city by the Property Council of Australia. We are starting to get noticed, not just around Australia but around the world. People are recognising that Canberra offers a high quality of life for its people. The government is not sitting back and resting on these acknowledgements. We are rolling up our sleeves and making sure we can maintain our reputation and build on it for the future. We are out there telling the world that we are confident, bold and ready for the next century.

Mr Assistant Speaker, it must be recognised that becoming one of the world's most livable cities does not happen overnight. It takes vision, planning and investment. Canberrans are now enjoying the rewards of this government's vision. To ensure this excellent quality of life continues and that we retain our recently gained world title we must continue to think about the long-term vision of Canberra. We cannot afford to sit back and fail to contribute to the greatness of our city. We cannot afford to tear down our achievements, as some do, for their own political gain. We need to work together to support and build a community and make sure that we are all playing our part to deliver the vision and infrastructure our city needs.

In this first year of our second century, we know that we are a city of a billion possibilities and this government is committed to turning these possibilities into real opportunities. We have an ambitious vision for the future that seeks to make Canberra a truly sustainable and creative city, a city that is inclusive, that supports the vulnerable and that enables every person to reach their potential—a city that fosters economic growth, jobs and innovations. Our vision was set out in the Canberra plan in 2008 and it was taken to the 2012 election, and we are well in the process of delivering. Fundamental to our approach is the best interests and quality for our people.

Our second century will be different. It will be about the best interests of Canberrans, both now and in the future. Our vision means planning and preparing for the challenges that lie ahead, including an increasing and ageing population, increased demand on resources and, of course, climate change.

While many others in this country falter with indecision and delay on how to tackle these changes, we have accepted the science on climate change and have set an ambitious strategy to reduce our emissions and become carbon neutral by 2060. We are not waiting for international or national action. We believe that cities can take a lead and are demonstrating through action what can be achieved.

Transport is an integral part of our response to climate change. In the territory, carbon emissions from transport are over 20 per cent, well above the national average of 14 per cent. We look at examples across the world and understand that we must respond to the issues of congestion and pollution that are stifling cities. By 2020, congestion will cost the territory \$200 million per year, an increase of 85 per cent in the last 15 years.

By 2031, the peak hour commute from Gungahlin to the city is estimated to take over 50 minutes if capital metro is not built. Congestion was costing Australia \$10 billion a year in 2005, with projections estimating that this will double by 2020 and increase exponentially, and no city, however well planned, is immune.

In the last decade the territory has invested over \$1.2 billion on road infrastructure with very little public debate. We know cities that focus predominantly on road infrastructure are generally more dependent on cars, with resulting economic and environmental issues. Unsurprisingly, this significant road infrastructure investment has resulted in Canberra having one of the highest car dependency rates in the country, if not in the world.

We know we cannot continue to just build more and more roads. This will lead to further road congestion. Cities that prioritise public transport have strong economic performance with sustainable transport and urban development. The lesson to learn from these experiences is that good public transport infrastructure is essential for the sustainable growth of any city. It is no coincidence that eight out of 10 cities listed on the 2012 Economic Intelligence Unit's global livability index have light rail.

We need to redress the transport imbalance in our city and invest more in good public transport if we want to maintain our high standard of living. Light rail is the major shift that this city needs to catalyse sustainable growth and increase the use of public transport. We know that buses alone will not attract people out of their cars or encourage sustainable urban development.

Evidence from cities across the world demonstrates that different approaches to transport result in different land use and urban development. Back in 2001, Austroads stated that there is no question that transport influences land use development and that the effects of each of these needs to be considered in an evaluation.

The territory's increasing population means that we will need to accommodate an additional 200,000 residents by 2050, increasing the city's population to over 600,000. As a territory that has a relatively small land area, we need to think about where those people will live, how will they move around the city and how can we efficiently provide access to high quality affordable services in a sustainable and equitable way?

To achieve this, the government recognises the need to closely link transport and broader planning strategies. This will encourage transit-oriented development and urban infill along public transport infrastructure corridors. We understand building the right infrastructure prior to the significant population increases we will see in the future creates a great opportunity for the community, investors and the government.

Light rail supports a long-term increase in the value of property along its route, and this increase will allow the redevelopment and revitalisation of public housing stock in progressive stages along Northbourne Avenue. New public housing will provide accommodation which has higher construction standards, lower running costs and better amenity. In addition, there will be an increased proportion of two-bedroom stock to provide increased capacity for tenants to age in place. It will also provide an opportunity to renew public housing right across Canberra as the government replaces the housing along the capital metro corridor on a roof-for-roof basis with the corridor and reinvests to regenerate the public housing stock across Canberra.

Light rail is a proven city-shaping tool. It changes the value of the land and activity surrounding. Buses do not have the same effect. Governments are now clearly aware of this phenomenon and are changing their approaches to ensure land use and wider impacts are included in the appraisal of projects.

In January this year, the UK Department for Transport provided guidelines that state that if you only look at direct user impacts, significant broader economic impacts will be missed. These guidelines show us that indirect impacts can be significant and are important in the overall appraisal of any transport project.

Earlier this month the federal government released a framework that emphasised the contribution of the infrastructure projects to broader economic benefits such as improved productivity. The federal Assistant Minister for Infrastructure and Regional Development, Jamie Briggs, said the guidelines would lead to a more holistic approach to assessing development that would better reflect community expectations and achieve value for money.

As has been the experience in cities all over the world, we expect that investment in light rail will stimulate business activity whilst increasing population densities and employment opportunities along the transport corridor. We look to other cities, such as Minneapolis, where over \$2 billion of investment was poured into the Minneapolis-St Paul transport corridor before the light rail even opened.

In the UK, Manchester's metro link expansion facilitated over 300 permanent new jobs and stimulated the local economy by over \$117 million per year. Manchester council responded by investing over 75 per cent of their infrastructure budget into light rail over recent years.

In France, well-integrated public transport networks with light rail at the core are common in the cities of similar size to Canberra. Valenciennes, in the north of France, is a small city with an industrial past and a semi-rural hinterland. The city has fewer than 43,000 inhabitants, while the surrounding region has a population of around 390,000. Stage 1 of their light rail system became operational eight years ago. Angers opened a 12.3 kilometre light rail line in 2011 with a population of 147,000.

It is also worth noting that Melbourne started investing in its iconic tram network when it was a similar size to Canberra. Sydney, which had the largest tram network in the Southern Hemisphere, is now clearly regretting its decision to rip out its tracks, and is spending billions putting them back in. These examples demonstrate that investing in permanent high quality public transport is essential for the prosperity of growth of cities, and that even relatively small cities like Canberra can benefit greatly from light rail.

We anticipate billions of dollars in economic, social and environmental benefits to Canberra. This project is not just about moving people from A to B. To put the light rail investment in context, it should be noted that the government's planned infrastructure program over the next four years is budgeted at \$2.5 billion out of a projected budget expenditure of over \$20 billion.

A public-private partnership is a sensible and responsible way of delivering this major infrastructure project. The government will seek an experienced consortium that will design, construct and operate the system. This ensures that we bring the skills and experience that we need into the ACT. The impact on the budget will be minimal over the construction period, with an agreed availability payment paid annually following completion.

This makes light rail an affordable project and makes sure the cost of the project will be spread across generations of users. To put the \$783 million estimated cost into perspective, the territory's economy has almost doubled in size over the last decade. Despite recent federal government cuts and impacts on our economy, the ACT is still one of only two states with a AAA stable credit rating.

The time is right to invest in a high quality integrated public transport system. Light rail is an affordable and necessary project for our territory. It is a project that will help stimulate our economy at a time when we need it most. It is a project that will continue to bring benefits to the territory over the next 20, 50 and 100 years.

The city-to-Gungahlin line will lay the foundation for a city-wide integrated network with light rail as its spine, supported by a feeder bus network and good cycling and pedestrian access. The government will be consulting on a wider light rail network in coming months. It is the government's intent that the whole of the city will be serviced by a high quality, strongly integrated public transport system that requires no more than two mode changes to reach any destination in this city, making it easier for residents and visitors alike to travel our city.

We are a government committed to making the right choices and providing people with choices. We will not condemn future generations to car dependency and the isolation, pollution and congestion that it brings. We have a vision of a sustainable Canberra and we will make the tough decisions now to ensure our city continues to prosper. We will not be distracted by the self-interest and lack of vision of others. We celebrate the world's acknowledgement of our home as the most livable city. We have the vision and the commitment to retain this reputation, not just for this generation but for many more to come.

MR COE (Ginninderra) (3.51): I am delighted to be discussing this matter of extreme public importance. It is an empty item that I did not necessarily expect to be lodged by the government. You would have thought, given the *Canberra Times* poll and everything else which has been discussed of late, the government might want to be talking about something else. But I very much welcome the fact that the member for Ginninderra is doing so much advocacy for the good people of Gungahlin.

