



Debates

WEEKLY HANSARD

Legislative Assembly for the ACT

NINTH ASSEMBLY

15 AUGUST 2017

www.hansard.act.gov.au

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Tuesday, 15 August 2017

MADAM ACTING SPEAKER (Mrs Dunne) took the chair at 10 am, made a formal recognition that the Assembly was meeting on the lands of the traditional custodians, and asked members to stand in silence and pray or reflect on their responsibilities to the people of the Australian Capital Territory.

Justice and Community Safety—Standing Committee Scrutiny report 8

MRS JONES (Murrumbidgee) (10.01): I present the following report:

Justice and Community Safety—Standing Committee (Legislative Scrutiny Role)—Scrutiny Report 8, dated 8 August 2017, together with the relevant minutes of proceedings.

I seek leave to make a brief statement.

Leave granted.

MRS JONES: Scrutiny report 8 contains the committee's comments on three bills, 147 pieces of subordinate legislation and one government response. The report contains the committee's comments on three bills which were introduced during the last sitting week. While on this occasion the committee has been able to report on those bills, members should be aware that the committee's ability to do so is severely constrained when only one non-sitting week is scheduled between sitting periods.

The committee asks that members and ministers desiring to have their legislation debated in a sitting period immediately following a one-week break after introduction be conscious that they may be asking the Assembly to debate bills in the absence of scrutiny committee commentary on the legislation because of the short time frame.

This is a situation which I am sure members would consider highly undesirable and contrary to established practice. To assist with the orderly consideration of Assembly business, the committee also asks that when the Assembly sets the annual sitting pattern for the next sitting year and subsequently, single-week breaks be avoided. The report was circulated to members when the Assembly was not sitting. I commend the report to the Assembly.

Estimates 2017-2018—Select Committee Report—government response

MR BARR (Kurrajong—Chief Minister, Treasurer, Minister for Economic Development and Minister for Tourism and Major Events) (10.03): For the information of members, I present the following paper:

Estimates 2017-2018—Select Committee—Report—Appropriation Bill 2017-2018 and Appropriation (Office of the Legislative Assembly) Bill 2017-2018—Government response, including the Government response to the Pegasus Economics report *Review of the ACT Budget 2017-18*, dated August 2017.

I move:

That the Assembly take note of the paper

I present the government's response to the estimates committee report. The government thanks the committee for scrutinising proposed expenditure for the 2017-18 fiscal year. The select committee's report touches on a wide range of issues, the outcome of which has been 158 recommendations to government. I will further discuss the government's response to those recommendations in a moment. I also wish to advise the Assembly that the government responded to the observations of Pegasus Economics on 28 July 2017. A copy of that government response was provided to the chair of the estimates committee, and I have tabled that here this morning for the benefit of members.

The government went to the last election with a positive plan for renewal across our city, and the 2017-18 budget sees this plan being put into action. We see renewal of Canberra's schools, hospitals, our infrastructure, our neighbourhoods and public spaces. The budget ensures that our city keeps getting better for all Canberrans. This budget maintains the high levels of investment announced in previous budgets, investing even more in better schools, local health care and infrastructure to keep our city moving. The budget delivers for the local economy. The government will continue making it easier for local firms to do business and attract more visitors to our city to boost our local tourism, hospitality and retail industries.

The government is also continuing with tax reform—continuing to make our tax system fairer, simpler and more efficient. We have renewed our commitment in the 2017-18 budget to adhere to a fiscal strategy that achieves an operating balance over time, offsetting temporary deficits with surpluses in other periods. This strategy has given the government the flexibility to deal with circumstances as they arise, whilst at the same time continuing to provide the services that Canberrans need and investing in our city's future.

Our AAA credit rating remains in place, although we, together with New South Wales and Victoria, have been shifted to a negative outlook as a consequence of the ratings downgrade applied to the commonwealth government in July 2016. No state or territory government can hold a credit rating higher than the commonwealth government. In the 2017-18 budget the territory government is continuing to support our economy whilst delivering appropriate services and building a strong operating balance over the medium term.

Turning now to the estimates committee report, the committee presented 158 recommendations, which cover a broad range of matters—not unexpected—across the spectrum of ACT government service delivery. It is not my intention to go through all 158 recommendations in this speech. I am sure members will be pleased to hear that. The government's response serves this purpose, and I have tabled that today.

I can say that overall the government has agreed to or noted the majority of the recommendations included in the committee's report. Specifically, we have agreed to

59 recommendations, agreed in principle to 36, agreed in part to 10, noted 43, and not agreed to 10. A response has been provided in relation to each individual recommendation.

In closing, there is nothing in the estimates committee report or its recommendations that raises any issues that would prevent passage of the Appropriation Bill 2017-2018 or the Appropriation (Office of the Legislative Assembly) Bill 2017-2018. On behalf of the government, I again thank the committee for their consideration of the bills and for their report. I commend the government response to the Assembly.

Debate (on motion by **Mr Wall**) adjourned to a later hour.

Ministerial delegation to North America

Ministerial statement

MS FITZHARRIS (Yerrabi—Minister for Health and Wellbeing, Minister for Transport and City Services and Minister for Higher Education, Training and Research) (10.08): I would like to report to the Assembly on the delegation that I led to North America between 14 and 27 May 2017, where I attended the International Association of Public Transport—UITP—2017 global public transport summit in Montreal and a subsequent International Association of Public Transport Australia and New Zealand study tour in the US and Canada. This mission was timely and significant for the ACT government in terms of the current work underway to transform our public transport network and implement new technologies. Indeed, the ACT is uniquely positioned within Australia to move quickly to realise the advantages from new technologies around the world.

While in previous times transport investments were primarily focused on road infrastructure developments, there has been a marked shift to investments in public transport nationally and globally. Canberra is a growing city with a population expected to reach 600,000 people by 2050. The government is taking action now to plan for the future so that Canberrans can look forward to a city that has sustainable, innovative transport networks, services and facilities, so that they can be mobile and move around our city affordably, sustainably and with ease. Most importantly, it will give Canberrans a real choice to leave the car at home.

The transportation field is rapidly changing in areas of technology, business models and customer expectations. Throughout North America we saw technology changing the face of many areas of the public transport industry, like on-demand transport, ticketing, autonomous vehicles, electric vehicles, cybersecurity and service providers. The ACT government has made significant decisions regarding the future of public transport operations in the ACT, including the purchase of new buses, a new ticketing system and investment in stages 1 and 2 of light rail. Those decisions are now in various stages of delivery and planning.

Just yesterday I announced electric buses entering the Transport Canberra fleet, while a state-of-the-art ticketing system using account-based technology accessible through devices and more traditional cards is also not far away. The integration of urban

planning and renewal, sustainability and active travel infrastructure with public transport is also a significant focus for this government.

Learning from international experts on the successes and failures of cities around the world helps us to achieve this vision. That is why in May this year my senior adviser, the Deputy Director-General for Transport Canberra, and I undertook this visit. The North American mission was designed to: foster global contacts in the transport industry; consider current developments across the entire spectrum of the public transportation sector from around the world; learn from the experiences and successes of countries and cities globally on transport technologies and infrastructure developments; identify new technologies for users of public transport and operators managing and maintaining it; and raise the profile of the ACT government's transport agenda.

Before I detail the mission's activities, Madam Acting Speaker, allow me to briefly detail the summit and the study tour. The summit was a unique international event with a long history covering all urban transportation modes. It detailed a program of congress sessions, with an exhibition of the latest solutions, innovations and products in public transport and urban mobility. Attendees included delegates from around the world, including representatives of public transportation authorities and private sector organisations.

Immediately following the summit, the delegates attended an eight-day North American study tour covering rail, bus, light rail, road transport and other relevant modes, organised by the Australia and New Zealand regional offices of UITP. It also addressed a wide range of issues, including technology, systems, operations, maintenance, strategy and policy matters. The study tour was attended by UITPANZ officials, senior public transportation officials from Australia and New Zealand, and representatives of private sector organisations.

The delegation observed that the public transportation sector is in a state of rapid global change. Delegates at the conference talked less about transport and more about mobility and the rider or passenger. Multiple sessions discussed mobility as a service, integrating previously distinct forms of transport across public and private sectors to provide a seamless service. Think of it almost like the Netflix of transport: you pay a subscription to access a range of services; they might be old or new, original or bought.

New technologies and new market entrants provide a source of tremendous opportunity for public transport users and operators. However, the task of predicting what public transport systems may look like in the future has become more difficult. For example, new ticketing technologies promise to improve the ease with which passengers may interact with public transportation systems. With our current MyWay contract set to expire within the next 12 months this element of the tour was of particular interest to us.

We saw firsthand how fuel technologies like those used in battery and hybrid electric buses promise significant environmental and operational benefits for a city like Canberra. At the same time, the emergence of autonomous vehicles may come to

change transportation ownership and usage models forever. Canberra is not immune to this global change; in fact, we have a recent history of welcoming it. The ACT was the first Australian jurisdiction to legalise ride sharing, paving the way for the rest of the country to follow. Both the summit and study tour provided insights into global trends, technologies and good governance models, many of which we have already implemented in Canberra or are well within our sights.

To open the summit we received a welcome address from the Hon Amarjeet Sohi, Federal Minister of Infrastructure and Communities in Canada. Minister Sohi provided an emotive opening address, detailing the positive effects he has personally observed of public transport in Canada. He was born in India and moved to Edmonton in Canada in his youth. It was public transport that helped his family settle and create a new life. Indeed, he became a bus driver and so considered himself the minister “because” of infrastructure. It was a pretty inspiring story, and we know there are a number of migrants working in our bus service here in the ACT, so perhaps it is an inspiration for them.

That we need to place the passenger at the heart of everything we do in public transport, including network planning and operations, was a frequent observation of the delegation and a theme of many presentations. It is also something the ACT government has ensured is at the heart of its decisions to procure and develop new transport infrastructure and services that meet the needs of all Canberrans. Much like Australia, Canada has had a mixed history of federal government involvement and investment in public transport and has often relied upon state, or in Canada provincial, governments to keep cities moving.

The 2015 election of the Trudeau government resulted in a massive shift in policy and focus, and Minister Sohi proudly reflected on his government’s recent commitment of \$3.4 billion for public transport projects across the country and the positive impact it will have on all Canadians. The first phase of this work was to focus on the modernisation of existing assets; not building new but bringing existing assets into good repair. This is something the ACT government is also working on, through upgrades to bus infrastructure, including the purchase of new buses and the redevelopment of bus interchanges, such as nearby in Dickson. Minister Sohi advised that ultimately public transport infrastructure creates better, more innovative, more livable cities, qualities our government has publicly stated as our clear objectives.

Delegates also heard from Mr Macky Tal, the vice-president for a public institution, CDPQ, who gave a presentation on the governance model currently being implemented in Quebec, Canada. CDPQ manages more than \$280 billion of assets on behalf of 32 organisations in Quebec. Their mandate is to generate long-term returns and economic development for the city. Under the CDPQ model the government undertakes the planning for a project and sets CDPQ’s long-term objectives. CDPQ is responsible for the long-term financing of infrastructure projects. A key message was that transport and land planning should be undertaken in conjunction with consideration of funding matters. Funding certainty provides better city planning and public transportation outcomes.

Perhaps one of the most relevant and timely topics covered early in the summit was ticketing. As the current ticketing contract moves towards its expiry date here in the ACT, the summit delivered a timely reminder of the importance of partnerships between the private and public sectors in optimising community assets and the customer experience. The workshops and presentations provided insight into some of the largest ticketing systems in the US and Canada. These sessions provided guidance on areas the ACT will need to focus on with the procurement and introduction of a new ticketing system. Attention will need to be afforded to: ease of use for customers; use of the system across modes and other activities; cybersecurity; communication of ticketing system changes; and, importantly, system testing. Presentations also looked at the ability of ticketing systems to link to broader government functions, such as with tourist sites, where users are provided discounted entries if they have arrived via public transport.

Our delegation observed the next big challenge for transportation globally is the integration of public transit modes with private forms of transport, such as bike share, ride share and on-demand services. We saw that, through the innovative use of technology, integration has been achieved in many cities. In Oslo, a new application-based system provides real-time data of bike locations and personalised usage data for their bike-share service. The results from the implementation of the new application-based system were impressive and saw a 116 per cent increase in trips taken by users, a 113 per cent increase in trips per bike per day and 40 per cent more trips per member. The application system also allows users to notify of broken bikes or other issues as they occur.

When talking about what bikes and cycling can do for public transport, a number of presenters advised that multimodality is critical to fully functioning public transportation in cities. They noted that, importantly, bikes create the link between the bus and train station, assisting to solve the first and last mile issue in accessing public transport. Bike share, ride share and on-demand services will all come under careful consideration for this government as it delivers Canberra an integrated public transport network. One of the key themes delivered at the summit was that customers want flexibility, not rigid timetables. Opportunities for the ACT government to enhance the links and/or first and last kilometre access points in Canberra's public transport network are something that will be looked at by TCCS.

From bike share and ticketing, the summit also looked at a case study in Montreal, Canada, where a clear governance model has created a common transport vision to link cross-government priorities such as urban planning. We have seen here in Canberra during the planning stages for light rail how public transportation and land use planning go hand in hand.

Transit-oriented developments are a key means to address the challenges associated with population growth, such as congestion, urban sprawl, inefficient use of existing public infrastructure, housing affordability and environmental degradation, and to promote urban renewal and city livability. Design excellence shapes our communities and the overall customer experience we can offer here in Canberra.

A clear focus of the summit was the importance of the customer and the necessity to keep the customer at the core of the governance models and transport reform. In Japan, JR-East, which owns and operates all of Japan's rail assets, underwent structural reform and "awareness" reform, which resulted in the adoption of a customer-first philosophy—so much so that they provide the equivalent of a doctor's certificate to passengers who experience delays of more than 10 minutes. The public transport operator needs to understand the emotional reaction of their customer. It is important to collect customer insights and define their customer personas, such as: what are the customer touch points and their pain points?

On a daily basis Canberrans will no doubt come into contact with TCCS assets and public transport infrastructure. This focus on reviewing and renewing customer engagement is important to TCCS and has been adopted into its core governance values and framework. However, the presentations and workshops also discussed the importance of empowering staff working in the public transportation space. JR-East regularly engages with staff. In each work area they assign a service leader and hold small meetings with those leaders. If one area has a good idea, there is praise and reward, as well as reflections on their customer engagements.

Negative passenger feedback is significant, but JR-East also picks out the compliments and passes these on to its staff. The presentations on customer service noted the importance of on-the-ground staff as a customer's first engagement with transportation, which can start with a bus driver. Bus and train operators were looked at as journey makers rather than just facilitating travel from point A to point B for public transport users.

Of great relevance to Canberra and our government's commitment to innovation, the delegation attended a workshop and panel discussion on electric bus systems. This discussion was pertinent to the ACT, with the government currently upgrading its fleet to include a new trial of electric buses. Many cities across the world have announced targets to move away from diesel buses by 2025. In 2030, 70 per cent of new city buses will be electric in Europe. However, compared to China, whose electric bus fleet makes up 85 per cent of all buses, our Western world has been slower to adopt this technology. There is strong motivation and support to move away from diesel and look at electric or hybrid technologies. I was amazed to learn about the infrastructure currently operating in China to support its electro-mobility services. One system in China, for example, can simultaneously charge 30 buses to full in just 10 minutes.

The future of the bus fleet industry is clearly in electro-mobility. An important question is: what does this mean today for fleet and depot investments by Transport Canberra? The energy mix in cities to support public transport is an important consideration for governments in achieving sustainable transport. Other presentations at the summit focused on design, ranging from bus layout and ticketing systems to setting clear land use objectives. The overall vision for a city, including well-planned and integrated public transport, is essential to achieving a livable city over the long term. To be successful, governments need to learn about innovative service design

and have an understanding of what customers feel now as well as what delight might look like for transport users.

Ticketing used to be about enforcement, but changes in attitudes to transportation and advancement in technology mean that ticketing globally now needs to be about enabling public transport usage, connecting members of our community and maximizing opportunities for integrated and modern modes of transport with everyday life.

From Vienna we learnt of a successfully integrated information and ticketing system for users developed by Wiener Linien, a company responsible for the majority of public transport in Vienna. They established a multimodal service platform that united publicly available transport offers and corporate fleets. In addition to providing information on its public transport services, the platform provides information on taxi, car share, park and ride and bikes within Vienna. Registration, routing information, ticketing and payment, and real-time passenger information are included in their service. To ensure that users are provided with a single point for information on mobility services in Vienna, the government requires all new mobility services to use this system.

There is potentially significant benefit to be had for both transport customers and the ACT government through the introduction of point-to-point, integrated, on-demand transport options. The ACT government will continue to heavily engage with industry on the potential introduction of integrated mobility on-demand services in Canberra. This will position us to provide the services customers want now and in the future, and not public transport services that meet yesterday's needs.

Another forum I attended was on the importance of public transport to public health. As I have said many times, the health benefits of better active travel and public transport are huge. At the summit we learned about London's healthy streets program. Ten indicators of healthy streets were identified and have helped to transform neighbourhoods, prioritise pedestrians and cyclists and provide sustainable infrastructure such as trees and safer paths.