It seems that here in the Assembly we do not really have any electorates. I cannot recall on one occasion the Labor members for Brindabella or the Labor members for Ginninderra actually spruiking for their electorate when it comes to light rail. Why is there not an absolute outcry? Why is there not an uproar from the residents of Tuggeranong or the residents of Belconnen, through their representatives in this place and in the government, about why their community is not being served by light rail? Why is Ms Berry not, in this place, saying no, let us build a light rail from Belconnen to the city? Why is Mr Gentleman not in this place saying let us build light rail from Tuggeranong to the city? Why have they just bent over and said, "We will cop it. We will take it. No problem at all. That is fine." We can easily just say—

Mr Rattenbury: On a point of order, Mr Assistant Speaker—

MR ASSISTANT SPEAKER (Dr Bourke): Resume your seat, Mr Coe. Mr Rattenbury, you have a point of order.

Mr Rattenbury: Is the use of the expression "bending over and taking it" considered parliamentary? I seek your advice on that. It does seem a rather crass contribution by Mr Coe in this chamber.

MR ASSISTANT SPEAKER: Thank you, Mr Rattenbury. Mr Coe, you will withdraw.

MR COE: Happily. That was not the context in which it was said but given your request, I do so.

It really does seem very peculiar to me that Ms Berry would come to this place and not speak for one second for her electorate when it comes to the expenditure of \$800 million, \$900 million, \$1 billion of taxpayers' money. Not only that, I find it odd that a member of this place would actually find it acceptable that we are going to award a contract, the biggest capital works contract ever in the ACT, to what is inevitably going to be an interstate or an international company. And quite frankly, it has to be. There is no company in Canberra that will be prequalified to do this kind of work, I believe. Therefore, this has to go to an interstate or an international consortium.

Surely there will be clauses in there saying that they have got to have local industry engagement; surely there will be clauses in there that say that they have got to employ local subbies or whatever. But the fact is that the vast majority of the money, and definitely the vast majority of the profit, is going to be going interstate or perhaps overseas.

I am at a complete loss as to how it can be that you can have the Tuggeranong Community Council and other community councils frequently putting out statements that this is not the best use of money, yet every single MLA on the other side of this chamber simply ignores those statements. In fact Ms Burch went to the Tuggeranong Community Council and had a go at them for talking out about light rail, had a go at them for actually saying, "How is this going to serve our district?"

How is this going to serve the 93 per cent of Canberrans that do not live within walking distance of a tram stop? How is it going to remove car dependency for the 93 per cent of people that do not live within walking distance of a tram stop? How is it going to remove car dependency for the people in the suburbs of Dunlop, Macgregor, Charnwood, Fraser, Evatt, Melba or any of the other suburbs in Ginninderra? The fact is that every single resident of Ginninderra is outside the walking distance prescribed for public transport, well outside, in fact, if you go by the 400-metre rule. But if you go for the ambitious one-kilometre rule, they are still well outside.

There are a handful of people in Palmerston that might be about 1½ kilometres from the nearest tram stop but the vast majority of residents in Gungahlin and all the residents of Belconnen will not be within walking distance of a tram stop. What impact will this have on them? How is this city building? How is this some sort of nation building scheme for the capital, if it does not actually serve the vast majority of residents?

It is all very well for people to say this is going to enliven the corridor. We know for a fact that people are willing to invest in Northbourne Avenue as it is. We have seen the Axis apartments being constructed, we are seeing the IQ apartments being constructed, and we are seeing the Haig apartments being constructed. There is the Avenue, Space, Space 2 and numerous other projects. If the government want higher density on Northbourne Avenue, all they have got to do is sell the blocks and they will get higher density on Northbourne Avenue.

What is more, the people who live on Northbourne Avenue now and the people who will live on Northbourne Avenue in the future will be served very well by the many bus services. In actual fact there are 165 bus services which go from Gungahlin to the city each day. Between 7 am and 9 am, there is a bus every three minutes. I commend ACTION for the way they service the Gungahlin town centre to the city service. I commend them, because that is a very well-serviced route in the network. I think there is relatively high satisfaction with the red rapid services.

This begs the question: why would you replace the most profitable bus system with an extremely unprofitable light rail system? At best, the light rail system is going to bring in \$3 million, \$4 million, \$5 million or at most \$6 million in revenue; yet we are spending in availability payments probably \$100 million over 20 years. The revenue is \$3 million or \$4 million; the expenditure is \$100 million.

There is a reason the private sector are not particularly interested in equity in this project unless they get a massive subsidy, perhaps to the tune of \$100 million a year. The government will get \$3 million in revenue. This is an appalling proposition for the taxpayers of Canberra and it is an appalling proposition for the vast majority of residents of Canberra when it comes to transport.

Let us look again at the electorate of Ginninderra. What is going to happen to the many people who use Ginninderra Drive or Barry Drive and want to turn right from Ginninderra Drive onto Ellenborough Street? If the tram is going to be the priority, the backlog on Ellenborough is going to get even worse. That is exactly what the government reports have said, that traffic gets worse around light rail, not better. It gets worse around light rail.

Not only will the other residents of Canberra not be serviced by light rail but their road links are actually going to get worse as well. They are going to be paying more and having a worse quality of life as a result of this. This is an appalling proposition for Canberrans, and we will fight it. We will fight it.

I think it is absolutely outrageous that the government could spend so much money without even assessing the other routes. How is it that nobody on the other side has stood up and said, "Why didn't they assess Tuggeranong to the city? Why didn't they assess Belconnen to the city? Why didn't they assess city to the airport, or city to the inner south or city to Woden or whatever? Why was it done on a political basis?" It is an appalling decision and the Canberra Liberals will do all we can to fight this ridiculous expenditure.

MR RATTENBURY (Molonglo) (4.01): I would like to thank Ms Berry for bringing this matter of public importance to the Assembly because, despite Mr Coe's surprise, I think it actually is worth while to continue to talk about this so that we can address some of the questions that are being put forward in the public space and take the opportunity to make the case and dispel some of the myths that are being propagated by those who choose to be sceptical about this, for reasons that suit them.

Let me start with a couple of quotes about light rail:

Light rail is a major step forward for public transport; it's an absolute transformation for public transport [in our city]. ... It will power ... commuters into the future, helping to reduce congestion into the city ... and manage population growth. ... It will inject a real dynamic into the city.

Next:

It can move many more people in one way than any number of buses and cars.

And the third quote I have is:

Light rail [is part of a] congestion-busting agenda.

Those are some quotes from Liberal Party leaders in other states about Perth, Sydney and Newcastle. Those Liberals, of course, are not in opposition; so they have not decided they must oppose light rail at all costs. Instead, they are trying to make decisions for the future of their respective cities.

I will take the opportunity to list some of the benefits of light rail and how it will contribute to the livability of our city. Firstly, light rail is of course a transport benefit for the ACT. With the Gungahlin to Civic line, we are looking at a travel time on light rail of about 25 minutes at peak hour, with a 10-minute frequency from 7 am to 7 pm. Currently the car trip from Gungahlin to the city can be a lengthy journey. We know that Northbourne Avenue is considered to be the most congested road in the ACT. As Ms Berry noted, by 2031 the average travel time by car without light rail is expected to be almost one hour.

The predictions are for light rail to increase public transport usage significantly. By 2031 we are looking at an almost 100 per cent increase in public transport passengers in this corridor, including around a 200 per cent increase in passengers during off peak times and the pm peak.

We know that generally light rail is much better at attracting passengers than buses. People like light rail, they like its fixed nature, the fact that it is quiet and comfortable. For the purpose of project assessment it is sensible of course to stick to the clinical and conservative passenger estimations, but I am certainly optimistic that when the light rail opens we might see even more passengers than expected, as has occurred with other recent light rail projects.

The Canberra light rail project is a major investment in public transport, which is also a sustainable form of transport. In this way it helps correct the historical de-prioritisation of public transport in our city that has seen it grow into one of Australia's most car-dependent capitals. This is not, by the way, because of Walter Burley Griffin planning Canberra to be a car city, which some people have spuriously suggested. Griffin planned Canberra to have trams running down its wide boulevards.

Car dependency in fact isolates people, sprawls our city, leads to congestion problems and fuel vulnerability, and even hits the hip-pocket of Canberrans, especially those who are already economically vulnerable. Studies conducted by transport researchers

at the Queensland University of Technology have shown that those with the highest levels of car dependency are most susceptible to mortgage stress. Transport costs are now the second highest cost for a Canberra household, primarily because of the costs associated with owning and running cars. Providing quality public transport, and of course starting to plan our city more around public transport, is a way to alleviate future economic stresses for Canberrans.