I learned also that our policy settings for reducing obesity and increasing physical activity and their integration with active travel and infrastructure for healthy cities are world leading. Among the evidence presented were the overall physical benefits of public transport use. For example, in one study researchers found that 90 per cent of bike share users are also public transport users, meaning that the incidental exercise for each person helps them stay healthy and active. Car users were found to have much less incidental exercise.

The summit wrapped up after three busy days with closing remarks from the UITP secretary-general, who summed up the five key themes of the summit: one, the public transport business model is changing. Innovation and working with partners is now essential. Two, more than ever, people are at the centre of transport, both as customers and employees. Transport must be inclusive and integrated and transport authorities especially need to be attractive employers. Three, the transport sector is leading change, including adapting to climate change and advancements in

digitalisation. Four, the transport sector must reduce the time it takes to bring solutions to reality, to the passenger. Five, it is clear the public transport sector cannot do it on its own. New partnerships will be the way of the future.

Those themes reflected what we learned at the summit. At its conclusion we joined a larger delegation from Australia and New Zealand to visit a number of US and Canadian cities to visit major transport projects. The study tour commenced on 18 May and provided the opportunity to see firsthand current developments, technologies, infrastructure, planning and governance frameworks relating to the public transportation sector in North America. Our first day was spent in Montreal, where we were provided with a tour of cutting-edge technology for buses in the city, including their electric buses and infrastructure. Having the opportunity to see this technology was invaluable in understanding and considering electric buses and upgrades to bus system infrastructure in the ACT.

Unfortunately, on 19 May 2017 storms and poor weather conditions in Washington resulted in the study tour's flight to Washington being cancelled, which in turn resulted in the cancellation of planned meetings in Washington. We did make it to Washington the following day and used this as an opportunity to investigate their extensive and successful public bike share scheme. I can attest that bike share allows people to make short, fast and cheap trips across cities. The Washington scheme is well integrated with their public transport network. It can also be accessed with a credit card and provides an easy way to navigate the city. Bike share schemes have proven a very effective element of many multimodal, integrated transport systems worldwide and are gaining increasing attention in their ability to provide what is often called first-and-last-mile solutions to ease traffic congestion and improve levels of physical activity.

Upon my return I asked TCCS to consider options on how a similar scheme could work here in Canberra. TCCS have since investigated the opportunities, potential timing and resources required for bike share to be successful in the ACT. I was pleased to announce earlier today that the ACT government is seeking community feedback on the introduction of bike share in Canberra. The ACT will look at other bike share schemes nationally and internationally, and we are watching with interest the recent launch of private venture schemes in other cities across Australia as well as the continual evolution and technological advancements of bike share models.

The proposal will help to promote bike riding as a viable and valued transport option, integrate it with our public transport network to further extend its reach and help to promote Canberra as Australia's cycling capital, further building our brand and image. The scheme will also complement the work being undertaken under the parliamentary agreement around the development of a cycle tourism strategy for the ACT. Following this community feedback, the government will issue a request for proposal to work with partner organisations to establish a successful scheme for the ACT.

We then travelled on to Los Angeles to meet with Foothill Transit and the chair of the American Public Transport Association in Los Angeles. Following that, we met with LA Metro and participated in a number of policy sessions covering upgrades to long-range transport, ticketing modernisation, asset management and stakeholder

engagement and marketing. These types of engagements are critical to hear firsthand from significant investors and participants about their experiences in reviewing governance frameworks for public transport to achieve successful reform and procuring, implementing, integrating and managing new transportation services.

The delegation travelled next to Portland, where over a couple of days we looked at regional planning, including street design, active transport and their ticketing and real-time customer information technologies. We observed Portland's "bike town" bike share scheme. This scheme was even more advanced than the Washington scheme and uses an app which allows users to track in real time where every bike in the scheme is anywhere in Portland. Decades ago, while other US cities were building for the car, Portland maintained a stronger emphasis on public transport. As a consequence, Portland is an attractive, livable city by US standards and the community's use of public transport is high.

The delegation study tour concluded in Vancouver with policy sessions hosted by Translink on their network overview; the establishment of a mobility pricing commission to cover parking, roads and transport charges; clever approaches to marketing public transport; and Vancouver's 10-year public transport strategy. We were also able to take a couple of trips on SkyTrain, the world's largest automated metropolitan rail system.

A key theme throughout the study tour was the opportunity to see the innovative and different ways cities in North America manage public transportation infrastructure and technologies. It provided invaluable information for the ACT government and TCCS on the barriers faced by cities and how they manage or solve them. I wish to express my thanks to all who contributed to the summit and the study tour. The lessons learnt and information obtained will strengthen and inform future decisions by the ACT government and mobility public transportation.

Our city is well on its way to an integrated transport network. I am very confident that Canberra is on the right path. We are embracing the future, recognising the challenges all cities around the world are facing: how to build livable, sustainable, equitable communities; how to adapt to climate change, reduce carbon emissions, provide opportunities for citizens and invest in public infrastructure for everyone; how to build cities that are not grinding to a halt because of congestion, cities where people can be productive and healthy and happy.

Many things contribute to cities with these features—features we already have and will continue to build. But they cannot be built without good public transport infrastructure. I look forward to continuing to deliver the commitments this government has made over a number of years: to build light rail for Canberra, to invest in our bus network with more frequent buses, to deliver a new modern ticketing system, to explore new opportunities with our partners and to invest in active travel so that Canberrans can be more mobile. I present the following paper:

Ministerial Delegation to North America May 2017—Ministerial statement,
15 August 2017.

I move:

That the Assembly take note of the paper.

Question resolved in the affirmative.

Social inclusion in the arts

Ministerial statement

MR RAMSAY (Ginninderra—Attorney-General, Minister for Regulatory Services, Minister for the Arts and Community Events and Minister for Veterans and Seniors) (10.31): Today I would like to outline to the Assembly the social inclusion in the arts 2017 plan. The plan builds on the 2015 ACT arts policy principle 1: participation in and access to the arts. We recognise that the arts are a central part of Canberra's vibrant and creative spirit and that participation in the arts should be available to everyone.

In my statement of ministerial priorities in December last year, I spoke of the strength and power in the arts. This plan shows the strength of the Canberra arts sector and tells some of the stories of the power that the arts have to improve quality of life. Since my speech, my directorate staff and I have been listening to the stories of how our government-funded arts organisations are working towards social inclusion and accessibility in the arts. We have heard enthusiasm for an inclusive and accessible arts sector and we have heard about a sector that already collaborates extensively with many different community groups to deliver relevant programs and content. Today I will share some of the stories of what is happening, what will happen and why it is important.

People enjoy the arts in different ways. Some like to participate as an audience member; others like to be actively involved through making or through doing. The ways ACT arts organisations create inclusion vary with their audience and their organisation's size.

To create opportunities for people to participate as audience members, some organisations offer subsidised or free tickets to events. One example is the Canberra Symphony Orchestra's program HeartStrings. Through this program the CSO works with charitable organisations and community organisations to gift tickets to people who might not otherwise have the opportunity to attend a concert. HeartStrings is funded by donations from the orchestra's patrons and partners, as well as by the ACT government. The generosity of patrons and partners is another example of the inclusive nature of the extended Canberra arts community. In 2016 an estimated 550 tickets were given away through HeartStrings.

Physical barriers can also prevent people in our community from enjoying Canberra's vibrant arts scene. The You Are Here Festival, an experimental arts festival that offers a mostly free program of events, has recognised the need to make accessibility a core principle. The festival provides detailed information about wheelchair accessibility of venues, how much of a show relies on visual or audio content and which events have Auslan interpretation.

You Are Here this year took inclusion a step even further by challenging artists to think about the content of their work in terms of accessibility. Named the Sublimation Project, four artists were asked to translate the work of another artist into a different medium with a different sensory experience—for example, a sight piece into sound or a 2D artwork into a tactile piece. The project aimed to make artists and audiences think practically about accessibility and consider new ways of making arts and arts events more accessible to people with disabilities. This willingness to experiment with new ways of engaging in the arts and creating content is an example of how we need our arts sector to be.

It is clear that our arts organisations place great importance on accessibility and diversity in both content and participation. They support artists, from hobbyists through to professionals, and understand that active involvement in the arts creates meaning in people's lives.

PhotoAccess, for example, which has provided affordable access to photography facilities for the Canberra community for the past 30 years, runs community outreach programs to encourage people to explore photography for self-expression. In 2016 they partnered with the Domestic Violence Crisis Service to deliver a digital story-telling project for women who have experienced domestic and family violence. They also ran a digital storytelling project for *Big Issue* vendors, in collaboration with the Woden Community Service. PhotoAccess continue their community outreach in 2017 through partnerships with Yurauna Centre at the Canberra Institute of Technology, ACT Deafness Resource Centre, Belconnen Arts Centre and Belconnen Community Service, building community and connection through opportunities for self-expression and sharing stories.

Collaboration is a key strength of the Canberra arts community, and we see that many of our arts organisations are already working strongly with each other and with non-arts community groups to share the joy of arts with as many people as possible. Belconnen Arts Centre, for example, partners with numerous community groups and other arts organisations for its program IGNITE: Alternative Arts Academy. IGNITE is a suite of programs for people with mixed abilities or with lived experience of mental illness that helps to develop their artistic practice. These partnerships allow IGNITE participants to explore various artistic disciplines, to gain access to arts institutions and to be guided in their skills development by professionals.

The long list of organisations involved includes the Canberra Glassworks, Megalo Print Studio and Gallery, Canberra Potters Society and the ACT Writers Centre. The BAC also works with Ausdance ACT on programs such as dance for people with Parkinson's, and with Alzheimer's Australia ACT on dance for people with dementia. These collaborations open the arts sector to people who may otherwise experience difficulty in accessing facilities, and they empower arts organisations to run programs for people who are experiencing disability and disadvantage.

While the stories we have heard tell us that Canberra arts organisations value inclusion and are working strongly towards accessibility, we acknowledge that there is always more to do. Inclusion and access are continual processes that evolve with a

changing community and its needs. We need to further enhance organisational culture, to embed identification of barriers to participation in all creative and curatorial practices. Physical space, how artwork is communicated or displayed and the social environment around the arts can be changed to work with people's needs and abilities.

The arts inclusion plan will encourage organisations to have accessibility at the heart and foundation of project planning, and to ensure that they are talking with the community so that they are represented in the planning, in the content and in the execution of a project. Many of our arts organisations already have close ties with a variety of community groups, and they deliver successful arts programs together. I encourage all of these organisations to maintain these relationships and to forge new ones. The potential to reach further into the Canberra community exists where organisations and community work together to develop effective and relevant programs.

We will provide support for arts organisations to reach their potential to be inclusive and accessible. We will do this through training and information provision—giving the staff of arts organisations the skills and the knowledge to connect with a diverse range of community groups, who will in turn gain access to arts facilities. To make sure that we are providing useful support, we will continue to talk with our arts organisations and ask them to report on their activities in regard to inclusion and access. The plan provides a template for reporting and evaluation for organisations to follow. While we will all ask for some figures, the most important aspect of gathering information is to continue telling the stories. Becoming inclusive and accessible is a continual process, so we will continue to tell the stories of how our organisations enrich the lives of the people in our community and develop the artistic skills of individuals.

The plan begins to tell some of these stories. However, it is not an audit, nor is it an exhaustive list of all the initiatives from all the organisations. It gives a snapshot of ways organisations invite the community into their facilities and programs, and how they provide support to develop excellence in art. It is my hope that the inclusion plan will spark thinking in other organisations and bring to the surface even more great stories. My directorate is establishing an online story collection on the artsACT website, building on the CBR arts showcase page which was launched in April this year. Sharing the stories in this way brings recognition, raises community awareness that everyone is welcome to engage with our arts organisations and that doing so can be an enriching and fulfilling experience.

The more people who are touched by the arts, the more the arts become valued within our community. Canberrans already enjoy a great cultural life, with access to our national cultural institutions, as well as professional local facilities and venues. However, there are still people and groups in our community who cannot access the arts for physical, financial or social reasons. The arts inclusion plan is a step on the continual journey to make the Canberra arts sector a place where people know that they are welcome and where artists from diverse backgrounds and life experiences can develop their professional skills and careers to achieve excellence.

It is up to us to create accessibility and to build an arts sector that works for people who live with disability, who have a lived experience of mental illness or want to

participate but feel excluded. We cannot change everything at once, but we can put in place sustainable measures to make sure that those who want to participate in Canberra's arts sector have that opportunity. I present a copy of the plan and I encourage colleagues to read it. It is also available online. I present the following papers:

- Social Inclusion in the Arts—2017 Plan—
Plan, dated August 2017.
- Ministerial statement, 15 August 2017.

I move:

That the Assembly take note of the paper.

Question resolved in the affirmative.

Standing orders—suspension

Motion (by **Mr Gentleman**) agreed to, with the concurrence of an absolute majority:

That so much of the standing orders be suspended as would prevent orders of the day, Assembly business, relating to the Report of the Select Committee on Estimates 2017-2018 and the Government response, being called on and debated cognately with orders of the day Nos 1 and 2, Executive business, Appropriation Bill 2017-2018 and Appropriation (Office of the Legislative Assembly) Bill 2017-2018.

Appropriation Bill 2017-2018

[Cognate bill:

Appropriation (Office of the Legislative Assembly) Bill 2017-2018

Cognate papers:

Estimates 2017-2018—Select Committee report

Estimates 2017-2018—Select Committee—government response]

Debate resumed from 8 June 2017.

MADAM ACTING SPEAKER: I remind members that in debating order of the day No 1, executive business, they may also address their remarks to executive business order of the day No 2, and Assembly business orders of the day relating to the report of the Select Committee on Estimates 2017-2018 and the government response.

Detail stage

MADAM ACTING SPEAKER: Standing order 180 sets down the order in which this bill will be considered—that is, in the detail stage, any schedule expressing the services for which the appropriation is to be made must be considered before the clauses and, unless the Assembly otherwise orders, the schedules will be considered by proposed expenditure in the order shown. With the concurrence of the Assembly, I am proposing that the Assembly consider schedule 1 by each part, consisting of net

cost of outputs, capital injection and payments on behalf of the territory. If this is the wish of the Assembly, schedule 1 will be considered by each part, consisting of net cost of outputs, capital injection and payments on behalf of the territory, then the clauses and the title.

Schedule 1—Appropriations—Proposed expenditure.

ACT Executive—Part 1.1.

Proposed expenditure agreed to.

ACT Gambling and Racing Commission—Part 1.2.

Proposed expenditure agreed to.

ACT Local Hospital Network—Part 1.3.

MR COE (Yerrabi—Leader of the Opposition) (10.46): As with numerous other portfolios, I believe that the substantive issues in the local hospital network as well as gambling and racing and the ACT executive will be covered in the policy areas of the relevant portfolios. Of course, gambling and racing and the local hospital network have another agency that covers off on the substantive policy; therefore, the opposition will be treating those other portfolios as being the place in which we will address issues such as the local hospital network and gambling and racing.

MR WALL (Brindabella) (10.46): Madam Acting Speaker, as you are tied up in the chair, I will speak on your behalf as the shadow minister for health. Why is it that when the government set strategic outcomes and accountability indicators in the budget context it looks like they have just stuck their fingers in the air to see which way the wind is blowing? There seems to be little, if any, science in those numbers. When the outcome is less than the target, no real analysis of the underlying reasons is done. The status quo is applied, thus the target potentially becomes unachievable. The psychological impact on the frontline people is that they ignore it because it is unachievable. When the outcome is more than the target, again, no analysis is undertaken. Certainly no improvement is built in to the next year target and the status quo again is applied. Thus there is no acknowledgement of improvement in the last year and no incentive to improve further in the next.

I will give the Assembly some examples out of the budget documents for the ACT local hospitals network. Leaving aside the question of data integrity—we all know there is none—the targets for 2017-18 for the proportion of emergency department presentations being targeted within clinically appropriate time frames across the five triage levels are exactly the same as for 2016-17, and yet the outcomes for 2016-17 show variations. Triage stage 3—that is, patients seen within 30 minutes—was fully one-third less than the target. No analysis is made of the reasons for the outcome; the status quo was just applied.

Then, at the bottom, there is the nebulous statement about improvements in time line performance and commitments to achieving targets. If we look at the budget for

201-17 we can find that, in most cases, there appears to have been some improvement—at least on the reported figures, but we know they hold no integrity—but those improvements are certainly not of the proportions that warrant setting unachievable targets in 2017-18. I have to wonder if the minister has asked frontline staff what they think about the targets that were set? Why can the government not just be honest? Why can it not just acknowledge that setting impossible targets sends all the wrong messages to frontline staff? Is it any wonder staff are overworked and stressed?

Here is another one also associated with the emergency department. It relates to the number of patients whose length of stay in the emergency department is less than four hours. These patients can go into hospital, be referred elsewhere for treatment or be discharged. The target for 2015-16 was 77 per cent. The outcome was 66 per cent. Madam Acting Speaker, I would suggest that you would like to have a guess but I dare say you already know—that is, the target set for 2016-17 was again 77 per cent. If you can believe the figures, the outcome for 2016-17 was 72 per cent, not a bad result. So, then, what is the target for 2017-18? It is 90 per cent.

From 2015-16 to 2016-17 the outcome improvement went from 64 per cent to 72 per cent, an eight point improvement. Now the government wants to see that climb by a further 18 points in 2017-18. And the justification for setting that target is set out in budget statement C, at page 44:

The 2017-18 target reflects the staged approach to achieving the long term goal of 90% by the end of the financial year.

A staged approach is not eight points followed by 18 points; a staged approach is step by step, not leaps and bounds. It needs to be an incremental improvement. I wonder what the emergency department staff might have to say about that target. I call it poppycock, and I wonder what the broader ACT community and constituents would have to say about that.

What about the constituent who presented at ED less than a fortnight ago? The ED waiting room was almost full. After a wait of four hours this constituent was taken to acute care. Along the way she noticed patients on trolleys lining the corridors. An hour after that she was told the ED waiting room was standing room only. She finally was discharged at 12.30 am, and on the way out she noticed the corridors were still lined with patients on trolleys, some of whom had been there since she went to acute care at 7 pm. What would this constituent say about a target of 90 per cent for ED patients remaining in the department for less than four hours? I think she would agree that it would need to be called poppycock.

This approach to target setting applies not only to the Health Directorate but across all government agencies. Unachievable targets, no science, no learning, no consultation with frontline staff, no realistic improvement rates—just fingers in the air and all against a backdrop of dodgy outcome figures. It is meaningless drivel.

Then we go from the unachievable to the bizarre. There is a set of targets for the percentage of elective surgery cases admitted on time by clinical urgency. One of the

categories is labelled non-urgent. This category sets the 2017-18 target of 91 per cent for the number of patients admitted “at some time in the future”. This is against a most laudable outcome of 88 per cent for 2016-17. I say “laudable”, but I wonder why it is not 100 per cent. Surely every patient who is neither urgent nor semi-urgent—the two other categories in this strategic indicator—would be admitted “at some time in the future”. What happens to the nine per cent who are not? Not only is this bizarre; it is yet another example of meaningless drivel.

One example is the hand hygiene rate. The target of 75 per cent for 2016-17 for both Calvary and the Canberra Hospital was exceeded. Calvary did better by seven points and Canberra Hospital improved by eight points. The outcomes for 2015-16 were almost exactly the same, and yet the Health Directorate once again went for the status quo in setting the targets for 2017-18—no achievable improvement, no analysis, no consultation, just the status quo. It is akin to that grossly overused expression, “We’ve always done it that way.” Well, always doing something the same way does not make it right, achievable or credible. It is about time the tradition became history.

Perhaps all of that is indicative of this government’s approach to doing business. Let me give an example in the Health Directorate. A small, family owned business of some 40 years’ experience, Capital Medical Supplies, employs 10 people and operates out of Mitchell. This business supplies a range of products to ACT Health at New South Wales public hospital contract prices. ACT Health rides on the back of the buying power of New South Wales through the locally owned family business Capital Medical Supplies. Recently this business was advised by ACT Health that it would no longer be purchasing directly from companies and instead would be purchasing through the New South Wales hospital contracts agreement.

ACT Health will be no better off in terms of price. However, ACT Health will be worse off in terms of supply arrangements. Capital Medical Supplies keeps stocks here locally in Canberra and can meet the demands of hospitals and the broader health network immediately. Indeed, I understand deliveries are made every day under arrangements with the current supplier but they will be considerably less frequent under alternative arrangements. For no price advantage and for less service, ACT Health’s business wisdom will threaten the livelihood and the viability of a long-term local business and will threaten the employment of many local workers.

Proposed expenditure agreed to.

Canberra Institute of Technology—Part 1.4.

MR WALL (Brindabella) (10.55): Madam Acting Speaker, this time I will speak on my behalf on the budget line items relating to the Canberra Institute of Technology. As a key provider of vocational education and training, much has been said in this place over the years about the location of campuses and whether or not there is need for more CIT services on either the north side or the south side. It seems that the view on this argument depends on which side of the lake you represent. This line of questioning was again evident during the estimates hearings, where I note that the chair of the CIT board countered the discussion by noting that:

No-one questions why the University of Canberra or ANU are not out at Tuggeranong or Woden, so I do not know why they keep coming to CIT and saying we should be opening up everywhere as well. To try to run an efficient business, we need to decide what is best, and look at how we create these big centres of excellence where you can really do some deep, hard training, rather than trying to be generalists scattered in every town centre in Canberra.

For the record, and in response to that comment, I personally think satellite campuses representing our tertiary institutions would certainly be a welcome addition in my electorate of Brindabella. Indeed I do not see anyone in the electorate of Murrumbidgee complaining of any potential tertiary institutions opening up there.

In recent years the ACT Labor government have made much of their decision to locate CIT campuses in the Tuggeranong town centre. The location of a CIT campus there is indeed very welcome. However, it should also be noted that the campus provides a very limited course outline, resulting in the need for many potential students to look at other options for their study needs. What is very apparent is that the courses that are offered as a whole at CIT are crucial to the success of this education model.

As noted during the estimates hearings, CIT operates under a demand-driven system; therefore, it is crucial to be offering course outlines that reflect the changing needs of the workforce. On a very positive note, it seems that there are moves in the right direction in this regard. CIT is the first vocational education and training provider to have developed a graduate certificate in network and cybersecurity, which stands us in good stead to attract students interested in that emerging field, particularly in light of the ACT becoming the first operational node of the Australian cybersecurity growth network. This, along with the intention of the board to build on their relationship with the AFP in forensic science and crime scene investigation, stands the CIT in a fairly good position to meet some of the future demands in these industries and attract students interested in forging careers in those fields.

I also note the mention of the demand for flexible learning environments during the estimates hearings. This demand is also reflected in enrolment fluctuations. We all know that flexibility is key to engaging everyone in further education. Evidence of the effects of not meeting demand can be seen in the decline in the target enrolments at CIT. The targets fell short by about 1,400 enrolments in the 2017-18 financial year. This, of course, is not a new issue to the CIT board, which I note is well aware of this problem.

On a positive note, it is pleasing to see the number of international students coming to Canberra and undertaking study through CIT. I understand from information in the estimates hearings that we are up by about 14 per cent on last year's numbers of international students choosing to study in Canberra. I am mindful, however, of the need to ensure that we continue to operate in an environment that can sustain these enrolments through study and beyond. The key will be ensuring Canberra is the place that attracts innovation and keeps pace with the demands of industry and business future needs. We need to keep these students well beyond their time at CIT and our tertiary institutions and attract them into jobs here in the territory and encourage them

to see a future life not just studying but working and living in Canberra beyond their study years.

MS CODY (Murrumbidgee) (11.00): I wish to highlight for the Assembly the importance of the ACT government's continued support of the Canberra Institute of Technology. For many Canberrans the importance of the CIT is well understood and the quality and value of its training is appreciated. It is one of those reliable parts of our community, giving young people or those seeking retraining the skills to get a job, support their families and participate in our workforce. For many of those same Canberrans, the risks facing CIT without a strong Labor government are not as well known. Across our country there has been a crisis in post-secondary education; not a crisis that has been the fault of the students or the global economy or our brilliant trades training teachers. Instead, this has been a crisis brought on by governments, mainly Liberal governments, across our states and territories.

The Barr Labor government, through its support for strong, properly funded and stable training, has insulated Canberrans from this disaster. Training and apprenticeships deliver jobs; not jobs based on hand-me-down wealth but jobs for everyone—jobs for people like my uncle, who was a bricklayer. I have had the great thrill of meeting a number of bricklayers recently, who, without the help and assistance of the CIT and other training institutions just like it, would not be able to do their trade and do their trade well.

Yesterday we buried my aunt, who worked very closely with my uncle in his bricklaying business in Wagga. I was reminded of the importance of the work they did through his apprenticeship and through her retraining through TAFE in New South Wales. That gave them the skills and the ability to run a very successful business for many, many years. I pay tribute in *Hansard* to both of them for their long, hard work.

The sort of training that CIT provides is not something that can be caught up on. If it is not there when someone needs it, they miss out. When cuts happen, when bad governments get control, whole generations miss out. They miss out on jobs, and we all miss out on an economy with good jobs. It makes our economy weaker and our community poorer. I congratulate Mr Barr and Ms Fitzharris, and I congratulate all of their predecessors who have built and protected CIT when the fashion has been to smash training. This is a government that is keeping Canberra strong, now and into the future.

MS FITZHARRIS (Yerrabi—Minister for Health and Wellbeing, Minister for Transport and City Services and Minister for Higher Education, Training and Research) (11.03): The inclusion of the Canberra Institute of Technology in this portfolio of higher education, research and training was an important step in recognising the significant contribution that CIT makes to the ACT economy and its role in providing Canberra's skilled workforce through the delivery of training and education. CIT, in its various forms, has been a part of the ACT landscape for more than 90 years, and the ACT government is committed to ensuring CIT remains the primary provider of high quality vocational education and training.

The ACT Labor government continues to support CIT through a direct appropriation. It is a challenging time for the VET sector nationally, with Australia experiencing a continued decline in VET enrolments. The growing imbalance between VET and higher education has been evident since 2012, when full funding for demand-driven higher education commenced. With the commonwealth government's higher education reform proposals currently before the Senate, the present and future landscape for tertiary education funding in Australia is still far from clear, but I understand that this will be debated shortly in the Senate.

There are also significant changes to the future world of work, with the Centre for Economic Development of Australia reporting an expected loss of up to 40 per cent of today's jobs in the next 10 to 15 years. This is reflected in CIT's most recent commercial—for those who have not seen it yet. The expectations of contemporary learners, with less demand for physical space and more demand for online and flexible learning, must be catered for.

In 2015 the government established a governing board for CIT. This was part of the government's commitment to the national partnership on skills reform but, more importantly, was critical for CIT to continue to operate as the sole public provider of vocational education and training as well as becoming more business focused to be able to adapt and evolve in the changing environment. Since the introduction of the board, CIT has begun a major process of transformation. In August 2016 the board released its vision and direction for CIT under four pillars, articulated in CIT's *Strategic compass 2020—evolving together*. These themes are: shaping change, growing our region's economy, advancing Canberra's workforce and transforming our business.

Complementing these aspirations are nine discrete projects that the government has invested in. These projects are the building blocks for CIT to transform its business and are focused on modernising teaching and learning resources, upskilling the teaching workforce, providing exceptional customer experiences, growing and investing in new and emerging markets, and investing in digital infrastructure. Campus modernisation is also a key driver in the aspirations of the CIT strategic compass and a priority for CIT, with the main CIT campuses characterised by standards from the 1960s and 1970s, when the majority of education was delivered in formal classroom settings.

The opening of the state-of-the-art CIT Tuggeranong last year was the first instalment in a major overhaul of all CIT campuses. At the same time modern, quality learning spaces and facilities were also constructed at CIT Reid and Bruce, including a state-of-the-art nursing facility and new aged care and disability training environments that replicate real work settings, upgrades made possible with a \$1.8 million funding boost from this government. CIT has some excellent facilities, and I encourage all of you to go—as I know Ms Cody has on many occasions—and look at what is on offer. It has been said that CIT is one of the ACT's best kept secrets.

CIT has come a long way in the last few years. It is an active member of the CBR Innovation Network and stands alongside ANU, UC, UNSW, Data 61 and the CSIRO

in playing a central role in the innovation ecosystem in the ACT and building individual and corporate capability. Earlier this year CIT hosted the CBR Innovation Network's first Wednesday connect, open to all businesspeople, innovators, entrepreneurs, researchers, students and investors interested in innovation and entrepreneurship, which was a great success, attracting more than 200 people.

The decision by the Chief Minister to extend representation at the Vice-Chancellors Forum to include the CIT chief executive officer recognised the need for all members of the education sector to work together to implement innovation policy and contribute to the diversification of Canberra's economy. Through this forum CIT is leading the way in the development of key government initiatives in cybersecurity, as Mr Wall noted, and renewable energy.

On top of all the excellent work CIT is doing, it also recently went through its re-registration with the Australian Skills Quality Authority, or ASQA, audit, a requirement for all registered training organisations. CIT was found compliant across all aspects of the audit and its RTO registration has been extended by the maximum seven years. Only about 20 per cent of RTOs gain ASQA compliance without any rectification, an excellent outcome for CIT.

CIT not only is well respected in the ACT and region but also represents the ACT on the national and international stage. A few examples of the wonderful work that CIT is doing are a CIT photography teacher being selected from a highly competitive field to exhibit at what is recognised as the most prestigious international art show, the Venice Biennale; and photography students annually participating in the UN photography competition, which results in a student being sponsored to undertake work experience in a United Nations member country.

A CIT student was awarded the 2016 national Apprentice of the Year and then went on to represent the ACT and VET at an international conference in India, speaking about apprenticeships, the importance of the apprentice system and the difference this training has made to his life. Two CIT landscape construction students are heading to Dubai later this year to compete in the biennial WorldSkills international competition, accompanied by a CIT teacher who has been selected as the industry expert in landscape construction.

CIT delivered training in India in the last financial year to more than 100 VET sector participants as part of TAFE Directors Australia vocational education and leadership training. There have been a range of overseas education experiences for students through the VET mobility scheme, which has sent more than 200 students overseas over the past four years; and 10 electrical students under the VET mobility scheme will shortly be travelling to France and Spain to look at new technology in renewable energy and building technology with Schneider Electric, a global specialist in energy management and automation, and Neoen, a leader in solar energy and wind power.

I am confident that the transformation of CIT, under the direction of a very competent and enthusiastic board and leadership staff, and with its dedicated staff, will ensure the ongoing viability of our public provider for many years to come. The

ACT government is committed to continuing to ensure that CIT remains a cornerstone of the higher education and training landscape in the ACT.

Proposed expenditure agreed to.

Chief Minister, Treasury and Economic Development Directorate—Part 1.5.

MR COE (Yerrabi—Leader of the Opposition) (11.11): I think it is highly likely that the Chief Minister will stand in this place today and gloat about the state of the economy and, in particular, the state of the territory's finances. He will, of course, not tell the full story. We are doing well on some economic indicators, and I will be the first to talk up some of the great initiatives, some of the great enterprises, that we have here in our city. However, there are also some serious issues that must be addressed with regard to the territory's finances.

Everything is not as fine as the Chief Minister will undoubtedly say. Unfortunately, there are issues that need to be addressed. Whilst there may be some improvements with the overall budget in terms of the headline net operating balance, the actual story is somewhat different, and it is very much a different story for the families of Canberra, who are seeing huge increases to rates, fees, fines, charges and other taxes.

Yesterday, ahead of this debate, the Chief Minister announced through the latest quarterly update that the fiscal position of the territory is improving, with an estimated deficit down \$63 million on the expected outcome. I quote from the Chief Minister's media release yesterday:

We have improved our fiscal position by investing in our community and diversifying our economy.

The ACT Government will continue to invest in the right infrastructure projects to deliver jobs and growth in the Territory, and continue building a better Canberra for everyone.

I would like to challenge the Chief Minister to tell the countless number of constituents who contact the Opposition on a regular basis about the increase in rates and the increase in cost of living. The story that he tells in the media release yesterday—the picture that he paints—is not reflected in the views of so many Canberrans who are doing it tough. The government not only drives up the cost of living—not only drives up the cost of housing, of rent, of rates, of land taxes—but also cuts concessions for those in our community who are most vulnerable.

The Chief Minister also did not mention in the media release yesterday that throughout his tenure as Chief Minister he has not delivered a budget surplus for the territory. Of course this is never mentioned. We only hear that he is a great economic reformer. We only hear that he will make the tough decisions. But of course there are very few tough decisions when you simply keep on going down the path that he is on. Meanwhile, across the border, the New South Wales government announced in June a \$4.5 million surplus—but here in the ACT Andrew Barr continues to deliver deficits. In addition to that, in New South Wales they have no net debt, mainly on the back of—

Mr Barr: They sold all their assets.

MR COE: But that is distinct from the surplus that they have of \$4.5 billion. The reality is—

Mr Barr: They have sold everything off. Is this you announcing your policy to sell ActewAGL?

MR COE: It is interesting that the Chief Minister should talk about selling off assets in New South Wales—but that is not the surplus. That does account for net debt, but the \$4.5 billion surplus that they have in New South Wales is on the back—

Mr Barr: It comes off the stamp duty boom and the Sydney property market.

MR COE: And once again we say that stamp duty is such a great thing in New South Wales but here apparently it is to be condemned.

Mr Barr: Yes, it is a very bad tax.

MR COE: The difference in the ACT is that they have not abolished stamp duty. Despite every media release which asserts that we are great economic reformers, they are still taking record amounts of stamp duty. Tell someone who just purchased a property for \$500,000, \$600,000 or \$800,000, as so many people in Canberra are forced to do, that there is no stamp duty. Tell them after they have paid \$20,000 in stamp duty that it has been abolished. Of course it is a furphy. Not only that but also this government then double-dips by increasing the rates. A real test for this government is going to come with the average unimproved values on the back of the Mr Fluffy auctions. Many suburbs in Canberra have not had many unimproved blocks sold for many years. But now, as a result of the Mr Fluffy scheme, there are going to be potential unimproved values that are determined by the auction results.