Light rail does not just bring transport benefits, of course; it responds to challenges that will impact on Canberra's livability in the future. Climate change presents challenges to our city that we would be negligent to ignore. Motor vehicles produce almost a quarter of our city's greenhouse gases, not to mention local air pollution. Excessive reliance on motor vehicles can make our citizens and city susceptible to oil price volatility. A smart city will start to build a high-capacity, high-speed and attractive public transport system to help combat these challenges.

As Professors McMichael, Stefen, Newman and Norman argued in a recent article, according to the latest IPCC report, a light rail car, powered by low-carbon energy sources, will generate, on a passenger-kilometre basis, only 20 per cent of the emissions of a bus, four per cent of those of a mid-sized car and 2.5 per cent of those of an SUV. Of course being electric, light rail can also run on renewable energy. They also note that, by triggering redevelopment along the transit corridor and at the major stations, light rail can indirectly drive even further emission reductions if the associated infrastructure achieves high energy efficiency standards.

In the next 30 years our population will increase to over 600,000 people, if the demographers' projections are correct. All these people need to travel around. They all need to live somewhere. Believe me, we do not want all of them using private vehicles and squashing onto the roads. All the warnings are there for the problems congestion will cause our city in the future if we do not take action. Nor would you want all of those people to locate on the fringes of Canberra, extending our urban footprint and, with it, the costs of providing infrastructure and the costs to the environment.

Light rail is a sensible response to this. Light rail on Northbourne Avenue is a sensible response as well. It is the corridor with the most congestion, high-predicted growth, excellent opportunities for quality urban redevelopment and renewal, and of course it is an entry way to our nation's capital.

One very specific issue to mention about light rail, on the issue of livability, is that light rail is faster, more comfortable, quieter and produces less local air pollution than buses. In a city like Canberra, with our clean air and relatively quiet environment, that is quite a plus. Light rail takes up less space than buses for the number of passengers it carries. This means of course that we save space in the city centres where space can quickly run out and become a premium.

Transport benefits, social benefits, economic benefits, health benefits, environmental benefits—there is a long list of reasons that light rail is an important part of a livable, sustainable and resilient Canberra for the future. It is not surprising, as I mentioned yesterday, that of the top 10 cities on the 2013 Economic Intelligence Unit's most

livable cities index, eight have light rail—eight out of 10. That is a common factor that I think is not surprising when you think about all of the benefits that I have just described.

I would like to turn to some of the recent commentary by our colleagues in the Canberra Liberals. I want to particularly mention briefly a recent statement put out by Mr Coe in which he said:

This is a project that cost us all more than \$800 million but delivers no economic or transport benefits to Canberra.

That was the quote. That statement is a good example of the ill-informed claims used by the Liberal Party. How ridiculous is it to say that the project will deliver no economic or transport benefits to Canberra. The transport and economic benefits are clear, they are a prime reason for pursuing the project, they are calculated as being worth billions of dollars. To pretend there are no economic or transport benefits is in complete ignorance of the evidence and demonstrates Mr Coe's willingness to make extreme and incorrect statements and perhaps suggests that Mr Coe refuses to recognise or does not understand the ongoing benefits that public transport projects can bring to our city.

It is one thing to disagree with a project, but to go so far as to say that there are no benefits is simply silly. The same statement from Mr Coe said:

Organisations such as Infrastructure Australia, the Centre for International Economics and the Productivity Commission, as well as respected economists such as Leo Dobes and David Hughes, have all supported my view.

I think it is probably a misrepresentation to say that those people and organisations support Mr Coe's view. Yes, those individuals or organisations have raised various issues and criticisms about light rail, but I doubt any of them would want their views conflated with those of Mr Coe, who has taken more of a shrill, hyperbolic, inconsistent and oppose-at-all-costs approach to discussing this project. As an example, would any of those people or organisations be willing to say that light rail will deliver no economic or transport benefits to Canberra, as Mr Coe said? I doubt it. As I say, they take issue with the project and elements of the project but none of them, as I recall it, have gone so far as to say that. The more I hear the criticism from the opposition, the more I realise that their position is founded on a strong anti-public transport sentiment and the desire to find a short-term campaign goal.

It is an interesting contrast to compare it to our other big infrastructure spend in this city, the nearly \$300 million Majura parkway, because there has certainly been no scrutiny at all from the opposition on that one. On light rail, the Liberal Party cries that it only services a select part of Canberra. The Majura parkway is also located in just one part of Canberra, but in fact the Majura parkway is not really even for Canberra commuters. It is built to be a freight route for interstate freight trucks.

On light rail, the government is undertaking a master plan with an intention of extending light rail across the city to serve a wide range of Canberrans. Mr Coe has raised here today the question of why Labor Party members are not clamouring for their electorates. (*Time expired.*)

MR GENTLEMAN (Brindabella—Minister for Planning, Minister for Community Services, Minister for Workplace Safety and Industrial Relations, Minister for Children and Young People and Minister for Ageing) (4.12): I am pleased to speak on this MPI brought by Ms Berry today, on my last day as acting Minister for Capital Metro. The important contribution to this investment makes Canberra one of the world's most livable cities, in our view. Ms Berry made an excellent case for the importance of investing in light rail to safeguard Canberra's future and to maintain its title as the world's most livable city.

I want to comment quickly on a couple of comments that Mr Coe made earlier. He made a comment in regard to me and Ms Berry spruiking for capital metro. I do not think there is anything peculiar about spruiking for capital metro. Planning for all of Canberra's future transport is incredibly important. To do nothing, as Mr Coe urges, would be, I feel, to fail the Canberra community. I think that is their campaign: "Let's do nothing about future transport for Canberra. Let's leave it to someone else." Mr Assistant Speaker, this government is not prepared to leave future Canberrans in the lurch. Investment in light rail is undoubtedly essential for Canberra's future prosperity, and I am proud to be part of a government that has a clear vision and commitment to sustainability and livability for its constituents.

I would like to explore some of the many benefits that light rail will bring to the city. Capital metro is clearly not just a public transport project; it is the glue that holds together the government's urban renewal and sustainability plans. Canberra is a growing and vibrant city. It is the government's responsibility to sustainably accommodate and plan for this growth, whilst nurturing the city's identity and creating opportunities for its residents.

To meet this responsibility, the government has a bold vision that sees Canberra as a smart, sustainable city with a strong sense of confidence and a great way of life that can attract visitors, businesses and residents. As a city, we have a lot to offer. We need to capitalise on our strengths and address our weaknesses to ensure that we can compete with other cities.

By committing to capital metro, the government is backing better public transport, backing infrastructure investment in Canberra, backing revitalisation of the Northbourne Avenue corridor, backing smarter land use, backing jobs, and tackling the increasing congestion that threatens to cripple our city. I will take some time to explain how investment in light rail can deliver all of these benefits.

To start with, better public transport depends on frequent, reliable and integrated transport options. Light rail can offer frequent services with a "turn up and go" experience. During peak times, light rail will run every five minutes; and at other times during its operation, you will not have to wait more than 15 minutes. The service will run late into the night, ensuring that hospitality workers and young people have safe transport to get home. Light rail systems are notoriously reliable, with over 97 per cent of services running on time. Light rail will be well integrated with pedestrian and cycling networks, ensuring safe and easy access to stops and vehicles.

The level boarding will make it more accessible for those with mobility issues and for families with prams. You only have to look at how light rail is rolled out across Europe. I look at some of the experiences I have had. In Freiberg, for example, in Germany, when you are exiting the light rail system there are two buttons on the exit aisle. The first button is for a normal exit; the second button is for a pram. As you press that button at the stop, the doors open and a ramp comes out to make it easier for you to exit the carriage.

Light rail offers an attractive, convenient, reliable and frequent service that has the capability to get people out of their cars and onto public transport. If we look at recent projects in other cities, we see that patronage figures are well above predictions. The Gold Coast light rail has already achieved over one million passengers, with public transport use increasing by 13 per cent. In Sydney, the inner west light rail extension was immediately full in the peak during its first weeks of operation. And the Glenelg light rail extension in Adelaide has helped to increase public transport passengers by 40 per cent.

We expect that Canberra's light rail network will be the much-needed catalyst to break our car dependency.

Following consultation, it is clear that cycling is a major priority for Canberrans; the Capital Metro Agency is requesting that vehicles have the capacity to accommodate bikes and that stops have secure storage facilities.

The bus network will strongly integrate with light rail, with feeder buses serving suburbs and delivering people to a light rail interchange. As we have heard, the vision is to have a city-wide integrated network where people can access a feeder bus from anywhere in the city to be taken to the light rail interchange, hop on the frequent light rail, and take a feeder bus to their onward destination. These interchange points will be seamless and safe, with real-time information. And let us not forget the free wi-fi on vehicles and at stops so that you can stay connected while you travel across the city.

We want public transport to be easy, reliable, frequent and attractive, and we are making the right investment, at the right time, to make sure this happens.

Now is a time when the territory is suffering through federal government cuts to the public service. These cuts demonstrate two issues for us to take note of and act upon. Firstly, the local economy is dependent on the public service; secondly, the territory government needs to provide economic stimulus to ensure that the ACT economy remains strong and we invest for our future. Capital metro will help address both of those issues.

Firstly, the investment in light rail will help to diversify the economy. Canberra's largest economic sectors are government administration and defence, representing between one-quarter and one-third of jobs in the territory. In June 2011, for example, public service jobs represented 51 per cent of all employment in the territory.

Reliance on public sector employment makes Canberra's economy susceptible to shifts in federal government policy. With significant federal government public service job losses, the territory's economic growth is predicted at 1.75 per cent this financial year, below the forecast national average. To provide a more robust local economy, we need to diversify. Capital metro will provide a range of wider economic benefits for Canberra. Improvements in the transport network will improve economic productivity and growth, create more jobs, and increase the diversity and sustainability of our local economy.

Analysis carried out by Ernst & Young indicates that capital metro stage 1 will support over 3,500 jobs during construction, including 1,450 direct and 2,100 indirect jobs. The Capital Metro Agency has developed a local industry participation policy to ensure that locals can benefit from this stage of the project. Local firms have already benefited through the planning and early investigation phases of the project. The corridor development and increased economic activity stimulated by the light rail infrastructure, along with the flow-on jobs from industry and consumption effects, are anticipated to create an additional 50,000 jobs that will remain long term in the city.

Secondly, the investment in infrastructure will help to stimulate the economy when it needs it most. The government has a planned \$2.5 million infrastructure program over the next four years. This is in addition to the private sector investment in light rail through a public-private partnership. This investment will help steer the territory through the tough years ahead. We are not a government that will sit back and do nothing; we have vision and commitment.

As Ms Berry said, investment in light rail is not just about transport solutions; it is also about catering for population growth and smarter land use. I do not think anyone can deny that we have constrained land availability in the territory. Experience in over 400 cities demonstrates that light rail infrastructure encourages higher densities in population, employment and economic activity along its route.

Investing in light rail along this important gateway to the capital creates a wide range of land use benefits for the territory, particularly as the government is the major landholder along the corridor. The investment in light rail will bring environmental, social, economic and health benefits to our community. These benefits will help to ensure that Canberra maintains a great quality of life into the future and protect the city from congestion, pollution, obesity and the decisions of the federal government.

With all the challenges that we face, the discussion must move beyond "Can we afford light rail?" to "Can we afford not to build light rail?"

Discussion concluded.

Adjournment

Motion (by **Mr Gentleman**) proposed:

That the Assembly do now adjourn.

Arawang Primary School

MR DOSZPOT (Molonglo) (4.22): As shadow minister for education, I had the pleasure of visiting Arawang Primary School in Waramanga last Friday, 17 October. I have visited Arawang Primary School previously and have always been impressed, so it was also a pleasure to meet the new principal, Mrs Jeni Page, and note her enthusiasm and pride in her new role and confidence in her pupils. She assigned two year 5 student leaders, Kieran and Lucinda, to show me around the school, and I was most impressed with their knowledge and observations about their school and their open pride in its achievements. Their attitude was a perfect illustration of the school programs that, according to the school website, are designed to foster student independence, maturity and self-confidence.

Principal Jeni Page and deputy principal Angela Georgopoulos also briefed me on the other aspects of their school: quality teaching; the attention to a stimulating and challenging learning environment that also incorporates technology; the focus on the development of student leadership, creative and innovative thinking; and, of course, the exceptional music program, which I was able to appreciate to an even greater degree as I was invited to be a special guest at the Arawang school assembly that morning.

Arawang's musical achievements are quite well known in the community. Their successes include: the primary eisteddfod under-12 choir, first place; Singfest, where they received an outstanding award; year 6 band fest, top score, 39 out of 40. I congratulate all the students on their dedication, which shows in their brilliant performances. To constantly achieve at such high levels is a great credit to their music teacher.

I have met Arawang music teacher Lynne Kowalik on a number of occasions, and I think she is the epitome of what defines quality teaching. She is an enthusiastic and dedicated professional who inspires her students with her talent and sheer love of music.

To highlight her dedication to her profession, I understand that, apart from her studies at the New South Wales Conservatorium High School, she then attended the New South Wales State Conservatorium of Music, and between 1981 and 1983 Lynne Kowalik attended the Kodaly Institute in Kecskemet in Hungary. So it is not surprising that she has won Children's Week awards for her work. She inspires and engages her students, and the results of her infectious enthusiasm were demonstrated at the assembly concert last Friday.

The program for the Arawang school assembly last Friday comprised the following: the opening was performed by year 6—West African drumming, taught and directed by Professor Gary France, using Djembe drums. This was followed by the 2/1 choir—year 1 and year 2 students—which performed three Canadian Indian songs, the first two performed in two parts, with a simple ostinato in each—*My Paddle's Keen and Bright*, *Land of the Silver Birch* and *I'm an Indian Warrior*.

The 4/3 choir then entertained us. Year 3 and 4 students, accompanied by Mr James Huntingford, performed *Joshua Fought the Battle of Jericho* and *Alexander the Cat* in simple two-part. The senior choir students from years 4, 5 and 6 then performed *The Rescue* by Alice Chance and *Turkey in the Straw*, two-part. The year 5 band performed *Cuban Sun* by Zorbie Botretos and *Majestic March* by Paul Lavender. The finale was by the year 6 band, performing *Gathering in the Glen* by Michael Sweeney and *Funky Town* by Steven Greenberg.

I would like to quote Zoltan Kodaly, the founder of the world famous Kodaly Institute, about the spirituality of music, which I think may explain a lot about the success of the educators connected with Arawang Primary School and, indeed, the special reputation of the school itself:

Music is a spiritual food for which there is no substitute. There is no complete spiritual life without music, for the human soul has regions which can be illuminated only by music.

In closing, I would like to thank Jeni Page for her invitation to visit her school again and congratulate Jeni and her teaching staff on their great contribution to Arawang primary. It was also evident that the praise comes not only from people like me but from the number of parents who turned up to watch the school assembly. Over 80 parents filled the hall to bursting point. Their joyous reception of the performances by the students was indeed great to see. Congratulations, Arawang primary, once again.

National Week of Deaf People 2014

MS LAWDER (Brindabella) (4.27): Today I would like to talk about the National Week of Deaf People. Thank you to members for agreeing to have an interpreter here today. I would like to introduce interpreter Mandy—this is her sign name—and I will hand over to her to interpret the rest of my speech.

The National Week of Deaf People is a week-long national celebration of deaf individuals and the deaf community. It is a week when deaf people in Australia and around the world celebrate being deaf and being part of the international deaf community. It is an opportunity to celebrate the community language, culture and history of deaf people in our country. It is an opportunity to make the public aware of local, state and national deaf communities that are part of us, and to recognise the significant achievements that are made by those within our deaf communities.

The theme of the National Week of Deaf People for 2014 is “strengthening human diversity”, and it runs from 18 to 24 October. Deaf Australia is the driving force behind National Week of Deaf People. One in six Australians experience some form of hearing loss and, as a subset of that, there are approximately 30,000 Auslan-using deaf in Australia.

We have come a long way with Auslan interpreters on TV during emergency broadcasts, and with captioning available on more and more programs on free-to-air

and pay TV, but we need to do more and do everything we can to be inclusive of this community. We still have a way to go to improve communication access in schools, in the legal system, in hospitals and in workplaces, to name just a few.

But just as importantly, we can recognise and promote awareness that there are a number of programs to assist communication access, such as the workplace modifications scheme, the Auslan for employment program, the national Auslan booking service, or NABS, for interpreters for medical appointments, the provision of captioning at many performances at the Canberra Theatre, the national relay service, and much more.

I recognise that many of these programs have come about due to the systemic advocacy and lobbying of organisations such as Deaf Australia, Deafness Forum of Australia, the ACT Deafness Resource Centre, Deaf Children Australia, Aussie Deaf Kids, and many more.

In addition, a number of outstanding individuals have contributed, and continue to contribute, to championing the rights of deaf people. There are also many organisations, such as deaf netball clubs, deaf touch footy, other sporting groups, parent support groups, teachers of the deaf, interpreters and those who teach Auslan, and many others to thank for their ongoing work.

One of my own teachers was interpreter Mandy, to whom I am very grateful, although she is probably a bit disappointed by how much I have forgotten and my lapses into bad habits over the years.