Is this government going to now use auction results in Hughes, Kambah, Wanniasa, Giralang—many suburbs in Canberra that have not had an unimproved block of land sold for decades—as the new value at which blocks in these suburbs will be determined? If so, we are potentially going to see massive increases to rates right across Canberra. It is up to the Chief Minister and Treasurer to give an assurance to all homeowners in Canberra that the auction results that we are seeing for the Mr Fluffy sales are not going to be incorporated and used as the new standard for unimproved values in the relevant suburbs. If so, Canberrans are in for a nasty shock with regard to their rates and their land tax notices. This government has been silent on this issue so far, but I am calling on the Chief Minister today to clarify what this government's policy is regarding the average unimproved value on the back of the Mr Fluffy sales.

With Mr Barr's reforms in 2011-12, rates have increased by 87 per cent for houses in the inner south. In the inner north, it has been 86 per cent. The average across the ACT is an increase of 63 per cent since 2011-12. The percentage increases in rates for units across Canberra are, in many instances, considerably worse. Here in the ACT,

the rent tax—that is, land tax—is up 18 per cent. Commercial rates are up five per cent and residential rates are up 12 per cent. And that is, of course, a general figure. In many instances they are considerably more.

Not only that but also we have stamp duty revenue bringing in \$300 million in this budget. Isn't it great when you can abolish a tax but it still brings in \$300 million? It is not a rosy picture for so many people in Canberra. It is no wonder so many people from Canberra are choosing to live across the border. The high cost of maintaining a home in Canberra is driving people across the border. The Queanbeyan City Council is responding. It is providing a far better product. How is it that land can come to market in Queanbeyan with gas, with water, with electricity and with the NBN for a fraction of the price here in the ACT, where the government is pretty much the sole supplier of land?

There are so many other fees and charges that have gone up astronomically under this government, and numerous others that have been increased in recent years or introduced in recent years as well. We have heard an increasing number of stories from constituents about the changes to concessions and the government's decision to roll numerous concessions and rebates into one single utilities concession. It was not well thought out. That was established in estimates with regard to people who do not necessarily have an electricity bill that is comparable to the concessions but who do have very high gas bills or water bills, to which the concession would be better applied.

We have also learned in the past few days that homeowners will pay an average of \$27 per year in water and sewerage charges under a new proposal by Icon Water which will see the per kilolitre rate increase beyond 2018. It keeps on going. Every single aspect is touched by increases under this government. (*Second speaking period taken.*)

The increases that we have to water and sewerage pricing are in part because of the outrageous agreement that Icon Water came to with ActewAGL. That agreement alone is putting in excess of \$150 onto the annual water bill for every Canberra household. That is if you assume that the shared services are worth \$5 million. It is quite possible that the shared services are worth considerably less than that. If you assume that the shared services are worth \$5 million, why is it that this government signed an agreement to pay \$30 million per year for this very dodgy deal? It is no wonder that water prices have gone up so much, when you have that level of negligence attached to decision making at Icon Water.

This money-hungry government will continue to do whatever it can to gouge Canberrans. The Chief Minister will do whatever he can to distract from the real issues affecting Canberrans. In conclusion, I urge the Chief Minister to respond to my earlier claim that this government should not use the Mr Fluffy sales as the new basis for unimproved values across the ACT. If they do, we will see massive increases to rates right across the territory, which will, I think, push many Canberra households to the brink.

MS CODY (Murrumbidgee) (11.23): I rise to acknowledge the good work of the Treasurer and the government in delivering ongoing economic growth and certainty for the future of all Canberrans. Whilst the statistics and numbers cited by Mr Barr are impressive, sometimes all those numbers can hide the real story as much as tell it. The real story is about giving people confidence that they can get the skills they need for jobs that are going to exist. The real story is about giving people the confidence that they can pay the mortgage next week and next year. The real story is about delivering for our community and giving them the confidence to be able to buy a house, raise a family and live with dignity.

Delivering economic development to a place like Canberra can sometimes be a pretty hard task. Some of the more important things are out of our control. The Reserve Bank controls interest rate rises. We are exposed to whatever silliness those across the lake impose through hiring policy, procurement policy and extreme industrial relations policies in the Australian public service. But this government believes that Canberrans can and should make our own economic luck, that we do not have to let this city get battered around by economic forces the way it has been in the past.

That is why the government has dedicated so much effort in this budget and those over the last term to economic diversification and development. Whether it is growing local tourism by attracting international flights, improving our skills base by encouraging more women into traditionally male-dominated trades or making it easier for new businesses to start up and thrive through red tape reform, this government takes growing and diversifying Canberra's economy seriously. Diversifying the ACT economy away from the federal government is an enormous task, but by getting our infrastructure and skills programs right we will keep delivering economic development and growth into the future.

MRS DUNNE (Ginninderra) (11.25): I want to comment on the arts engagement element of the Chief Minister's directorate at the moment. The most striking thing about the government's arts engagement strategy is, quite frankly, that there is no strategy. Arts are included in the government's list of priorities for 2017-18, making a series of motherhood statements about implementing policy in various areas. But this is not supported by the arts being identified as a strategic objective. There is no mention of arts in this context. Indeed, when I asked a question on notice about this, the then acting Minister for the Arts and Community Events made some nebulous statement about the arts being intrinsic in several objectives of other directorates.

Then there is the proposed ministerial advisory body for the arts: a bouquet to the minister for this initiative. The government has been directionless since it abolished the previous Cultural Council. And a bouquet to the minister for wanting to consult the arts community on the proposal through a series of roundtables! But what did he actually do? He invited expressions of interest from people interested in being involved and then selected just a lucky few to participate in this consultation.

Mr Assistant Speaker, you would excuse my scepticism that this is not real consultation. The minister has said that he will ensure diversity of participation across the sector but he is doing so by choosing people who, I think, will tell him what he

wants to hear, not necessarily what he should be hearing. What would have been wrong with a wider process of consultation? If nothing else, it would have demonstrated to the arts community that the minister was serious in his proposal and was prepared to listen to them.

I think that what we are seeing here at the moment is mere lip-service to consultation. I suspect that artsACT and the minister have their own ideas about what the successor of the Cultural Council will look like and they do not want any unnecessary consultation which may divert them to something else. And despite a staffing cast that looks like the credits for *Ben Hur*, it seems that, from other answers I have received, nothing very much gets done.

Let me run through a few of the questions that I asked in relation to arts in the estimates process and the answers I got. I asked a question about which arts buildings and facilities had been identified for upgrade work and what the work will be. The answer was that that had not yet been determined. Surely, if there were proposals in the budget to support these activities, there should be some idea what buildings are going to be upgraded and what works are going to be done.

I asked what targets were set and outcomes achieved in the past two years since the 2015 arts policy was released. I was told that none was set in the policy, which is fair enough, but that the actions and measures outlined in the 2015-16 strategic plan for the arts were continuing, that is, even though we are in 2017-18. No details about those actions and outcomes were provided. Further, it was stated:

There has been no subsequent strategic plan for artsACT.

ArtsACT is an organisation which is continuing to implement its 2015-16 strategic plan two years after the event.

I asked how the arts contribute to the outcomes of other government directorates. The answer to my question was:

There are no immediate plans to introduce measurable targets for other directorates.

Once again, the government has no strategy. I asked that question because the evidence now is overwhelming that engagement in and of the arts brings many benefits. It is not just in the creative sense. The arts benefit society and the health and wellbeing of our people, as well as the economy overall, in many ways. For example, just in the health area, do you know how powerful music can be for the therapy of people with Parkinson's disease? Earlier today the minister for the arts reflected, in passing, upon the dance programs for Parkinson's disease operated out of the Belconnen Arts Centre. Do you have any idea how powerful music can be in speech therapy for stroke patients who lose that function?

Are you aware, Mr Assistant Speaker, that music can bring a person out of the depths of dementia, releasing them into a state of happiness as the cogent and articulate person they once were? Do you know that simply learning how to play a new musical

instrument can ward off or at least delay the onset of Alzheimer's disease and even extend your life? And they are just a couple of examples in the health area.

The arts can contribute to better outcomes in almost every aspect of the life of a city and its people. Yet the government does not recognise this. The government does not consider how arts can have a powerful and positive role in the achievement of objectives and outcomes across all its directorates and agencies. And, even if it did, it could not measure them.

What about arts programs for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people? I asked the Minister for Arts and Community Events about the specific programs and targets the government has for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander arts and culture. I asked how these programs and targets will be engaged to achieve health, justice and other social outcomes. The acting minister told me:

The specific programs and targets are—

you guessed it—

yet to be determined.

And:

Ways to engage with the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities on priorities are—

yes, you guessed it—

still being developed.

The acting minister also told me that there was \$100,000 per year for five years from 2016-17 that had been allocated for this work. And when I asked how the money was spent in 2016-17 the answer came back that it was going to take five years and a cost of \$500,000 to develop strategies.

The government's draft consultation paper *Mob in Arts* is a 38-page document that, once again, had nothing about strategic plans the government has. It does not come up with any recommendations or practical action plans. It is another patronising set of motherhood statements.

Let me turn to the Kingston arts precinct for a bit and let me declare once again my interest. I am a member of community radio station, ArtSound FM, as is my senior adviser who is also a presenter there. ArtSound is one of the arts organisations identified as a potential tenant of the Kingston arts precinct.

I asked a couple of questions about the progress on this project. I asked how much it would cost for the master plan and administration of the tender process for selecting a developer, and the answer was \$1.1 million. I asked how the developer's plans for the site differ from the master plan, and I got fobbed off. I was told that the development plan had not been finalised. So the government has not yet approved it. We still have

no idea what the final product would look like and how it would meld with the master plan.

The acting minister told me that there had been consultation with stakeholders along the way and that this would continue. This is a positive, I thought. But as to transitional arrangements for stakeholders moving to the precinct, this government tells me that its priority is to finalise the sale and design of the precinct. This government will start looking at transition arrangements only after construction begins.

By then the horse will have bolted. It will be too late for the government or even the developer to learn what the stakeholders will need and how they might be best accommodated. Work on transition arrangements must be in progress now, in parallel with finalising the development plans, if it is to have any chance of success.

Surely it should be to everyone's advantage to know who will be moving to the precinct, what assistance they will get, how they will be accommodated, and what they will need. It is a bit like a developer constructing an apartment building but not selling any units off the plan. This government simply has no strategy.

Another question I asked of the minister was about the specific targets the government has for achieving community engagement in and access to the arts. Again a non-answer came back, showing that this government has no strategy. The acting minister told me:

The accountability indicator for the arts engagement output on the engagement activities assists in achieving community engagement in and access to the arts.

That does not mean anything. That is a direct quote.

Notice two things: in that one sentence the word "engagement" was used three times. Secondly, the answer simply asserts, without any supporting evidence, that the accountability indicator assists in achieving community engagement in the arts. The answer concluded:

There are no other specific targets set.

(Second speaking period taken.)

This is a classic circular argument designed to do little more than confuse and bamboozle its audience, meaningless drivel from a minister of a government who has no strategy for arts engagement in this territory. It would make an excellent line for an episode of *Yes, Minister*. They have not all been written yet. Some of them were written during the estimates process.

Then I asked why the accountability indicators for arts engagement suggest a stagnation of achievement. The answer was that the number of funded organisations had not changed and the number of programs delivered, and consequently attendance,

had not changed. This answer confirms my concern that this government budgets for stagnation.

But one contributing factor to growth in the arts engagement might be the ACT's significant population growth. Even if the number of programs and organisations did remain static, would not population growth alone contribute to growth in arts engagement? And if there were population growth, would not this suggest a need for an increase in the number of funded organisations and programs to meet the growing need of the population? Incredibly, the minister told me in an answer to a question on notice:

Accountability indicators are influenced by a number of factors from year to year and are not necessarily related to population or tourism.

What are they related to? It is this kind of head-in-the-sand approach to strategic thinking that concerns me most, especially when Canberra's population is growing at the rate of 1½ per cent per year, and that is around 4,000 people or close to a suburb every year. What concerns me is that this government has no idea how to cater for the arts demands of people of the ACT.

This does not include growth in tourism, which the Chief Minister likes to talk about. But there is very little connection between tourism and arts in this budget or any government policy. The government's own budget papers say that tourism is worth \$2 billion a year to the ACT economy and will grow to \$2½ billion by 2020. And the government's own budget papers say that arts and culture play an important part in tourism figures. Yet the government is stagnating its support for the arts and has no plan for growth in the sector.

Contrary to the government's own budget statement, this minister says that population and tourism do not necessarily influence the outcomes of accountability indicators. One of the government's own answers to a question on notice acknowledged as much. It said:

A static target is set as the categories for funded organisations have not changed.

That is, the money has not gone up even though there is increased demand.

The government accountability indicators are stagnant. It is as simple as that. The minister and this government have no strategy for the arts engagement of the territory. It is as simple as that. The government and this minister are so bereft of any capacity for strategic thinking they cannot even take opportunities to value-add to visits by national and international artists that the government itself brings to the ACT.

What about giving local artists the opportunity to learn from visiting artists? What about workshops and master classes and visits to schools? No, this minister thinks that that is all a bit too hard and gets things like this into the schedule for visiting artists. It may be true in some cases but should the government just assume it applies to any and all artists it brings to the territory? Musica Viva does this. Why can't the government?

Finally, let me say a little about arts funding. First I must acknowledge the government's funding for stage 2 of the Belconnen Arts Centre. And while the government has been pussy-footing around this for years, it is welcome and no doubt will present the arts centre with many new opportunities. But there was the story last year of the cut of \$750,000 from arts funding.

Perhaps ACT Labor's 2016 election promise of \$750,000 in additional ongoing grants funding was a typographical error. In December the minister was shamed into announcing \$248,000 would be reinstated in the program and in February, still red faced, he announced another \$230,000. He called it additional funding but in reality it is still \$300,000 shy of the amount that was slashed before he became minister.

In summary, the government is stagnating the arts. In real and even actual terms it is going backwards. This government does not recognise the contribution the arts make to the economy, to social capital, to health, to wellbeing and to education. This government has no strategy for the arts. This government pays the arts little more than lip-service.

For all its motherhood statements about support for the arts, how important the arts are and how much the minister wants to consult and talk to the arts community, this government's on-the-ground commitment to the arts counts for little. For all its glossy arts reports, policy statements and out-of-date strategic plans, full of buzz words and bureaucratese, this government has no strategy for growth in the arts sector. It is as simple as that.

MR RAMSAY (Ginninderra—Attorney-General, Minister for Regulatory Services, Minister for the Arts and Community Events and Minister for Veterans and Seniors) (11.41): I am delighted to speak in support of the Appropriation Bill 2017-18 and in particular the measures in the ACT budget for arts and culture in the territory.

The ACT government acknowledges that investment in the arts contributes to building a city that is creative, that is livable and that is vibrant. A strong and vibrant arts and community events sector is essential to the cultural, social and economic fabric of Canberra. And when the arts are diverse, inclusive and accessible we all benefit. The arts produced in our city, in all of their various forms, disciplines and levels of practice, enrich us all as a society. The new funding measures in this budget, in addition to the existing longstanding commitment to the arts, reflect the great value that the government and our community place on our artists.

The package in the 2017-18 budget for the arts fulfils a number of the government's key election commitments and demonstrates our commitment to Canberra being a vibrant, diverse and inclusive arts capital. We will be delivering funding to ensure our arts facilities meet the needs of our growing community, both now and well into the future, which is why a significant portion of new funding will go towards improvement works at some of our most popular arts facilities, including the much-loved Belconnen Arts Centre which will be receiving \$15 million over the next four years to finalise design and construction of stage 2.

Stage 2 of the BAC will add a 400-seat multipurpose auditorium, new dance and rehearsal studios, an expanded exhibition space, new workshop spaces and a bar and cafe to this popular and important community facility. We will also be funding \$880,000 in continuing upgrades across the Ainslie, Gorman, Strathnairn, Tuggeranong and Watson arts centres.

We will be increasing the baseline funding pool for arts project grants to a minimum of \$750,000, as well as an additional \$100,000 specifically for engaging with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander arts and cultures. We will be funding Art, Not Apart, the Design Canberra Festival and Kulture Break for the next three years, as well as new community-based arts festivals in Woden and Gungahlin. And there will be \$250,000 per year for the ANU's new advanced music performance program.

Overall, this package of \$21.6 million in new funding over the next four years is the single largest injection of government funding into the arts since ACT self-government. And this is on top of nearly \$6 million in funding we continue to provide annually to 25 arts organisations in the ACT, and it is on top of over \$1 million the government provides in support of community outreach programs by the ANU's School of Music and School of Art and Design.

This funding is also in addition to the \$8.7 million annually that goes toward the funding of the Cultural Facilities Corporation which runs the Canberra Theatre Centre, the Canberra Museum and Gallery, the Nolan Collection and historic places like Lanyon, Calthorpes' House and Mugga Mugga.