Thank you very much to the Auslan interpreters who assist with communication access for deaf people. Just the other night I was at an AFL football club presentation and met a group of deaf friends, one of whom had played football in a women's AFL team this past season, and interpreter Sarah was with them.

Thank you to all those whose job it is or who volunteer their time and effort to support and include others, including Pete Halsey and Mark Parkinson at the ACT Deafness Resource Centre. You can find out more about the ACT Deafness Resource Centre at www.actdrc.org.au. I especially thank interpreter Mandy for being here today.

Diwali festival of lights Volunteering ACT

MS PORTER (Ginninderra) (4.31): I would like to talk about two recent events at which I was fortunate to represent ministers. The first was the MARSS celebration of Diwali, the festival of lights, on Friday night, where I represented Minister Burch. It was organised by the hardworking staff under Dewani Bakkum and her board under Raewyn Bastion. Diwali celebrates the coming of light to drive away darkness. It brings together many faiths, including the Hindus, Sikhs and those of the Jain faith. As we talked about yesterday, we live in a very multicultural city, and people from the four corners of the earth celebrated together, sharing food, music and dance. This message of coming together to drive away darkness by the giving of light is so important, particularly right now.

The other event I will talk about was the launch of Volunteering ACT's new resource called *Let's Talk About Inclusion—Promoting Inclusion in your Volunteer Involving Organisation*, an event at which I represented Minister Gentleman. The aim of this resource is to assist organisations to work with vulnerable volunteers who may otherwise miss out to the detriment of the whole community. Maureen Cane, CEO of Volunteering ACT, under the leadership of her board headed by Jan Haydon, needs to be congratulated, as does Rob Donnelly, the program manager, who spoke passionately of the difference this program makes to lives and how much opportunity it gives.

Georgina Byron, CEO of the Snow Foundation and sponsor of the program, announced the inaugural champions of the inclusion program: Woden Community Services and Villaggio Sant' Antonio.

People are vulnerable for many reasons, not just because they may have a disability. The program also reaches out to refugees, new arrivals, those unemployed or between jobs and those with mental health issues, to increase the diversity of the volunteer workforce and break down preconceptions.

The resource, which has a self-assessment questionnaire organisations can fill in, helps organisations to challenge themselves about preconceptions and attitudes, and their unwillingness sometimes to work with vulnerable volunteers. I believe it will be a valuable asset to assist many organisations to engage with a currently underutilised workforce. Of course, it is to the detriment of organisations if they are not working with people with disabilities, the unemployed, refugees and new arrivals into our cities.

I commend the work of those two organisations; I reiterate my support for them and hope they will continue to be funded through this government as well as the corporate sector, which I think is a good partnership.

Employment—penalty rates

MS BERRY (Ginninderra) (4.34): Last week I was able to join with ACT members of United Voice commemorating international Anti-Poverty Week. During the week they were asking for the Australian Chamber of Commerce and Industry to stop their attack on penalty rates because it was an attack on a worker's right to live with dignity. I asked some of the members of United Voice to send me their stories about what an attack on penalty rates would mean to them, and I will refer to some of those stories.

Tom is a 34-year-old security officer with four young children, two in early primary school and two below school age. He is the sole breadwinner in his family. Like so many security officers in the ACT, he works a 12-hour rotating shift. His base rate of pay is \$19.49. His wife is unable to work as one of his children has additional needs requiring constant care and attention. His wage is supplemented by the hours he is rostered to work in the evenings and on weekends. Without those penalty rates, his family would simply not be able to get by. He is not always available to enjoy time with his family on weekends. When events such as children's birthday parties,

sporting events or other family occasions are celebrated, he has to sacrifice this time in order to secure a living range.

This is Goran and Maria's story: they are cleaners. They have only known cleaning work since they first migrated to Australia from Macedonia. They would have liked to have found better jobs, but their limited English left them with few choices. When they came to Canberra they had two young children and three suitcases with their clothes—nothing else. They have worked hard and gone without in order to save enough money to buy their own home. Their children are going to university now but still need to live at home. Their house is nearly paid off but they worry what would happen if the penalty rates they receive for their evening work and the occasional weekend work were removed. They want to be able to own their own home before they become too sick to work. Goran struggles with back pain and wonders how much longer he will be fit enough to clean. Without penalties, Goran and Maria will stand to lose their home and would no longer be able to support their children's efforts towards a better life.

Then there is the story of Vicki, who works in a club. She is undertaking some part-time studies at university. She was working at the club for four years and expects to work there for at least another two years. She often works unsociable hours, and in the four years she has worked in the club she has been rostered on Christmas Day twice and New Year's Eve three times. Vicki felt that she missed out on all the time with family and friends but was prepared to do so because the extra income from the public holiday penalties makes a big difference over the rest of the year.

Canberra is the nation's capital, but many of the jobs for the key workers in this town are low paid, with penalty rates making a huge difference between the economic survival and abject poverty, including homelessness. This is especially the case for the people who work in industries like cleaning and early childhood education and care.

Former Chief Minister of this place Kate Carnell took over as CEO of ACCI early this year, and in the *Canberra Times* she said she would take a hard line against weekend penalty rates. I think that is a shame. It is a shame that anybody in this town, particularly a former Chief Minister, would want to drive people out of their homes and into homelessness because of a reduction in penalty rates.

I was very happy to commemorate international Anti-Poverty Week with some of the lowest paid but most essential workers in the ACT. I will do what I can to ensure their penalty rates are protected for now and into the future so that they will not be driven out of their homes and onto the streets.

TEDxCanberra

MR SMYTH (Brindabella) (4.38): I rise to speak about the TEDx conference that was held on 11 October. I had the great privilege of attending TEDxCanberra 2014—Uncharted, and I would acknowledge that Mr Rattenbury was also there. It was an incredible day of ideas, which not only exhibited some of our city's best thinkers but also brought our community together. I walked away from my experience at this conference with much food for thought, and appreciated the opportunity to engage in

the discussions on the day. In this regard I particularly liked the picnic basket concept for lunch, which got attendees to mix and mingle and to share ideas with each other. This had the wonderful effect of injecting life and actually having people in Civic Square, something we need more of outside this building.

As the minister responsible for NOWaste by 2010, it was great to see that this year's conference had a zero waste target. Zero waste is achievable; it should not merely be an aspiration. I commend the hardworking volunteers on the day who were dumpster-diving at the back of the Canberra Theatre to make this happen. And they did.

I would also like to take this opportunity to acknowledge the following individuals and organisations for making this conference a success. Firstly, I thank the TEDx talk presenters: Katy Barfield, the fair food warrior; Lindsay Bevege, the patient care advocate; Bede Carmody, rescuer of chooks; Christine Charles, rocket scientist; Emma Colenbrander, social business entrepreneur; Anita Collins, musician and music educator; Eleanor Gates-Stuart, artistic science communicator; Khadija Gbla, culture and gender rights voice; Daniel Harris-Pascal, forest gardener; Shane Horsburgh, redefiner of masculinity; Deane Hutton and Rob Morrison, jumper and skivvy-wearing scientists; Liz Lea, dancer and choreographer; Steve Lee, optical technologist; Amber Nichols, singer-songwriter; Marianne Scholem, stylist songstress; and Erica Seccombe, artist and microphotographer.

Secondly, I thank the TEDx adventure hosts: Neil Baudinette, of our own Assembly; Gavin Blake, of Fever Picture; Shane Breynard, who wished to be known as the phantom of Civic Square; Craig Brown, from the Academy of Interactive Entertainment; Josh Creaser, from 350.org Australia; Amelia Greig, from the Division of Space Plasma, Power and Propulsion laboratory at the Australian National University; Nancy Harrison, from Food Lovers; Greg Parish, from the Museum of Australian Democracy; Brant Pridmore, an ACT philosopher; Gordon Watson, from Datapod; and Clinton White, from ArtSound FM.

Next there are the partners who were mentors for the speakers: the Canberra Theatre Centre, Cre8ive, Hotel Hotel, Newcastle and the University of Canberra. There were the partners in the thinkers category: CBR Canberra, Aspen Medical, Dixon Advisory and Food Lovers. And there were the partners in the conversationalist category: Conversations of Change, Dialogue, Eco Meats, Fever Picture, Inspiring Australia, Katrina Howard, Lindsay & Edmunds, NICTA, PwC Australia, and Speak2Us. And there are the foundation partners: Think Act Relate and acidlabs.

Next, I thank the TEDxCanberra staff: Stephen Collins, the creative catalyst and licensee; Sarah Jewell; Ingrid Tomanovits; Kristin Boag; Lisa Walsch; Maria Koulouris; Jude Burger; Jonno Bray; Jess Miller; Kelli Monck; Sharen Scott; Nathanael Coyle; Nancy Harrison; Hannah Denny-Collins; Katharine Pierce; Merlin Kong; Will Glenwright; Nitin Naidu; Michael Honey; Clare Conroy; Courtnee Leigh; Dale Rogers; Gavin Tapp; Ruth Ellison; Nikki Coleman; Catherine Mahoney; Roslyn Walker; Giesel Manalo; Jo Allenbone; and Brittany Adams.