The ACT government is continuing to invest in building a creative, livable, vibrant Canberra, recognising the important contribution that the arts make to the identity, the vibrancy and the livability of our city. I look forward to continuing to work with the Canberra arts community to ensure that arts and culture in the ACT are inclusive, accessible and community building. I commend the budget to the Assembly.

MS LE COUTEUR (Murrumbidgee) (11.45): As Mr Rattenbury said, basically the Greens are happy with this budget. It does reflect in many ways the Greens-ALP agreement and includes some things that clearly the Greens are particularly pleased about. I will quickly mention a few of those as this is my first speech on the budget. There is \$65 million to improve our public transport, including light rail and buses. This is more investment in public transport than there is in roads. This is a great change of priorities for the ACT. I look forward to seeing it continue.

An amount of \$12 million is provided to support active travel and active living in the ACT. There is a commitment of an additional \$30 million in the parliamentary agreement over the four years for bike paths and cycle lanes, including much-needed maintenance. There is a \$1.9 million investment to deliver a climate change adaptation strategy, half a million dollars for community grants to undertake zero net emissions projects, funding for an EER review and building quality review processes.

Turning to people, there is funding for the drug and alcohol court, the office for mental health, prison industries and increased support for the Office for Disability.

There are a lot of other issues that we raised, such as more money for mental health, funding education to deliver safe schools and improved school facilities and, as I mentioned, our public transport system. We will talk much more about that.

Importantly, there are investments in public housing, including housing our vulnerable Canberrans and addressing homelessness. While this was not all in this budget, by the time the public housing renewal strategy has been finished I understand that there will be a total of \$600 million spent on new public housing. I think that is a very commendable investment and, unfortunately, a much needed investment in our community.

Another investment that is needed in our community is supporting the community legal centres and community groups. They support Canberrans by delivering a gender-inclusive agenda. There is also support, as I said, for the community legal centres as well as the Environmental Defenders Office. Of course, there are some areas where the Greens would go further and we have concerns in others.

Looking at this output class, starting with the positives, we are very pleased to see the projected return to surplus and the incredibly small—almost a rounding error I guess in a \$5 billion budget—deficit of \$10 million this year. The positive thing about this is that it gives us room in the future to invest in useful public infrastructure and to look at some of the issues that have been highlighted in terms of the revenue side of our budget.

One of the other things that we are very pleased about is community engagement. As everyone will know, the Greens have been talking about community engagement ever since we existed. We are very pleased to see that there is a specific allocation for deliberative democracy in this budget. We are looking at ways to improve this and making it go further. I anticipate talking more about that in this chamber.

One of the things we are very positive about is Access Canberra and what it intends to do with the increased building levy. The Greens, and I am sure other MLAs, have a continual stream of complaints about building policy issues in Canberra. This was my experience when I was here in the Seventh Assembly. I would have to say that nothing has changed in the Ninth Assembly. Possibly, things are worse. So we are really pleased about the building reform budget initiatives which are going to be funded out of the increase in the building levy.

The building audits, which will be a better building inspection program, have clearly been called for because clearly many building owners have financial losses and considerable loss in amenity due to building defects that are simply the result of non-compliance with the Building Act. Building certification reform was one of the Greens' election commitments. What that is saying is that there will be a panel of independent auditors to conduct mandatory annual audits of certifiers.

There have been widespread concerns about the independence, efficiency and effectiveness of our current independent certifier system. By auditing the certifiers, we hope to give much more rigour to and much more confidence in this system. The other one is continuing to work on building regulation reform. This has been an

ongoing issue for about the past four years. We are pleased to see that the government is continuing on that.

Unfortunately, there is much more that Access Canberra needs to do. I specifically would like to highlight in the building area responding to complaints and then actually doing enforcement actions on the worst breaches. I have brought up some of the worst breaches in the annual reports and estimates process. I anticipate, unfortunately, being in the position of having to do things like that again.

It seems that there are very few, if any, instances where the ACT government actually goes to enforcing breaches in the planning area or, in fact, in the general areas. I think it is very important that with some of the more egregious breaches of our building regulations, where things have been built a couple of metres higher than the approval was given for, we actually start taking some enforcement action. It is just not good enough. I think it would be very good for the building industry if a clear message was sent that you have to do the right thing. If you do not, there are consequences.

On a more positive note, though, the estimates committee heard about the government's responsible investment process. As someone who has had many years of professional experience in responsible and ethical investment and as someone who chaired the public accounts committee inquiry into the possibility of government ethical investment in the Seventh Assembly, I am incredibly pleased at the progress that has been made on this. It is much more than I had realised from the outside. We are now actually voting our shares. We are being responsible shareholders and we are voting our shares at annual general meetings. In some instances we not voting in support of management, which is what has happened in the past.

I asked questions about Oil Search. There have been some motions about greenhouse emissions. I was really pleased that we voted, as I would call it, on the side of the angels. I am also very pleased that we have been reducing investment in fossil fuels as well as doing the things that were agreed on specifically—for example, in respect of cluster bombs and tobacco—in the agreement. I am glad to see that the use of fossil fuels is also reducing.

I will talk about a few areas where the Greens are more concerned. The Greens have supported the move in taxation reform to reduce reliance on stamp duty and to transit into rates. But I think this is an area where we need to look carefully at what issues may be coming from this. While I do not totally agree with the Leader of the Opposition's comments, I think this is somewhere where we do need to consider all the issues relating to the rates changes. There are some concessions on rates and we need to look carefully at how these are being implemented.

Another area of revenue that I think we need to look at, because it has not been well thought out, is the lease variation charge changes. Moving from \$7,500 or \$5,000 per unit to \$30,000 per unit in one go with no consultation and no warning is poor policy at the least, regardless of the impact of these particular changes. To have so little consultation is really not on.

As I said in my speech in the estimates report, I am concerned about the impact on housing affordability and the push for a compact city. We have had very strong views from the government for a long time, which the Greens support, that we should be aiming towards a compact city. These changes are potentially going in the opposite direction and clearly may well impact on housing affordability. (*Second speaking period taken.*)

The Greens would like to see, as was talked about in the estimates report, a full revenue neutral review of the lease variation charge system. There are currently three ways of doing it. For some residential leases it is \$30,000 per dwelling; for some residential leases, it is between \$30,000 and \$180,000; for all other residential leases, it is before and after valuations. I think all of this is pointing out that what the government needs to do is actually take a triple bottom line approach to the budget and apply this to the revenue side as well as to the expenditure side.

The parliamentary agreement talks about a triple bottom line framework. But on the basis of this budget I am concerned that it does not appear to have been extensively implemented. The Greens very clearly think that revenue items can be used not just to get revenue. They have a social, and possibly an environmental, impact. We need to look at them all. That is one of the reasons that we pushed for the vacancy tax. Of course, I am very pleased that that is being implemented in this budget.

In terms of other issues, I would like to say that I share Mrs Dunne's concerns about the Kingston arts precinct and this development. It may be going well, but certainly there is a dearth of knowledge as to how it is going. I think we need a lot more consultation with the arts community as to what is going to happen there.

MS LAWDER (Brindabella) (11.57): I wish to speak briefly on a topic. I hesitate to say that it is one of my favourite topics, because I would prefer not to speak about it. But it is a topic I have raised many times in the past. During estimates I asked for an update on the odours that occasionally occur in some Tuggeranong suburbs ostensibly, to the best of our knowledge, from the Mugga Lane Resource Management Centre. It has been an ongoing issue for a number of years. It has been raised by many of my constituents.

In response to the questions that I asked during estimates, I was advised that there had been approximately 100 complaints over the past 18 months. The directorate did assure me—I agree it is the case absolutely—that they are working very hard with ACT NoWaste and with REMONDIS, the operator of the resource centre and other interested and relevant parties.

I understand from the responses I have received that the environmental authorisation has been updated, including, for example, by addressing the depth of soil over the top of the tip face and updating some of the operations on a day-to-day basis in terms of closing off the tip face at the end of each day. I was told that the operator is also doing work to control leachate that comes out of the old waste areas and that new cells are being designed and constructed at the moment for future waste and the treatment of leachate.

I was assured during estimates that these measures have contributed to reducing the odours that may have been coming from the tip, but we still have not had a sort of definitive response as to whether it is the tip that is the source of the odours—the only source of odours in that particular valley area. There are no particular recommendations, of course, in regard to addressing the odours.

The issue is one for my constituents. It is not okay to leave ratepayers, taxpayers, residents, constituents—however you want to think of them—subject to these terrible odours. Many of my constituents expressed concerns about the value of their property, being able to enjoy the amenity of their property, especially during the summertime. It appears that during wintertime the odours are not as apparent and there are not as many complaints.

There are still intermittent complaints and it is not okay just to leave it, just to say, as we have heard from some members opposite in the past, “They live near a tip. You have to expect the smell.” These particular suburbs are not actually near a tip. They are quite some distance away. When I drive past the tip I expect a smell if I am somewhere in the area. But in suburbs far enough away, meeting all the relevant standards, you would not expect to have an odour that means you cannot have your windows open, that you cannot put your washing on the line, that you cannot have a barbecue and have people over because you are embarrassed about the smell in your area.

It is not okay, and members in my electorate are very unhappy. They are worried it is going to happen again this coming summer. It is not good enough. I appreciate, and my constituents appreciate, the work that has taken place so far. But we have not had any definitive response that, yes, it was the tip that was causing the smell and that, yes, every possible thing has been done to address the smell.

It is symptomatic of a feeling amongst my constituents of a bit of neglect, a bit of disdain and disrespect for people in that area, that they are just expected to live with it. In some instances we are talking about people who have spent a lot of money on their homes, people who pay a lot of money in their rates. Of course, they have gone up in the most recent budget.

For example, Fadden has had one of the highest increases in unit rates in the ACT in the last budget. People ask, “What am I getting for this increase in my rates, let alone my rates generally, that I have to put up with these terrible odours on an intermittent basis?” I do appreciate—I will stress this—the work that has taken place to date. I understand, as has been explained to me, that odours move in mysterious ways. But it is not okay to leave residents of some Tuggeranong suburbs with this experience of a terrible odour impacting their everyday life, impacting their mental health and adding to some concerns about their physical health because they are unsure of what may also be involved with that smell.

I implore government to continue to try to address those issues. Access Canberra is the area that we usually deal with. Historically there have been some issues about the reporting of those complaints. I feel reasonably confident that that has now been

addressed. But in the beginning some constituents said that when they rang Access Canberra, as they had been instructed, as I told constituents to do and as I continue to tell them, sometimes they were told, "We do not take those complaints." Or when people ring up to say, "I have complained about this in the past," they have been told, "We have no record of any previous complaints."

This is not okay either, but it may illustrate a lack of training or understanding on the part of some of the operators in Access Canberra. I am reasonably sure this has been addressed. It has not been something that has been raised with me more recently, but it certainly was the case in the first instance when the number of complaints was increasing about 12 to 18 months ago.

In summary, thank you to the government for the work they have done so far in Access Canberra and in Minister Fitzharris's directorate of Transport Canberra and City Services. We appreciate that you have been attempting to address this issue. But please do not feel that your work here is done, because there are still people who are very adversely affected. As I have said, they fear that come the warmer months it is going to ramp up again. Please do not let that happen.

MS CODY (Murrumbidgee) (12.04): I rise to praise the work of the ACT government in the space of higher education, training and research, and their commitment to ensuring the sector is as inclusive, diverse and accessible as possible. Post-secondary education should not be treated as a privilege. Education and training opportunities are fundamental rights. They not only empower the individual; they make our society and economy stronger. I would like to congratulate Mr Barr and Ms Fitzharris for a budget that will support and develop initiatives to boost women in trades.

In 2015 women made up only three per cent of traditional trade apprenticeship enrolments. The ACT government is supporting women to get into tradie jobs by addressing barriers they face to enter a male-dominated field. Our industries are strengthened when they reflect the ACT population. Encouraging female tradies is one part of ensuring this robust diversity in our workforce.

Training should be accessible and opportunities should be diverse because this is how we ensure diversity of participation in the workforce. A diverse workforce is a robust one; so we must strengthen the workforce through prioritising equitable outcomes. We know that our universities in Canberra have world-class reputations. A reflection of this is that we attract international students from across the world. We also see international students travelling to Canberra to study at fantastic CIT. We have over 900 students from 80 different countries who both benefit from and contribute to the incredible opportunities in tertiary training and education.

Education is the ACT's biggest international export. This is revenue that is not dependent on a federal Liberal government. Continued support in this sector reflects the ACT government's move to diversify the ACT economy to ensure better financial autonomy. The higher education, training and research sector is not vital just to Canberra's economy. It is also essential for our future to prepare young people for the workforce and contribute valuable scholarship to our shared knowledge as a society.

Our higher education, training and research sector is inclusive, accessible and diverse. I congratulate the government on its continued efforts to protect these values in the face of attacks from Liberal governments across the country.

MR MILLIGAN (Yerrabi) (12.07): I am going to begin by speaking on my shadow sports and recreation portfolio. This is an area where the government appears to be spending a lot of money. It is finally, it would appear, delivering on the promise of a leisure centre for the Stromlo-Molonglo community. This is long overdue. Promised during the 2008 election, work on this will finally begin, according to the budget papers, by the end of this financial year. We are looking forward to seeing this get underway, though it is disappointing that it will not include a dive pool, and there is no discussion of an indoor sports centre, though the government's feasibility study strongly recommended that this be included in the facility.

We also welcome the announcement and funding for a feasibility study, though the minister wrongly told the Assembly last year, and reiterated earlier this year, that this was already being conducted. We ask the minister to commit to and prioritise the building of an indoor sporting centre for Gungahlin, though maybe asking the government to commit to anything might not be such a great idea. During the recent election, several key promises were made to grassroots sporting bodies such as Tuggeranong rowing club, who were promised a grant of \$200,000 for a permanent club facility, whilst the Canberra Kart Racing Club was promised a similar sum of money to upgrade its Mark Webber circuit track.

In response to questions on notice as to why these promises were not kept, the government tells us that it remains committed to them. I wonder how long the clubs will have to wait: until someone is seriously injured on the track? Or until the Tuggeranong rowing club decides to move across the border and we lose yet another sporting club from the ACT? I called on the government recently to get real about their support of the grassroots sporting community, not just the elite sports. I again call on the government to get real.

Of course, it is not all bad news. We see that the government has split sports and recreation portfolio responsibilities across two directorates, with sports facilities management moving to TCCS. This seems an appropriate move, but we would like to question what is involved in the maintenance costs. A single line item appears in the budget to cover all of this area.

For example, will the maintenance of Boomanulla Oval finally be addressed? Boomanulla Oval is in a disgraceful state. In May of this year the minister claimed that the management of the oval fell under her portfolio responsibilities, in which case this facility should have been maintained as a matter of course, with all other ovals and recreational facilities. The ongoing and disgraceful state of the oval is indicative of this government's failure to maintain even basic standards for its facilities. The longer the government fails to act, the higher the cost to the people of the ACT. Hopefully, with the move of maintenance to TCCS, we will finally see the full repair and restoration of the oval, as a property that is central to the Indigenous community and also to the whole Canberra community.

This is but one example of an area that needs crucial attention. I can name many others that have been ignored for too long. There is the lack of appropriate change facilities at many of our public sportsgrounds. A drive around the suburbs will demonstrate that many sporting clubs now use containers as a way of storing their gear, containers which have been vandalised and become an eyesore for the local community. I could go on, but the list would be too long.

To maintain transparency in the budget in this important portfolio area, we call on the government to act. I agree with the committee's recommendation that, rather than a broad number being included as part of output 2.4, city maintenance and services, a separate budget line be maintained for sporting and sportsground facilities management which will include detailed line items for the costs and incomes associated with maintenance, lighting and other usage charges, irrigation, capital upgrades, capital expenditure, user charges income from sportsground facilities management and employee expenses resulting from sportsground facilities management.

I turn now to my shadow Indigenous affairs portfolio. Over the last little while I have had much to say on matters pertaining to this portfolio, but this is because the government's ongoing failure in this area gives me much to be concerned about. I acknowledge again that this is a difficult area; I am not oblivious to the many areas of disadvantage, even intergenerational disadvantage, which are experienced by Indigenous Canberrans. But with the small numbers involved, not enough is being done to work with appropriate Indigenous organisations to overcome some of these significant areas of disadvantage.

Of course, this government would like you to believe differently. During budget week, the government released a glossy brochure which detailed the funding that would be spent on Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander initiatives. The numbers seemed staggering at first glance—\$21.6 million on the arts, a \$12 million facility for Winnunga, just over half a million dollars for families, \$100,000 in seed funding, \$5.3 million for through care, \$3.2 million for the AMC and \$5.2 million for community legal centres: a total of just over \$42 million. But as with many things that concern this government, the devil is always in the detail, a detail it is good at hiding, ignoring or perhaps wishing would go away.