And of course there are the on-the-day volunteers, the people who made it happen, cleaned up the mess and ensured there was no waste as well as getting the show on the

road and keeping it there: Maureen Barrett, Sophie Beauvais, Shian Buutljens, Kim Chatterjee, Allison Denny-Collins, Mark Devan, Renae Hill, Natassja Hoogstad Hay, Sam Kennedy-Hine, Bess Laaring, Cameron Lees, Courtnee Leigh, Annette Liu, Nuranti Mandrini, Michael Monck, Jecinta Neumann, Jen Pang, Tiara Perdana Sari, Michael Perez, Eki Ramadhan, Sallie Rodriguez, Wilson Tan, Adam Thomas, Barbra Wilson and Joshua Wong.

Well done to all involved, particularly the attendees. It was a full house at the Playhouse all day. There was lots of discussion at the luncheon and during the breaks, which were ample, but it was the spirit with which people entered into it that made it such a success on the day. Thank you to all involved.

NationsHeart

MR COE (Ginninderra) (4.44): This evening I would like to place on the record my congratulations for a community in Belconnen who have created a wonderful, inviting and meaningful contribution to the lives of many Canberrans. NationsHeart Christian Community in Belconnen has been an important part of our community for 40 years. In addition to the regular Sunday service, the doors are open throughout the week for many different activities. Members of the Assembly would be familiar with the exceptional work NationsHeart do with their FoodHut. The service is truly an institution in Canberra and a great source of physical, emotional, social and spiritual sustenance for many people.

The work that needs to go into such a program is immense. The logistical process includes placing orders with Foodbank New South Wales on Fridays and the deliveries occur on the following Wednesday. I should note that in addition to Foodbank, the FoodHut receives deliveries from the Yellow Van, another great service provided here in Canberra. The time of deliveries can vary so volunteers are on stand-by waiting for the time at which unpacking and stocking needs to take place.

Further to this, rosters have to be prepared, the space needs to be cleaned and, of course, the FoodHut needs volunteers to serve during opening times. Around 80 people come each week to shop, choosing from among the goods provided to suit their household needs. For many people, this means the task of stretching their meagre budget is made somewhat easier, and they are able to access good quality food and goods for a nominal charge.

The driving force behind this massive task has been Richard Swann, who is stepping down as the coordinator after five years in the job. Richard is a stalwart of the NationsHeart community and his efforts were appropriately acknowledged earlier in the month at a celebration at the church. He has much support along the way, from his angels, including his wife Ena. Richard's expertise will not be lost as he will still continue doing the vital role of ordering with FoodHut on Fridays.

Another hive of activity at the church is the Rough Diamonds group. The efforts are led by Jeanette Morris who coordinates between 50 and 100 people with special needs participating in various activities at the church or elsewhere. The events could include chartering a bus and going on an excursion, which I am told can be quite a production.

In addition to the events on the day, there is also the essential behind-the-scenes work, such as following up volunteers, calls to participants to see how they are going, organising training days and much more.

Another activity is the Tuesday night community meal, of which Thelma Leach and John and Patrice Simmons are the driving force. They purchase the food, join with other helpers in preparing the meal in the afternoon before serving at 5:15pm and packing up afterwards. It is a big job but one that brings so much joy to so many people. The meal also serves as a placement for University of Canberra nutrition students who come to assist and observe.

NationsHeart, like many other community groups, punch well above their weight in their contribution to Canberra. Of course, there is much more happening than what I have mentioned.

I would like to thank the leadership of the church, including the ministry team—Naomi Giles, John Simmons and Nick Weatherstone; the elders council—Craig Webber, Ric Glenister, Barbara Kennedy, Bronwen Frost, Alison Simkus and David Lewis; and leadership support—Tryphena Watson and Wally Harrison.

NationsHeart is one of the many communities in Canberra for which we should celebrate. I congratulate them on their 40th anniversary and wish them all the best for the future.

Unparliamentary language

MR RATTENBURY (Molonglo) (4.47): I rise this afternoon to express my concern at recent examples of crass and unnecessarily sexual language both in this place and in the broader political discourse in the ACT. Earlier this afternoon we had Mr Coe in the discussion on light rail referring to Labor Party members in Ginninderra and Brindabella as “bending over and taking it”. I have no reason to understand why Mr Coe thought this was appropriate language to use in the chamber. It is certainly an expression that, when I went upstairs and took a straw poll on it amongst my staff, was considered to be rather offensive let alone unparliamentary. It certainly warranted, rather than just a begrudging withdrawal, more of a personal apology to each of the members involved.

Similarly, in last week’s *City News*, Ian Meikle wrote the following in his “Seven Days” column:

As PUP senator Jacqui Lambie might observe, the Greens cabinet cuckoo Shane Rattenbury appears to be growing a pair and taken umbrage with the Chief Minister, criticising her calls for a national or state-based clinical trial of medical marijuana.

Now, I know Mr Meikle. I know that he has a perfectly good grasp of the English language and a reasonable vocabulary as well. It begs the question as to why he resorted to that kind of language, which is generally considered unsavoury in public discourse, and why he resorted to blokey locker room language that, frankly, has no place in political commentary.

I think this is a concerning trend. We have seen Mrs Jones this year expressing her distress at perceived sexism when cabinet ministers in estimates rolled their eyes at her questioning in the estimates process. To see these sorts of things appearing in the public discourse comes as a very surprising thing in that context.

I accept that Mr Meikle, for example, does not like my politics, or perhaps does not even like me. That is simply not the point. That sort of language has no place in a modern public discourse. It makes for an unsafe space. It means those people who might be considering coming into public life will be turned off by the prospect of facing that sort of personal commentary. I accept that politics is robust, but I think even in politics people should not resort to that sort of crass and unnecessarily sexual language. These recent examples are opportunities for us all to stop and reflect on how we want to go forward and what is an appropriate standard in public life.

Question resolved in the affirmative.

The Assembly adjourned at 4.50 pm until Tuesday, 28 October 2014, at 10 am.

Schedule of amendments

Schedule 1

Red Tape Reduction Legislation Amendment Bill 2014

Amendments moved by the Chief Minister

1

Clause 20

Page 18, line 2—

omit clause 20, substitute

20 Registration of deeds Section 4 (1) (a)

omit

registrar-general;

substitute

registrar-general; or

2

Clause 21

Page 18, line 10—

omit clause 21, substitute

21 Section 4 (2)

substitute

(2) A deed must not be registered under this Act by being deposited with the registrar-general unless the deed, in the opinion of the registrar-general—

(a) is legibly written; and

(b) is on paper of a size and standard approved by the registrar general; and

(c) will, if entered on the register, be, and continue to be, easily readable.

Answers to questions

ACTION bus service—patronage (Question No 313)

Mr Coe asked the Minister for Territory and Municipal Services, upon notice, on 7 August 2014:

- (1) What was the total number of passengers who boarded an ACTION bus, from 6 May 2013 to 28 June 2013 excluding weekends, between the times of (a) 6am-6.15am, (b) 6.16am-6.30am, (c) 6.31am-6.45am, (d) 6.46am-7.00am, (e) 7.01am-7.15am, (f) 7.16am-7.30am, (g) 7.31am-7.45am, (h) 7.46am-8am, (i) 8:01am-8:15am, (j) 8.16am-8.30am, (k) 8.31am-8.45am and (l) 8.46am-9.00am.
- (2) What was the total number of passengers who boarded an ACTION bus, from 5 May 2014 to 27 June 2014 excluding weekends between the times referred to in part (1).

Mr Rattenbury: The answer to the member's question is as follows:

- (1) The total number of passengers who boarded an ACTION bus between 6 May 2013 and 28 June 2013 for the requested time periods was:

Time Period	Passenger Boardings - 6 May 2013 to 28 June 2013
6:00am - 6:14am	5,283
6:15am - 6:29am	8,482
6:30am - 6:44am	12,873
6:45am - 6:59am	23,661
7:00am - 7:14am	38,977
7:15am - 7:29am	57,340
7:30am - 7:44am	90,175
7:45am - 7:59am	148,230
8:00am - 8:14am	158,257
8:15am - 8:29am	129,726
8:30am - 8:44am	83,973
8:45am - 8:59am	57,721
Total	814,698

The variance in the timing provided in comparison to that requested is due to the nature of the reporting system.