Let us start with the arts, which falls in this directorate, and probably the most significant promise, \$21.6 million. You may be wondering what this will be spent on. I can now inform the Assembly that the actual number is much lower. The specific funding for engaging with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander arts and culture is \$400,000 over four years. That is \$100,000 per year for specific Indigenous funding: not \$21.6 million, not even two per cent. We call on the ACT government to give the breakdown of arts funding for ACT Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander-specific programs and grants, not as part of an overall budget.

This is not the only figure that does not add up, but I will reserve future figures for my responses to the appropriate directorates. Needless to say, the total spending on the Indigenous community is substantially less than the \$42 million claimed by this

government. It begs the question what other numbers have been fudged in this budget.

I can tell you one other number that does not add up, and that is the employment numbers in the ACT public service. The 2008 COAG Indigenous employment strategy committed this government to a target of three per cent of Indigenous employment in the sector by 2018. It is now 2017 but, to date, Indigenous employment in the ACT public service is 1.4 per cent of the total workforce. This very low number was revealed after a question on notice was submitted.

It was disturbing to note during the estimates hearings that the Deputy Director-General, Workforce Capability and Governance, who is also the ACT Public Sector Standards Commissioner, was unable to answer a direct question on the proportion of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people currently employed in the ACT public service or to state the target agreed to by the ACT government. It shows a lack of interest and desire to make a difference in the lives of Indigenous Canberrans by this government.

The committee noted that there was an overall lack of transparency in relation to the proportion of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people currently employed in the ACT public service, not in each individual directorate but across them all. Information received from each of the directorates shows that the Chief Minister's directorate has the lowest Indigenous employment of them all.

We agree with the committee's recommendation and call on the ACT government to table in the Assembly by the end of August 2017 the proportion of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples in the ACT public service and targets for that employment for each directorate as well as across the whole service.

MR RAMSAY (Ginninderra—Attorney-General, Minister for Regulatory Services, Minister for the Arts and Community Events and Minister for Veterans and Seniors) (12.15): The 2017-18 financial year will see the government continue to provide ACT residents with a one-stop shop for ACT government services, a “no wrong door” approach to make it easier and more efficient for businesses, community organisations and individuals to get their business done in the territory while ensuring that community safety is preserved.

Since Access Canberra's inception, its success has been evident through the feedback from customers, with an increase in its customer satisfaction metrics again this year. This is not accidental. The government, through Access Canberra, is committed to providing an exceptional “one service, one experience” journey for the people of Canberra. I am committed to ensuring that interacting with government, through Access Canberra, continues to be easier and simpler. In this budget we are building on this success by continuing to make it easier for Canberrans to engage with the government by increasing the number of services available online. Access Canberra is continually developing digital services for customers to use, and aims to add a further 75 digital transactions in 2017-18. We will also implement a new centralised complaints management system for Access Canberra, leading to better end-to-end tracking of complaints and a higher quality of data being retained. This will give the

government better information and intelligence on where areas of risk exist in the territory, allowing for a more efficient deployment of resources.

In this year's budget we also have initiatives to continue to ensure community safety. The government has funded an additional three dedicated work health and safety inspectors in 2017-18 to proactively monitor the construction of this government's large infrastructure project, specifically, the construction of the first phase of light rail. Light rail construction involves work activity that has not been undertaken in the ACT before, and the government has committed \$715,000 over three years to ensure that we bring specialist capabilities into WorkSafe. We are doing this to ensure that workers are able to get home safely and that the community as a whole is confident that areas in and around the light rail construction remain safe.

As the light rail construction involves some disruption to traffic on a number of Canberra's main arterial roads, as well as construction activity in close proximity to pedestrians and motorists, the dedicated work health and safety inspectors being funded by this initiative will oversee all onsite regulatory and legislative work health and safety requirements for phase 1 of light rail activities. They will also help develop WorkSafe's resources in dealing with traffic management. This initiative will continue until June 2020 through a phased down approach, with the funding of two positions anticipated in the 2018-19 budget and one position in the 2019-20 budget.

The government has invested \$176,000 in this year's budget for licence plate recognition cameras to enforce the territory's parking spaces more efficiently. These cameras are car mounted and able to determine if a car has remained in place for more than the permitted time or is in a location where parking is not permitted, such as a no-stopping zone. This initiative supports the government's broader integrated transport commitments and will significantly increase the ability of Access Canberra to regulate compliance with public parking zones focusing on vehicles parked in short stay parking zones. The technology has the ability to detect and deter people who top up their meter and remain in a single short stay car park all day. Increased levels of compliance in short stay parking will help achieve a higher rate of parking rotation for time limited parking zones, which will improve access to parking for people visiting businesses nearby, particularly in places such as Braddon and the Woden trades centre. This will, in turn, help increase the number of people who are able to visit these areas and drive increased business in our busy precincts.

Importantly, this will allow our regulation of parking throughout the territory to be monitored and enforced in a much more efficient and reliable way. While we will still have foot patrols moving through areas that are unsuitable for these vehicle-mounted cameras, this new technology will be able to move through other busy areas in a more efficient manner. This will lead to the government being able to more effectively regulate a much larger area each day in a more efficient manner for a variety of offences, including overstaying in time-limited and pay parking as well as parking in inappropriate areas.

As you would be aware, Madam Acting Speaker, the Working with Vulnerable People (Background Checking) Act 2011 was introduced to reduce the risk of harm or neglect to vulnerable people in the territory. The scheme has a six-year introduction

time line, and we are now heading into year 5. In the past few years, the demand for registrations under the scheme has significantly increased. The original policy estimates and operational funding for the scheme were based on an estimation of approximately 14,000 applications per year and an overall scheme of 42,000. As at July 2017, there were just over 100,000 current registrations. So in this budget the government is providing over \$1.65 million in additional funding to meet this demand, by funding an additional eight full-time employees within Access Canberra. These additional staff will be assisting customers with their queries and applications, undertaking risk assessments on applications and leading compliance activities.

A commitment made by this government in the last election was to encourage outdoor dining. This is now a funded commitment. The ACT government will be providing one month's free rental of public space for outdoor dining every year to every business, reducing costs for existing businesses and giving restaurants and bars a chance to try new spaces for free. By providing this financial incentive, the government aims to grow the economy by increasing the number of existing food businesses with outdoor dining and encouraging new businesses with free trials. This fee change is the equivalent to an eight per cent reduction in business costs annually.

Finally, in this budget the government has shown its commitment to ensuring the safety of the territory's citizens, whether at work or play, and continues to focus on delivering a state-of-the-art, one-stop shop for the people of Canberra. Access Canberra continues to put the customer at the centre and progress the government's vision to become a leader in customer and regulatory services.

Debate interrupted in accordance with standing order 74 and the resumption of the debate made an order of the day for a later hour.

Sitting suspended from 12.24 to 2.30 pm.

Questions without notice Canberra Hospital—emergency waiting times

MR COE: My question is to the minister for health. Minister, you said in this place on 1 August about Canberra Hospital emergency department waiting times: "We are seeing our waiting times coming down." ACT Health has not released any data about hospital emergency waiting times since last year due to the ongoing problems with health data. What evidence do you have to back your claims that Canberra Hospital emergency department waiting times are in fact coming down?

MS FITZHARRIS: I thank Mr Coe for his question. Indeed Canberra Hospital emergency department waiting times are coming down. I am regularly briefed by Canberra Hospital and by ACT Health on the performance of the emergency department. There is internal information directly sourced from the emergency department on a daily basis, and I am pleased to say the broad trend is that emergency department waiting times are coming down. The expansion and the additional staff in the Canberra Hospital emergency department finalised late last year have certainly contributed to that.

MR COE: Is there any publicly available data or evidence to demonstrate that Canberra Hospital emergency waiting times are coming down? Will you table any further data or evidence that you have access to to support that claim?

MS FITZHARRIS: I certainly know that on the ACT Health website there is live information about the number of people currently presenting to the emergency department, broken down by those waiting to have treatment and those currently receiving treatment over the past 24-hour period. That is available to all members of the public right now—

Mr Coe: Is that times, or just—

MS FITZHARRIS: It does not include waiting times. But, as I have said, I will continue to deliver quarterly updates to the Assembly on the progress of the data review in ACT Health. I look forward to making the next quarterly update in the September sittings, when I will be informing the Assembly and the community about how we continue to report ACT Health data while the data review is underway.

MR COE: I wish to raise a point of order, Madam Acting Speaker, on relevance. I asked about what evidence was available with regard to waiting times coming down, which is distinct from just number of people who present.

MADAM ACTING SPEAKER: Standing order 118 does require that you be directly relevant, so can you be directly relevant to Mr Coe's question, Ms Fitzharris?

MS FITZHARRIS: Thank you, Madam Acting Speaker. I have completed my answer.

MRS JONES: Minister, will ACT Health be able to provide accurate data to the Australian Institute of Health and Welfare on emergency department waiting times by the next reporting deadline?

MS FITZHARRIS: I thank Mrs Jones for the supplementary. She may like to clarify "by the next reporting deadline". What I have said in my previous answer, and what I also said in my previous update on the data review, is that I will continue to give quarterly updates to the Assembly on the progress of that review.

I have also established a panel to oversee the progress of that review. That panel, as I have stated a number of times in the Assembly, includes senior representatives from the National Health Funding Body and the Australian Institute of Health and Welfare. They are sitting on the panel overseeing the ACT Health data review. We remain in very close contact with both of those organisations regarding their requirements for us to report.

In my next update to the Assembly in the next sitting period, in September, I will be providing further information that is currently being developed by ACT Health and by the data review panel on how we can provide reporting while the data review is underway because, as we know, that does not finish until early next year.

Waste—recycling

MS LE COUTEUR: My question is to the Minister for Transport and City Services and relates to last week's *Four Corners* program on waste. Noting that the waste feasibility study has not yet been completed, what assurances can the minister provide to ACT residents that materials such as glass bottles which are placed in our recycling bins are being recycled and not ending up in landfill?

MS FITZHARRIS: I thank Ms Le Couteur for her question. Like many others, I have been interested to view both the ABC's *War on Waste* program and the *Four Corners* report last week. I can assure the Assembly, and through the Assembly the broader ACT community, that, regarding glass recycling in the ACT, glass is processed locally in the ACT. It is decontaminated, made into glass sand and used primarily as day cover in landfill.

Re.Group, which is our contractor, recently upgraded the facility to invest approximately \$6 million in the installation of a glass blaster. This technology allows all glass received to be processed into a product called glass sand. Imploded glass is turned into glass sand with approximately 70 per cent to 80 per cent used as landfill day cover, which is the layer of sand placed over waste material each day in the ACT. This is in line with EPA approval and is a beneficial reuse of the material, thus saving the use of soil.

Other uses for recycled glass are also being explored and tested, for example, for use in road base, concrete mix and pipe bedding. I understand that there have been some questions about stockpiles of recyclables in the ACT that TCCS may be aware of. There are some in private hands in the ACT. But certainly following the *Four Corners* report I can assure the Assembly that the glass that is picked up through ACT government contracts is processed locally here in the ACT.

MS LE COUTEUR: Minister, what compliance and enforcement processes are in place to ensure that stockpiling and illegal dumping of waste by private companies, including those subcontracted by ACT government contractors, is not taking place?

MS FITZHARRIS: In terms of the waste feasibility study that Ms Le Couteur referred to in her original question, we are looking forward to that report and study being presented to the government in October this year. In the meantime, of course, the Assembly passed last year the Waste Management and Resource Recovery Act, which commenced in the ACT on 1 July. There is a phased implementation to that new legislation. The first components are the licensing of waste facilities, registration of waste transporters and the implementation of a mandatory data reporting regime. Those will all go some way to addressing the issues that Ms Le Couteur raised. Again the waste feasibility study, when completed, and when its recommendations are presented to government later this year, will further that regulatory work.

MR STEEL: Can the minister provide an update on new benefits from the upcoming container deposit scheme?

MADAM ACTING SPEAKER: I have to rule that out of order. This was an issue about compliance and enforcement, and I do not think it is directly related.

MR STEEL: The minister mentioned the waste sustainability strategy, of which this would be a part.

MADAM ACTING SPEAKER: Okay, I will allow the question.

MS FITZHARRIS: Thank you, Mr Steel; indeed the container deposit scheme is just another component of the waste feasibility study. The original question went to recycling, and the entire point of the waste feasibility study was to increase our levels of recycling, to reduce the production of waste in the first place, and, for the waste that the city does produce, to make sure that we achieve even greater recycling rates. As has been said throughout the life of the study, many opportunities have presented themselves to the ACT government over the life of the study. A key feature of the waste feasibility study has been to take those opportunities when they present themselves.

One such opportunity was the introduction of a container deposit scheme in the ACT. Knowing, of course, that New South Wales will be starting a container deposit scheme later this year, the ACT Labor government announced last year its intention to commit to a container deposit scheme. We took that commitment to the election and we look forward to delivering that early in 2018.

Government—technology investments

MS ORR: My question is to the Chief Minister. Chief Minister, can you please update the Assembly on the recent investment announcements in the ACT?

MR BARR: I am very pleased to advise the Assembly that within the past 24 hours we have had two very significant announcements of investment in our city, coming from national and international institutions. Firstly, Microsoft and the Canberra Data Centres have announced a partnership to deliver a high-scale cloud out of a series of Canberra-owned and operated data centres in Fyshwick and Hume; a significant expansion of their physical presence. Secondly, I have just had the pleasure of joining the University of New South Wales Canberra to announce that the ACT government will be working with the university to build a major new campus on the eastern edge of our city.

These two announcements in the last 24 hours are big statements of confidence in our city. They are city-building investments of the utmost importance and quality. These are investments that do not come by accident. They come from the ACT government working closely with a number of national and international industry partners to deliver on this city's potential.

We have set our efforts and our focus on attracting national and international investment into our city. These are two further practical examples of the government delivering on its intent to rapidly grow our city's higher education sector. We will continue to support all the higher education institutions in our city.

The University of New South Wales Canberra has been here for 50 years. Today's announcement that we will develop an MOU and seek to significantly expand their presence will attract hundreds of millions of dollars of new investment to Canberra and create thousands and thousands of opportunities for students, researchers and employment. (*Time expired.*)

MS ORR: Chief Minister, how does a growing higher education sector align with the government's stated priorities?

MR BARR: I have been saying for some time now that the higher education sector in Canberra cannot grow fast enough. Today's announcement of a new campus for our city demonstrates that we are moving quickly to achieve these important policy outcomes and greater economic diversification for Canberra. The higher education and research sector is Canberra's single largest export earner. It is an industry that has significant potential in the ACT. It already contributes close to \$3 billion annually and employs 16,000 Canberrans. One in nine of us in this city either works or studies at one of our city's higher education institutions. This is a critical industry for the ACT.

We are delighted to work with UNSW Canberra, which has been here for 50 years already, to significantly expand their presence as part of what will be a fantastic new education precinct on the eastern edge of our CBD. The area in question is within the purview of the City Renewal Authority. In establishing the authority for city renewal, I was very clear that the government's priority would be to renew the city. That is exactly what we are doing—attracting new jobs and new investment to Canberra. It is a wonderful outcome for our city and, combined with the Microsoft investment, sets forward a very clear path for significant investment and growth in the territory economy.

MR STEEL: Chief Minister, what does an investment like that announced by Microsoft and Canberra Data Centres mean for Canberra?

MR BARR: This investment will see Microsoft deliver a world-class, secure and innovative open cloud platform that will ensure the digital transformation of Australian governments at federal, state and territory and local levels. It is an investment that demonstrates to the world that Canberra is a hub for innovation in cloud technology and services in a market sector that is becoming increasingly crucial for business, for individuals and governments around the world.

This announcement follows in the footsteps of recent successes for some of Canberra's own successful ICT companies, including software developer Intelledox, which announced in May this year that it had secured \$4 million in growth capital funding from Ellerston Ventures, recognising Intelledox's unique customer focus and data-driven technology offering.

That investment followed last year's acquisition of the online transaction business eWAY for \$US50 million by the US payment technology services giant Global Payments. These successes demonstrate that Canberra continues to develop and has developed world-quality products and world-quality innovators, and the establishment

of a global presence in Canberra by Microsoft will only strengthen our city's reputation as a world-class city for business and investment.

Canberra Hospital—emergency waiting times

MR MILLIGAN: My question is to the Minister for Health and Wellbeing. Minister, a constituent has told of her experiences in the Canberra Hospital on 8 August. She arrived at an almost full waiting room at 3 pm and waited for four hours before being escorted to acute care. The corridor was lined with patients on trolleys, some of whom waited until 11 pm or later to receive medical attention. At 8 pm a nurse told her that it was standing room only in emergency. She left after midnight and observed that the corridor was still lined with patients lying on trolleys. How often this month have patients been lying on trolleys at the Canberra Hospital due to the lack of beds?

MS FITZHARRIS: I will take the detail of the question on notice. It is not detail that I have in front of me. We know that we see every winter an increase in presentations to all emergency departments in all hospitals around the country. What we are seeing at the moment is that there has been an increase in presentations to Canberra Hospital emergency department, as there has been a smaller increase in presentations to the Calvary ED.