- (2) The total number of passengers who boarded an ACTION bus between 5 May 2014 and 27 June 2014 for the requested time periods was:

Time Period	Passenger Boardings - 5 May 2014 to 27 June 2014
6:00am - 6:14am	4,969
6:15am - 6:29am	8,275
6:30am - 6:44am	12,692
6:45am - 6:59am	24,640
7:00am - 7:14am	41,569
7:15am - 7:29am	64,220
7:30am - 7:44am	85,042

Time Period	Passenger Boardings - 5 May 2014 to 27 June 2014
7:45am - 7:59am	136,318
8:00am - 8:14am	148,745
8:15am - 8:29am	126,233
8:30am - 8:44am	82,748
8:45am - 8:59am	57,631
Total	793,082

**Alexander Maconochie Centre—Solaris program
(Question No 323)**

Mr Wall asked the Minister for Corrective Services, upon notice, on 17 September 2014:

- (1) How many prisoners currently at the Alexander Maconochie Centre (AMC) have undertaken the Solaris program during (a) 2012, (b) 2013 and (c) 2014 to date.
- (2) How many of the prisoners identified in part (1) completed the program.
- (3) In what time frame was the program completed by those identified in parts (1) and (2).
- (4) What is the total cost, per financial year, to implement the program.
- (5) Is there a financial incentive for prisoners at the AMC to complete the Solaris program; if so, what is the value of this incentive.

Mr Rattenbury: The answer to the member's question is as follows:

- 1) I understand the Member's question to mean how many detainees undertook the Solaris program, known as the Solaris Therapeutic Community (Solaris TC), in 2012, 2013 and 2014. As opposed to how many detainees currently at the AMC participated in Solaris TC in those years, as is phrased in the Member's question. The total number of Solaris TC participants in each year is as follows (all 2014 figures are correct as at 17 September 2014):

2012: 47
2013: 33
2014: 22

However, if the Member did, in fact, mean to enquire as to the number of current detainees that have participated in Solaris TC in those years, the answer to the members question is as follows:

2012: 23 of the 47 total participants remain in custody.
2013: 20 of the 33 total participants remain in custody.
2014: 16 of the 22 total participants (to date) remain in custody.

- 2) Of the total participants (1), the following number of detainees completed the program:

2012: 36
2013: 27
2014: 17

- 3) The number of days spent in Solaris TC by graduates varies from 105 to 192, as such the average number of days in each year is provided:

2012: 116
 2013: 117
 2014: 148

- 4) The ACT Corrective Services expenditure on Solaris TC in the 2013-14 financial year was \$689,284.00.

Please note that the Solaris TC is delivered in partnership with Karralika, which also receives funding for the program from the Commonwealth Department of Health.

- 5) Detainees receive remuneration for participating in approved programs, education and employment. Successful completion of programs and education courses provides a better chance for rehabilitation than participation in prison-based employment only.

Detainees are remunerated for a minimum 30 hours per week and a maximum of 42 hours per week. The payments per hour by category as set out in the *Prisoner Remuneration Policy* are as follows:

Unemployment	Per hour	= \$0.50
Per 6 hr day	= \$3.00	
5 days only	= \$15.00 per week maximum	
Level 1	Per hour	= \$0.83
Per 6 hr day	= \$4.98	
5 days	= \$24.90 per week maximum	
6 days	= \$29.88 per week maximum	
7days	= \$34.86 per week maximum	
Level 2	Per hour	= \$1.17
Per 6 hr day	= \$7.02	
5 days	= \$35.10 per week maximum	
6 days	= \$42.12 per week maximum	
7days	= \$49.14 per week maximum	
Level 3	Per hour	= \$1.67
Per 6 hr day	= \$10.02	
5 days	= \$50.10 per week maximum	
6 days	= \$60.12 per week maximum	
7days	= \$70.14 per week maximum	

Participants of the Solaris TC receive remuneration at Level 2 for 6 days; equating to \$42.12 per week. Further, a participant may hold the position of House Supervisor for which they are remunerated \$60.12 per week.

Also, participants who have accrued an ACT traffic infringement debt are able to offset this debt via the ACT Road Transport Authority Community Work and Social Development program, at the 'alcohol or other drug treatment' rate of \$1000 per month (for full compliance). The Community Work and Social Development Program Guidelines are available at the following link:

http://www.rego.act.gov.au/__data/assets/pdf_file/0004/572071/WDP-Overview.pdf

**ACTION bus service—patronage
(Question No 326)**

Mr Coe asked the Minister for Territory and Municipal Services, upon notice, on 18 September 2014:

What was the total number of origin passengers who boarded ACTION route 200 from 7.30 am to 8.20 am at the Gungahlin Market Place (Stop ID 7002), broken down by total number of boardings, from (a) Monday, 4 August to Friday, 8 August 2014 inclusive, (b) Monday, 11 August to Friday, 15 August 2104 inclusive, (c) Monday, 18 August to Friday, 22 August 2014 inclusive, (d) Monday, 25 August to Friday, 29 August 2104 inclusive, (e) Monday, 1 September to Friday, 5 September 2014 inclusive and (f) Monday, 8 September to Friday, 12 September 2104 inclusive.

Mr Rattenbury: The answer to the member's question is as follows:

The table below shows the total number of origin passengers who boarded ACTION route 200* from 7.30am to 8.29 am at the Gungahlin Market Place (Stop ID 7002) for the time periods requested:

Time Period	Total Passenger Boardings
(a) Monday, 4 August to Friday, 8 August 2014 inclusive	1,063
(b) Monday, 11 August to Friday, 15 August 2014 inclusive	1,108
(c) Monday, 18 August to Friday, 22 August 2014 inclusive	1,064
(d) Monday, 25 August to Friday, 29 August 2014 inclusive	1,089
(e) Monday, 1 September to Friday, 5 September 2014 inclusive	1,179
(f) Monday, 8 September to Friday, 12 September 2014 inclusive	1,149
Total	6,652

*From Monday 4 August to Friday 29 August, Network 12 was in operation and the Red Rapid consisted of the route 200 only.

From the introduction of Network 14 on 1 September 2014, the Red Rapid has been redesigned to include additional route numbers.

As such, figures in the table above from 1 September are inclusive of all Red Rapid services, which include the Route 200, 202, 251, 252, 255 and 259.

**ACT Housing—Spotless facilities manager
(Question No 328)**

Ms Lawder asked the Minister for Housing, upon notice, on 23 September 2014:

- (1) Is Spotless, as the Total Facilities Manager for ACT Housing, responsible for the repairs and maintenance of ACT Housing properties.

- (2) Does the contract between the ACT Government and Spotless allow for Spotless employees to complete maintenance works themselves or is Spotless engaged solely to manage the maintenance and repair work;
- (3) What repairs and maintenance does Spotless do in-house and what repairs and maintenance jobs does Spotless outsource to other contractors.
- (4) How many complaints has ACT Housing received over the last five years relating to Spotless and what is the breakdown of these complaints per year.
- (5) What categories are the complaints, received by ACT Housing regarding Spotless, classified into and how many complaints have been received in each classification.
- (6) What is the agreed process to be followed when complaints are received by Spotless about repairs or maintenance they have undertaken.
- (7) What is the agreed process to be followed when complaints are received by ACT Housing regarding Spotless.
- (8) What actions have taken place for each complaint made about Spotless over the past year.
- (9) Is there any action taken by ACT Housing against Spotless when complaints are received.
- (10) How much has been paid to Spotless over the last two financial years for repairs and maintenance and is the Minister able to say how much of that money has Spotless paid to external contractors.

Mr Barr: The answer to the member's question is as follows:

- (1) Yes.
- (2) Direct Service (or Self Delivery) by the Total Facilities Manager (TFM) is permitted under Schedule 3, Item 7 of the Total Facilities Management Contract. The Self Delivery program is provided by Asset Services, an arm of the Spotless group of Companies. The Self Delivery program "went live" on 4 July 2014.
- (3) Spotless Asset Services is able undertake repairs and maintenance in the following areas:
 - electrical works – servicing of electrical appliances, electrical checks, heater services, smoke alarm service/replacement program, time out testing, RCD installation;
 - older person security upgrade works – heavy duty screen doors, night latches, patio bolts, window locks and peep holes;
 - carpentry and general handyman services; and
 - energy efficiency measures including window pelmets, wall and ceiling vents, draft sealing and insulation.

All other repairs and maintenance are allocated to the subcontractor base consisting of 83 active sub-contracting firms.

(4) Complaints were received in the following areas and numbers:

CATEGORY	2009-10	2010-11	2011-12	2012-13	2013-14	2014-15	Total
Maintenance – Property	412	606	465	500	750	124	2867
Maintenance - Around Property	195	212	180	156	209	88	1040
Other	209	219	235	166	296	58	1183
Total Financial Year	816	1,037	880	832	1,255	270	5,090

*numbers include staff complaints received against housing and spotless staff combined.