In relation to the specific questions that Mr Milligan asked, of course, all members are welcome, as are all constituents, to write to me about a specific experience that I cannot comment on in question time.

MR MILLIGAN: Minister, how often this month has it been standing room only in the emergency department of the Canberra Hospital?

MS FITZHARRIS: I reject the assertion that there is standing room only. Canberra Hospital emergency department has been expanded. It has expanded because our population is growing. It has also been expanded because, like hospitals all around the country, we are seeing increased presentations to emergency departments. One of the reasons we see that in the ACT is partially because of a lack of bulk-billing general practice services, among a whole range of other reasons. It is part of the reason why we have made a commitment in this budget to provide grants to bulk-billing general practices. It is also why we are expanding the walk-in centre network, so that people can access primary health care. But what we do see in emergency departments right around the country is increasing presentations, and increasing presentations of patients needing more complex care.

MRS JONES: Minister, other than rejecting the experience of Canberrans as an assertion, what backup plan does the hospital have to cope with peaks of demand, other than having people on trolleys for hours?

MS FITZHARRIS: Madam Acting Speaker, the Canberra Hospital plans each year for the flu season and for the winter season where we see more presentations. Part of that is a broad health strategy around public health. You will have seen both me and the chief health officer encouraging people to get a flu shot in the lead-up to the flu

season, because it helps to protect individuals and the community as a whole. The presence—

Mrs Jones: A point of order.

MADAM ACTING SPEAKER: A point of order.

Mrs Jones: Can we please stop the clock?

MADAM ACTING SPEAKER: Can we stop the clock, please?

Mrs Jones: It is on relevance. The question was about backup plans at the hospital, not advice to people to get flu shots.

MADAM ACTING SPEAKER: Standing order 118(a) asks that the minister be concise and directly relevant to the subject matter of the question. The question was, as I have noted, about backup plans at the hospital. So could I ask the minister to be directly relevant.

MS FITZHARRIS: Madam Acting Speaker, I note that, by the time the point of order was called, I was 27 seconds into my two-minute response. I indicated in the first part of my answer that Canberra Hospital, and indeed ACT Health, have a number of backup plans to assist with high levels of presentations during the winter season. Those include public health messages, which I will say very clearly are very important.

The backup plans at the hospital also go to increased staffing and to monitoring what else is happening in the rest of the hospital. We will, in the near future, also commence some information and community awareness activities, encouraging people to see their GP or attend a nurse walk-in centre early, if they feel that they are suffering from a cold or flu that could potentially get worse. Of course, we will also let people know that there is an emergency department on the north side, at Calvary; and, for a number of New South Wales residents, we would encourage them to use the very well-equipped Queanbeyan emergency department.

Government—procurement policies

MR WALL: My question is to the Minister for Economic Development. Minister, I have been contacted by the owner of Capital Medical Supplies, a supplier of medical products to ACT Health, amongst other organisations, which employs 10 staff and has been operational in the ACT for over 40 years. This business has been advised by the ACT government that they have decided to purchase from manufacturers directly as opposed to using local supply agents. Minister, why has the government taken this decision, given, as I have been informed, that there is no apparent cost saving by doing so?

MR BARR: I will need to check the assertions made by the member opposite. I will take the question on notice.

MR WALL: Minister, is this an example of a wider policy directive by the ACT government in purchasing decisions? If so, what is being done to minimise the risks of local jobs being jeopardised as a result of it?

MR BARR: The government's procurement policy balances value for money with positive weighting in favour of local suppliers in procurements. The policy has been in place for some time now. It is not buy local at any cost but, equally, it is not a policy of disregarding local providers either.

MR PARTON: Chief Minister, how is this ACT government policy supporting the growth of the local economy and protecting local jobs?

MR BARR: The suite of policies that the government has put in place, particularly the small business innovation partnerships program in recent times, has seen a tremendous opportunity for local businesses to partner with the ACT government. We have put in place a range of policies and programs, including the digital challenge, which has enabled very small start-up local businesses to get an opportunity to access ACT government procurement.

Of course we are not the only purchaser of goods and services in the territory. There is a lot of business-to-business procurement that occurs. We support the Canberra Business Chamber and a range of programs that they undertake to support local businesses to grow.

Ultimately the evidence that I would point to is that small business in the ACT is the most confident of any state or territory. Support for policies of the ACT government, as measured by the recent census small business index, demonstrates very strong support for policies of the territory government. That particularly relates to recent changes, over the past three or four years, to government procurement.

Animals—dangerous dogs

MR DOSZPOT: My question is to the Minister for Transport and City Services. Minister, on Saturday, 5 August a Wanniasa woman returned home to find three large dogs in her backyard. A neighbour had witnessed them savagely attack the woman's two small dogs, which were then found hiding in the house covered in blood and badly mutilated. The small dogs have survived but the vet bills are over \$5,500. The woman rang the police, who told her to ring domestic animal services. Access Canberra then told the woman that DAS was closed on weekends. Later that day the three attack dogs entered another property where a children's birthday party was being held. The dogs were again reported, and seized by DAS rangers, but subsequently released. The dogs are reported to be trained hunting dogs. Minister, when people are attacked by dogs or see animals being attacked by dogs, whom should they ring?

MS FITZHARRIS: I thank Mr Doszpot for his question. Unfortunately, the caller was given the wrong information through Access Canberra. They can call Access

Canberra. There is always a domestic animals services ranger who is contactable at all hours of the day to respond to these requests. Of course, if a person is injured, calling police is the right thing to do.

Like you, Mr Doszpot, I am increasingly concerned about the numbers of reported dog attacks. I think that as a community we need to have a very serious conversation about what it means to responsibly own a pet and to keep pets, particularly dogs, enclosed, and on leash when they are in a public place.

MR DOSZPOT: Minister, what has happened and will happen to the three dogs and their owner?

MS FITZHARRIS: I understand that that is the subject of an ongoing investigation by Domestic Animal Services.

MR WALL: Minister, why is it the government's continued policy to value the rights of the dangerous dog over that of the safety of the broader community?

MS FITZHARRIS: It is not.

Schools—safety

MR STEEL: My question is to the Minister for Education and Early Childhood Development. How is the government ensuring safe workplaces for teachers, educators and support staff?

MS BERRY: I thank Mr Steel for his question. As members will have noted, in late July I launched a new occupational violence policy and management plan with the Australian Education Union ACT branch to ensure that public school staff are safe and confident in doing what they are most passionate about, that is, teaching and facilitating learning.

This policy and the government's partnership with its workers and their union arose from recognition that there are some unique safety risks faced by school staff. The term "occupational violence" is a catch-all. It refers to any action, incident or behaviour that departs from reasonable conduct in which a person is assaulted, threatened, harmed or injured in the course of or as a direct result of their work.

While it is unfortunate that there has been a need to use this term to talk about these things that have been happening in ACT schools, it is important that occupational violence is identified and named when it occurs. The government has done that by recognising a problem and responding swiftly with leadership and decisive action. This is nation leading.

Best practice policy sets out the commitment of the ACT Education Directorate to ensure that the risk of occupational violence to staff in its workplaces is eliminated so far as is reasonably practicable; minimise the impact of any exposure; and provide rapid response and appropriate support following any incident that might occur.

Alongside this policy the government has committed to a plan that outlines what will be done in practical terms to implement the new policy. I am proud to be part of this nation-leading policy and plan in respecting teachers, educators and school support staff.

MR STEEL: Minister, why is the government's response to occupational violence in schools important?

MS BERRY: It is important because there are few greater priorities in the workplace ahead of making sure that workers return home in the same condition as they left. I am sure that we can all agree that a child has a right to access a high quality education that sets them on the path to getting the most for their future. In our schools the right of a child to an education comes first. It comes equal first. It shares that place with the right of our workers to be safe.

The ACT has a great education system and our community should be very proud of our schools. Our community should also be proud of the ACT government's approach to inclusion in ACT schools, where all young people are offered access to an education, regardless of their background or circumstances. The government wants to give every student a great education and the chance to a decent life.

Our system welcomes all children, irrespective of their background or behaviour, because the community values each child's right to an education. With this comes a recognition that some students will show up to school with complex and challenging behaviours that usually stem from things that are going on that are not their fault. Sometimes the behaviour of these children does become aggressive and there have been some instances where school staff have been exposed to occupational violence as a result. This is unacceptable, and the government will not tolerate it. The culture has to change, and it starts with school staff being empowered to not tolerate occupational violence and to report it when it happens.

The government's education policies are all about putting the student at the centre but this must be achieved in an environment where staff are safe and remain confident in their workplace. Balancing these two issues is complex but the government will not be timid about taking on difficult things.

MR PETERSSON: Minister, how can the ACT community support the government's effort to make schools safe workplaces?

MS BERRY: Achieving real and lasting change is how occupational violence will be managed in ACT schools, and it requires the support of the whole community. There are two key areas where I am asking the community to take on this support role. First, our whole community must respect school staff. We must genuinely respect our teachers, educators and school support staff, and do so in the way we both talk to and behave with them. The huge amount of work, time and personal investment in their work must also not be forgotten. As the individual concerns of parents arise, their own interactions with school teachers, leaders, learning support, administrative and facilities staff should remain courteous, appropriate and can never be allowed to drift into perpetrating occupational violence.

I have remarked before that school staff so often have a special relationship with our children. Sometimes they know more about our children than we do ourselves. This is the case because of just how deeply they care about their work and our children. I am sure we can all agree that this deserves great respect from us all.

The job of school staff is to educate and facilitate learning. Occupational violence is not “part of the job” and respecting school staff means that all of us are responsible for challenging that mindset and changing the culture. In this way the community should also demonstrate leadership. Our behaviour is a model for that of our children, and the standard that we set must be one of no tolerance for occupational violence, or violence at all.

Bimberi Youth Justice Centre—staffing

MRS KIKKERT: My question is to the Minister for Disability, Children and Youth. Minister, I have received notification that detainees at Bimberi are again being confined to their rooms because of staff shortages. On a usual day, at what time of the morning are detainees allowed out of their rooms after the overnight lockdown period?

MS STEPHEN-SMITH: I thank Mrs Kikkert for her question. I have been advised that on a normal day the average time that young people leave their cabins is around 8.30. However, this can change for a range of operational reasons, for example, if staff have to meet together in the morning, as I am advised they do at least one day a week, to plan and to assess the young people, and what they are going to do with them for a period of time.

Also, if young people are to go to court that day or are to be released that day, they may be kept in their cabins for longer. While there is a relatively standard time, this is dependent on operational requirements.

MRS KIKKERT: At what time were detainees allowed out of their rooms on Saturday 29 July and on Monday 31 July?

MS STEPHEN-SMITH: I thank Mrs Kikkert for her supplementary question but I will have to take that one on notice.

MS LEE: Minister, between 6 am and 10 pm on Saturday, 29 July how many senior managers were working at Bimberi and how many of them were filling in for other staff?

MS STEPHEN-SMITH: I thank Ms Lee for her supplementary question. Again, given the level of detail in that question I will take it on notice.

Bimberi Youth Justice Centre—complaints

MRS JONES: My question is to the Minister for Disability, Children and Youth. Minister, I refer to your comment on 3 August that it was true that you had sought out

the identity of those who had raised concerns about Bimberi in anonymous emails, specifically because you—and I quote:

... and the senior executive of the directorate were keen to ensure that these matters could be fully investigated ... So yes, the directorate responded to those emails to try to elicit further information.

Minister, how successful was the directorate in identifying the author or authors of those emails?

MS STEPHEN-SMITH: I thank Mrs Jones for her question. I will take that question on notice because, obviously, there are some sensitivities around ongoing investigations in relation to these matters. I want to be sure of what I am able to say.

MRS JONES: Minister, why would we need to know the identity of an anonymous email correspondent in order to fully investigate concerns?

MS STEPHEN-SMITH: I thank Mrs Jones for her question. What I actually said in my statement was that the directorate had sought out the author or authors of the email earlier this year, because the matters raised in those emails were extremely serious and they were very keen to get some further information. It is helpful in terms of being able to investigate matters, and for the authorities that have the statutory capacity to investigate matters, for people to be able to make reports. Again, I will take the detail of the question on notice about the identity. But my statement was more around the need to get some further detail of the allegations that had been raised because, as I have said on multiple occasions, those allegations were very serious and both the directorate and I were very keen to get further information about the allegations that were being made so that the specific matters that were being raised could be fully investigated.

MRS KIKKERT: Minister, you keep going on about further information. Precisely what further information were you and the directorate hoping to obtain that would allow the allegations to be fully investigated?

MS STEPHEN-SMITH: I thank Mrs Kikkert for her supplementary question. As I have said on a number of occasions, a number of descriptions of incidents were vague in terms of the time frames in which they occurred and in terms of the people involved. It is very difficult to investigate those kinds of allegations without a clearer picture of exactly when those were alleged to have occurred. That was an example of the further information that we were seeking.

Budget—emergency services

MR PETTERSSON: My question is to the Minister for Police and Emergency Services. Could the minister please update the Assembly on what support is contained in the 2017-18 ACT budget for our emergency services?

MR GENTLEMAN: I thank Mr Pettersson for his question and his interest in our front-line staff. As part of the 2017-18 budget, the ACT government has announced a

number of initiatives in the emergency services portfolio that will enhance emergency services capabilities and support our hardworking personnel.

Just some of the initiatives announced in this year's budget include \$6.6 million to employ professional call takers and dispatchers in the emergency 000 communication centre; \$576,000 to enable a second crew to be deployed at Ainslie fire and rescue station; and \$2.9 million to relocate the ESA's backup communications centre and ACT Ambulance's non-emergency patient transport facilities.

There is also \$147,000 for a recruit college for 16 firefighters to get more firefighters on the road and continue our efforts to actively encourage female participation in line with the women in emergency services strategy.

It is important that we continue to recruit staff in all our emergency services portfolios to ensure that rosters can be filled, workloads remain reasonable and staff can provide relief for each other. It is important too that they get home to their families when the need occurs.

In this context, I am particularly pleased with the initiative to recruit and train 16 new firefighters who will be ready to join the front line in May 2018. These new recruits will meet our election commitment to recruit more firefighters to address shortages and to replace staff likely to leave the service. It also continues our commitment to the women in emergency services strategy 50:50 recruitment in ACT Fire & Rescue and improving work force diversity.

MR PETTERSSON: Could the minister please inform the Assembly how this support directly benefits the frontline employees of the ACT Emergency Services Agency?

MR GENTLEMAN: The announcements in the 2017-18 ACT budget provide further government support that will assist our ESA staff and volunteers in their efforts to protect the ACT community. I thank all the staff and volunteers who work across each off the services within the ESA. They do a fantastic job. The government is committed to ensuring that our frontline emergency services employees and volunteers have the right equipment, resources and support to do their jobs well and safely. All of our investments in facilities, vehicles and protective equipment directly benefit the staff and volunteers who use those items on a daily basis while responding to emergencies.

I particularly draw the Assembly's attention to our commitment in the 2017-18 budget to provide \$100 annually as a subsidy for ACT firefighting volunteers for fitness programs and gym memberships. While small, this initiative will provide a positive impact on the cost of living for firefighting volunteers by reducing their out-of-pocket expenses for fitness-related activities.

In line with the 2016 election commitment, this announcement is a tangible means by which the ACT government will encourage and support volunteers to maintain the required fitness standard to perform their important roles.

MS CODY: Could the minister please provide additional information on how the ACT Emergency Services Agency is planning for the future needs of the Canberra community?

MADAM ACTING SPEAKER: Could you please repeat the question, Ms Cody?

MS CODY: Certainly. Could the minister please provide additional information on how the ACT Emergency Services Agency is planning for the future needs of the Canberra community?

MADAM ACTING SPEAKER: I will call the minister, but because the original question was about the budget, the minister will have to rely on the budget to answer that question; otherwise it would be out of order.

MR GENTLEMAN: Indeed; thank you, Madam Acting Speaker. As demonstrated by our commitments in the ACT 2017-18 budget, the ACT government and ESA are working to build operational capability and deliver against the ESA strategic reform agenda. The strategic reform agenda aims to ensure cohesive operations across ACT Fire & Rescue, the ACT Rural Fire Service, the ACT State Emergency Service and the ACT Ambulance Service.

This is demonstrated in this budget by our initiative to fund professional call-takers and dispatchers in the emergency 000 communications centre. This initiative follows on from extensive consultation with staff and consideration of the issues involved in running a modern, effective communications centre, and is a strong example of the strategic thinking and planning that has gone into our budget initiatives.

The ACT continues to be one of the safest cities in the world in which to live, and Canberrans can be rightly proud of our emergency services and the support they provide for the Canberra community. The ACT government is committed to working with ESA to continually strengthen and update our emergency services response as our city grows and changes.

Budget—justice and community safety portfolio

MR HANSON: My question is to the Attorney-General and relates to the budget cuts being applied within the JACS Directorate. In estimates hearings the directorate was asked if cuts would result in job losses. The responses were:

There may be some reductions in employee expenses.

Followed by:

There may be a reclassification of positions in some instances.

Attorney-General, will you guarantee there will be no job cuts in your directorate as a result of your budget cuts?