(5) See answer to question 4.

(6) Spotless investigate and respond to all maintenance related complaints. When a complaint is lodged, Spotless enters the complaint details directly into the Housing and Community Services (HACS) data base Homenet thus giving HACS visibility of all complaints. Spotless sends the complainant an acknowledgement letter within 3 business days of receipt. The letter includes the complaint reference number, the date the complaint was received, the timeframe, the expected date for completion and a contact number for further enquiries.

Spotless undertakes an investigation into each complaint and responds to the complainant within 16 business days. If a complainant is not satisfied with the response provided by Spotless they can escalate the complaint to the HACS Contract Management Unit. All complaints and the responses are forwarded to HACS by Spotless where they undergo quality assurance checks and for record keeping purposes.

(7) HACS responds to complaints regarding Tenant Responsible Maintenance, and complaints about HACS and Spotless staff. The complaints are managed through the HACS Complaints Unit and are forwarded to the Contract Management Unit for investigation, action and response. The process outlined in the answer to question 6 is followed.

(8) To collect and assemble the information sought for the purpose of answering the question would be a major task, requiring a considerable diversion of resources. In this instance, I do not believe it would be appropriate to divert resources from the provision of direct services to clients, for the purposes of answering the member's question.

(9) Actions in response to substantiated complaints against Spotless are taken under the terms of the TFM Contract. HACS may issue a General Non-conformance Notice (NCN) requiring the provision of a cure plan outlining how the non-conformance will be rectified. An NCN can lead to an abatement of the management fee.

(10) In 2012-13 Spotless was reimbursed \$36.803 million for repairs and maintenance. In 2013-14 Spotless was reimbursed \$38.017 million for repairs and maintenance.

The contract with Spotless is a Reimbursable Contract which means the costs to deliver the services has been agreed. As the Self Delivery team did not commence until 4 July 2014, all funds have been paid to external contractors.

**Business—legal assistance
(Question No 329)**

Mr Wall asked the Attorney-General, upon notice, on 23 September 2014:

- (1) What is the total amount of funding allocated to the legal assistance for small business service announced on 4 September 2014.
- (2) What communication has taken place to inform small business of this service and what was the cost of this communication.
- (3) How many appointments are allocated per business.
- (4) How many appointments have been made with the service to date.

Mr Corbell: The answer to the member's question is as follows:

- (1) No Government funding is allocated to the legal assistance for small business service (the Small Business Clinic). The Small Business Clinic is a joint project between the University of Canberra (UC) and the Legal Aid Commission ACT as part of the clinical legal education program. Private legal practitioners provide pro bono assistance to clients. Final year law students provide assistance to the practitioners by conducting research on client matters. The Legal Aid Commission provides administrative support to the Clinic including booking appointments, data entry and reception duties, amounting to approximately 4.5 hours per week, which is absorbed within existing resources.
- (2) A media release was circulated by my office on 4 September 2014. The opening of the Clinic also appeared in the 'CityNews' in September 2014. The Law Society and the UC refer to the Clinic on their websites. The Law Society also notified practitioners about volunteering to provide legal advice to the Clinic in their *Hearsay* publication. The UC has prepared new brochures advertising the Clinic. Referrals to the Clinic are also made directly from the Legal Aid Commission's Helpline. All communication costs have been absorbed within existing resources.
- (3) Appointments are not limited per business. However, it is envisaged that particular issues or concerns raised during the initial 30 minute consultation would be addressed at that time. Should the business have a different or additional concern following their initial appointment, they are able to return to the Clinic for further advice.

The aim of the clinic is to put small business owners in contact with experienced lawyers who will provide initial oral advice during the consultation.

- (4) As at 2 October 2014, 28 appointments had been made with the Clinic – approximately 6 appointments per week.

**Crime—car tyre slashing
(Question No 330)**

Mrs Jones asked the Minister for Police and Emergency Services, upon notice, on 24 September 2014:

How many tyre slashing incidents have been reported to the police since the arrest of a suspect in June this year in relation to the long standing issue of a tyre slasher within the inner south suburbs, particularly Narrabundah and Griffith.

Mr Corbell: The answer to the member's question is as follows:

Since the date that the male was taken into custody, and subsequently released, there have been 4 incidents of criminal tyre damage in Narrabundah and Griffith reported to police.

Canberra Hospital—Adult Mental Health Unit (Question No 331)

Mrs Jones asked the Minister for Health, upon notice, on 25 September 2014:

- (1) How many agency nursing staff have worked per shift (a) weekly and (b) annually since the opening of the Adult Mental Health Unit.
- (2) How many nurses or staff on (a) 451 and (b) (457) visas have worked per shift (i) weekly and (ii) annually.
- (3) What is the budget for overtime for nurses and staff each financial year.
- (4) Has the budget referred to in part (3) been exceeded; if so, by how much.
- (5) Has the budget referred to in part (3) been increased.
- (6) How many graduate nurses have worked per shift (a) weekly and (b) annually.

Ms Gallagher: The answer to the member's question is as follows:

I sought advice from ACT Health in order to respond to the Member's question and a response has been provided to questions 3, 4 and 5.

It was considered that providing a response to questions 1, 2 and 6 would require an unreasonable diversion of mental health staff resources. Responding to the questions would require a manual break down and analysis of hundreds of pages of raw data.

- (1) ACT Health is unable to provide a response to this question due to the high resource implications to analyse raw data.
- (2) ACT Health is unable to provide a response to this question due to the high resource implications to analyse raw data.
- (3) The budget for overtime for nurses and staff (excluding medical staff as this information is not able to broken down to one cost centre) at the Adult Mental Health Unit is the following:

Financial Year	All Staff	Nursing Staff
April 2012 - June 2012	\$ 100,933	\$ 99,381
July 2012- June 2013	\$ 473,000	\$ 446,000
July 2013 - June 2014	\$ 486,920	\$ 459,380

(4) The variance on the budget referred to in part (3) is the following:

Financial Year	All Staff	Nursing Staff
April 2012 - June 2012	\$ 6,604 under budget	\$ 8,555 under budget
July 2012- June 2013	\$ 23,879 under budget	\$ 18,134 under budget
July 2013 - June 2014	\$ 80,094 under budget	\$ 79,751 under budget

(5) Has the budget referred to in part (3) been increased.

Financial Year	All Staff	Nursing Staff
April 2012 - June 2012	\$ 31,530 decrease	\$ 27,558 increase
July 2012- June 2013	\$ 17,039 increase	\$ 155,765 increase
July 2013 - June 2014	\$ 540 increase	\$ 13,380 increase

(6) ACT Health is unable to provide a response to this question due to the high resource implications to analyse raw data.

Canberra Hospital—Adult Mental Health Unit (Question No 332)

Mrs Jones asked the Minister for Health, upon notice, on 25 September 2014:

- (1) How many incidents between patients have been reported since the opening of the Adult Mental Health Unit.
- (2) What types/categories of incidents have been reported between patients since the opening of the Unit.

Ms Gallagher: The answer to the member's question is as follows:

- (1) There have been 26 reported incidents between patients since the opening of the Adult Mental Health Unit.
- (2) These 26 reported incidents were classified into one of the following categories:
 - physical contact
 - verbal / physical threatening with no contact

ACTION bus service—park and ride facilities (Question No 334)

Mr Coe asked the Minister for Territory and Municipal Services, upon notice, on 25 September 2014:

- (1) What was the total cost, or if not completed the estimated cost, of constructing the Park and Ride facility on (a) Webber Street, Calwell, (b) the corner of Mawson Drive and Athllon Drive, Mawson and (c) Gozzard Street, Gunghalin.

- (2) What is the total (a) size, (b) capacity and (c) construction time of each facility listed in part (1).

Mr Rattenbury: The answer to the member's question is as follows:

- (1) a) \$300k
b) \$350k
c) \$350k
- (2) a) Calwell 2350sq/m, Mawson 6900sq/m, Gungahlin 11,000 sq/m,
b) Calwell 60 Spaces, Mawson 180 Spaces, Gungahlin 340 spaces.
c) Calwell 5 months, Mawson 8 months total (two separate stages, one in 2010 and expansion in 2013), Gungahlin 3 months (gravel surface).
-

Questions without notice taken on notice

Government—polling

Ms Gallagher (*in reply to supplementary questions by Mr Coe on Thursday, 25 September 2014*): ACT Government directorates have not recently authorised or engaged 'The Greasy Poll' to determine support for various infrastructure projects. Directorates are not currently undertaking any telephone polling in relation to the support of various government policies.

It is appropriate to undertake surveying to determine community perceptions and satisfaction with Government policies and programs. This research is often necessary to measure performance as required by annual report outputs reporting and budget processes.

The total cost of these telephone surveys from September 2013 to September 2014 was \$519,576.