MR RAMSAY: I stand by these statements that were made in relation to the question in the annual reports hearings, and we will continue to maintain the safety—

Mr Hanson: On a point of order, Madam Acting Speaker, on relevance. I can see where he is going. He is going to refer me back to answers I have already got from the estimates process. The question was specifically whether he would guarantee there would be no job cuts within his directorate. That is not an answer that was provided in estimates, on a point of relevance.

Mr Steel: On the point of order, ministers cannot be directed to answer questions in a particular way.

MADAM ACTING SPEAKER: The standing orders clearly say that the answer should be concise and directly relevant. I do note that we were only 16 seconds—

Mr Hanson: I'll take a yes or a no, Madame Acting Speaker.

MADAM ACTING SPEAKER: I cannot direct Mr Ramsay to answer yes or no. However, I can ask him to be directly—

Mr Hanson interjecting—

MADAM ACTING SPEAKER: Order, Mr Hanson! If you want me to make a ruling on your point of order you will be quiet. I cannot direct Mr Ramsay to give a yes or no answer. However, I can remind him of the standing orders and ask him to be directly relevant to the subject matter of the question, which was: will you guarantee that there will be job cuts? Mr Ramsay, if you would like to be directly relevant to the question in the remaining one minute and 44 seconds.

MR RAMSAY: Thank you Madam Acting Speaker. As I say, we will continue to work on maintaining the safety and work across the directorate, and the directorate will work in a range of ways to ensure that the staff is able to provide the highest level of safety for Canberra people.

MR HANSON: Is that a yes, or a no?

MR RAMSAY: I refer to my previous answer.

MR COE: Attorney, have you provided any guidance to the CPSU about whether anyone will be forcibly reclassified or whether anyone will lose their jobs in your agency?

MR RAMSAY: No.

Roads—Erindale

MS LAWDER: My question is to the Minister for Transport and City Services. On 27 February I wrote seeking clarification on plans for improvement to Gartside Street

in the Erindale group centre. A master plan design of the Erindale shopping centre was completed five years ago and it has taken five years for the stage 1 development to be started. On 8 May the minister responded to my letter informing me that stage 1 work was due to commence in May 2017. I followed up on the lack of progress in a letter dated 8 June, to which the minister responded on 4 July stating that work was due to commence in July. Minister, we are now in August. Why has work not started, and will the delay affect the completion date?

MS FITZHARRIS: I thank Ms Lawder for her question and follow up. It is regrettable that there have been some delays in commencing that piece of work. It will start this month. Those delays unfortunately were around contract negotiations. The contract for design was, as you know, awarded in January 2016. Stakeholder consultation to inform the concept was completed last year. Public consultation on the preliminary sketch plans happened midway through last year. I understand that construction will start this month and is scheduled to be completed in November. While I regret the delays in the commencement of this construction, we all look forward to seeing those works completed in Gartside Street.

MS LAWDER: Minister, what consultation, if any, has taken place to advise building owners, tenants and businesses of the delay?

MS FITZHARRIS: I believe that there has been ongoing consultation with local businesses in particular who will benefit from the upgrades at Gartside Street. If that has not happened more recently, I will make sure that local businesses know that those works will get underway this month.

MR PARTON: Minister, can you explain why there has been delay after delay on this project?

MS FITZHARRIS: There have been delays. On many occasions the development of a contract and the negotiation to complete that contract can be protracted. In this case we will see upgrades at Gartside Street completed in December this year. We are also very excited about other upgrades to local shopping centres, group shopping centres and the town centre, particularly in the Tuggeranong region, in Kambah, in Erindale at Gartside Street, and of course those in the Tuggeranong town centre.

Transport—electric buses

MS CODY: My question is to the Minister for Transport and City Services. Can the minister update the Assembly on the progress of the electric bus trial?

MS FITZHARRIS: I thank Ms Cody for her question. I am very pleased to update members on the progress of the electric bus trial. I was very pleased to announce in the last few days that Transport Canberra has entered into contracts with two vendors to supply three alternative energy vehicles for a 12-month bus trial right here in Canberra.

This announcement further strengthens the government's commitment to providing Canberra with an innovative and integrated modern public transport system. It also

clearly demonstrates this government's resolve to invest in our bus system as one part of an integrated transport network.

The two complete electric buses will be supplied by Carbridge, who currently supply buses to Sydney and Brisbane airports for passenger transfer from car parks to terminals. The third vehicle, a hybrid electric bus, will be provided by Volvo Australia. One of the complete electric buses and the one hybrid electric bus have already been delivered to Transport Canberra's Tuggeranong depot and are being fitted with the appropriate systems and equipment as we speak. Driver training will also be undertaken as, of course, safety remains a top priority.

It is expected that these two new vehicles will enter service next month, while the final complete electric bus is expected to enter service later this year. I look forward to continuing to update the Canberra community at a launch for these buses in the coming weeks.

MS CODY: Minister, how will the electric buses benefit the territory?

MS FITZHARRIS: These electric buses will provide significant benefits to the territory as we continue to renew and expand our bus fleet. The trial presents a great opportunity to monitor how these new-technology buses can supplement our existing transport network and the Transport Canberra bus fleet. The performance of the electric buses will be measured across a range of areas, including environmental impact, customer comfort and convenience, and operational compatibility with the existing fleet.

We anticipate that the alternative fuels trial will demonstrate improvements in the area of environmental impact through the elimination or reduction of carbon outputs. We also expect greater customer comfort and convenience, thanks to a quieter and smoother ride, while maintaining the latest benefits of climate-controlled travel. As I mentioned this morning, on my recent North American trip I had the pleasure of riding on a number of electric buses, including in Montreal and Los Angeles, and can attest that they are both quiet and comfortable.

Around the world, cities are adopting these technologies. The adoption of them right here in Canberra shows the progressive nature of the territory in trialling and adopting new and emerging technologies to benefit the community. The electric bus trial will be used to assess the success of implementing new technology in the fleet, with the full intention of further innovation over the coming years.

MR COE: Minister, how did the specs in the contracting tender differ for this contract for an electric vehicle compared to the failed contract about a year ago?

MS FITZHARRIS: I thank Mr Coe for the supplementary. What we were able to learn when we first went to market for an electric bus trial early last year was that there have been significant advancements over the past 12 to 18 months in the electric bus market in the ACT. We were able to adapt some of the specifications in the tender which has enabled us to have, as I mentioned, two electric buses and one hybrid vehicle. That will enable us to trial two different types of buses throughout the entire

Transport Canberra network to see what sort of future purchases we can make in the replacement of our bus fleet.

Mr Coe: Point of order. On a matter of relevance, the question was: what were the different specs for the electric bus—as distinct from the hybrid—in this contract as opposed to the previous contract. I ask that the minister be directly relevant.

MADAM DEPUTY SPEAKER: The question was about the specifications in the contract and I will ask the minister if she can answer the question.

MS FITZHARRIS: I have completed my answer. If there is any further detail I can provide on the specific specifications of a specific tender, I will take that on notice and report back to the Assembly.

Public housing—renewal program

MR PARTON: My question is to the Minister for Housing and Suburban Development. Minister, in addition to the sites already announced for replacement housing under the public housing renewal program, how many additional sites will be required to complete that program, whether they be in established suburbs or greenfield suburbs?

MS BERRY: I thank Mr Parton for his question. Of course, the program has been going for some time now, and is nearing completion. We are on track to ensuring that the government meets the requirements under the agreement to replace 1,288 housing properties with newer dwellings all across the city that will meet the needs of our tenants.

Because this number changes as we are building and replacing homes over a period of time, I will take the detail of the question on notice. I can probably get a response to you today on the actual numbers of houses that we have completed, those that are online or are being constructed, and sites that we might be pursuing as part of an expression of interest for the purchase of private dwellings.

MR PARTON: Minister, is the government prepared for the possibility of not making the deadline for the ARI federal money?

MS BERRY: I thank Mr Parton for the supplementary question. I am advised that we are on track to meet the deadline proposed in the agreement.

MR HANSON: What suburbs will the additional developments be located in; and will any of those developments be sited on community facility zoned land?

MS BERRY: I refer the member to my first response to Mr Parton's initial question: I will bring back some advice about the actual numbers because those numbers move as purchases are being completed and as buildings are coming online.

Mr Hanson: A point of order, Madam Acting Speaker, my question was directly about where, not how many. The minister may be getting to that, but she was saying

she was providing an answer on the specific numbers. On relevance, my question was what suburbs and would any be sited on community facility zoned land.

MADAM ACTING SPEAKER: In the remaining minute and 20 seconds, minister, if you could concentrate on the issues of location that would be helpful.

MS BERRY: I understood there to be two parts to that question; I was responding to the first part. The second part is that no, there is no intention to build, as part of this renewal program, replacement properties on additional community facility land.

Government—project coordination

MS LEE: My question is to the Chief Minister and Minister for Economic Development. Chief Minister, one of the responsibilities that the former director-general of economic development had was as coordinator-general, responsible for coordinating major ACT projects. Has the coordinator-general function been kept and, if so, which ACT government official is responsible for coordinating major projects?

MR BARR: The role that the former director-general had has been shared in a variety of different areas, depending on the nature of the major project. Were it to relate to something within the land area, for example, and the City Renewal Authority, it would fall under the purview of that authority.

MS LEE: Chief Minister, which official now has responsibility for considering the ACT government response to unsolicited proposals?

MR BARR: There is a committee of directors-general who undertake assessments of unsolicited proposals.

MR DOSZPOT: Chief Minister, what actions have you taken to assure yourself that the governance of the role of coordinator-general and examination of unsolicited proposals are beyond reproach?

MR BARR: The government processes include a published set of guidelines that provide a step-by-step process on how the government assesses unsolicited proposals. There is within those guidelines, which were updated recently—

Mr Coe interjecting—

MADAM ACTING SPEAKER: Order!

MR BARR: There is—

Opposition members interjecting—

MADAM ACTING SPEAKER: Order!

MR BARR: Thank you, Madam Acting Speaker. As I was saying in relation to unsolicited proposal guidelines, they are publicly available. They have recently been revised and reflect best practice across this country.

Budget—arts funding

MS CHEYNE: My question is to the Minister for the Arts and Community Events. Minister, can you please outline how the 2017-18 budget benefits Canberra arts facilities?

MR RAMSAY: I thank Ms Cheyne for her question and her dedicated interest in the arts. In the 2017-18 budget the government is investing in the growth and the sustainability of the ACT arts facilities which underpin so much of our capital's cultural activity.

One of our key election commitments is to fund stage 2 of the Belconnen Arts Centre, which will allow the centre to grow into a major hub for the arts not just in Belconnen but also across the entire ACT and region. Stage 2 will include a 400-seat multipurpose auditorium, a new dance space, and expanded exhibition and workshop spaces, which will support the creative practice of an ever-growing cohort of diverse local artists.

Many of Canberra's other much-loved arts facilities will be receiving ongoing safety upgrades to their premises to ensure that they are providing the best possible environment for creative and social enterprise. An upgrade to the lighting at the Canberra Museum and Gallery will improve the efficiency of energy use and provide safer, better quality lighting to display their unique and beautiful collections.

We are also funding future thinking about another iconic Canberra cultural institution, the Canberra Theatre. It is becoming clear that there is potential for our local theatre complex to grow into a major regional cultural centre. The government will fund a community consultation process on this as a first step.

Investment in our arts facilities is just one of the ways the government is delivering on its election commitments in this budget to make this great city we love even better.

MS CHEYNE: Can the minister outline how the 2017-18 budget benefits Canberra arts events?

MR RAMSAY: I thank Ms Cheyne for her supplementary question. We know that investment in the arts contributes to building a city that is creative, livable and vibrant, and our accessible, high quality and often quite edgy community events are a great way for Canberrans to engage with the arts. Through engagement with the arts, we are invited to see the world and our place within it differently, build community and explore identity.

This budget includes funding for three years for Art, Not Apart, a well-loved festival that challenges notions of place and identity, activates spaces in our city in quite

unconventional ways and shakes up traditional ideas. By providing unique experiences and installations in unexpected places, emerging artists gain exposure and offer the community an interactive, thought-provoking arts encounter.

We will also be funding the Design Canberra Festival, which celebrates and promotes Canberra as a global city of design. Through over 100 events, including exhibitions, talks, tours, site activations, markets and open homes, the festival raises the local, national and international profile of Canberra's prolific, influential and commercially successful craft and design scene.

Within my portfolio, we will be funding new community-based arts festivals in Woden and Gungahlin, which will be a new step in exploring the arts identity of our town centres which currently do not have their own arts facilities.

The government is proud to be supporting events like these which contribute to the thriving, diverse arts ecology that we are so fortunate to have here in the ACT.

MS ORR: Minister, how does the government's investment in the 2017-18 budget benefit Canberra artists and the wider community?

MR RAMSAY: I thank Ms Orr for the supplementary question. The budget not only supports arts facilities and events but also directly benefits individual artists, independent artists groups, students and the broader community. We are vastly increasing the baseline funding for arts projects grants. This funding encourages artistically interesting and exciting projects, career development for local artists and the provision of quality arts activities for the benefit of the ACT community.

We also separately fund film projects through ScreenACT, subsidise the cost of hiring Llewellyn Hall and provide a preserved pool of funding for arts projects by Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander artists. We also support the artists of the future through funding programs at ANU, including their new advanced music performance program.

The arts not only contribute to the cultural and economic fabric of our society but we know that they are critical to the health and wholeness of all of us. For example, creative expression has been shown to improve the lives of people living with conditions such as Alzheimer's, Parkinson's and dementia.

The \$21.6 million injection of new funding, on top of our existing commitments to facilities, events and artists themselves, continues to position Canberra as a significant centre of arts and culture both nationally and globally. This government's increasing investment in Canberra's thriving arts scene recognises the contribution that the arts make to the identity, the vibrancy and the livability of our city, and I look forward to continuing to work with the Canberra arts community to ensure that arts and culture in the ACT are inclusive, accessible and community building.

Mr Barr: I ask that all further questions be placed on the notice paper.

Supplementary answer to question without notice Bimberi Youth Justice Centre—complaints

MS STEPHEN-SMITH: While I do not have the exact words in front of me, I believe that, in response to a question I was asked, I referred to an “ongoing investigation”. I need to clarify that I was referring to investigations into the allegations that have been raised. To the best of my knowledge, there is currently no workplace misconduct investigation being undertaken in relation to these matters.

Papers

Madam Acting Speaker presented the following papers:

Estimates 2017-2018—Select Committee—Report—Appropriation Bill 2017-2018 and Appropriation (Office of the Legislative Assembly) Bill 2017-2018—Speaker’s response to recommendation 14, dated 10 August 2017.

Acting Speaker—Instrument of Appointment, pursuant to standing order 6A—Assistant Speaker Steel (8 and 9 August 2017), dated 7 August 2017.

Financial Management Act—consolidated financial report Paper and statement by minister

MR BARR (Kurrajong—Chief Minister, Treasurer, Minister for Economic Development and Minister for Tourism and Major Events) (3.39): For the information of members, I present the following paper:

Financial Management Act, pursuant to section 26—Consolidated Financial Report—Financial quarter ending 30 June 2017.

I ask leave to make a statement in relation to the paper.

Leave granted.

MR BARR: I present to the Assembly the June quarter consolidated financial report for the territory. This report is required under section 26 of the Financial Management Act 1996. I am pleased to advise the Assembly that the June interim outcome headline net operating balance for the general government sector shows the territory budget in balance, with a very modest deficit now of just \$10.6 million. This result is a \$63.3 million improvement on the estimated deficit at the time of the 2017-18 budget, which was \$73.9 million. This improvement in the territory’s finances reflects higher than expected revenue as well as lower than forecast expenditure.

I can also advise the Assembly that net debt in the general government sector as at 30 June 2017 was \$1,452.9 million, which was a decrease in net debt of \$193.6 million from the period 12 months ago, to 30 June 2016, when it was \$1,646.5 million. Net financial liabilities also decreased compared to the 30 June 2016 outcome, by \$2,730.3 million. It is a very encouraging result for the 2016-17 financial

year—a fiscal position in balance, and we are delighted with this outcome. We look forward to continuing the government’s fiscal policy settings into the future.

Auditor-General’s report No 4 of 2017—government response Paper and statement by minister

MS BERRY (Ginninderra—Deputy Chief Minister, Minister for Education and Early Childhood Development, Minister for Housing and Suburban Development, Minister for the Prevention of Domestic and Family Violence, Minister for Women and Minister for Sport and Recreation) (3.41): For the information of members, I present the following paper:

Auditor-General Act, pursuant to subsection 21(1)—Auditor-General’s Report No 4/2017—Performance information in ACT public schools—Government response.

I ask leave to make a statement in relation to the paper.

Leave granted.

MS BERRY: I am pleased to table the government’s response to the ACT Auditor-General’s report, *Performance information in ACT public schools*, report No 4 of 2017. As members will be aware, on 31 May 2017 the Auditor-General tabled her performance audit report. The report contains seven recommendations to build on existing work and to improve outcomes for children in our public schools.

National and international assessments of student achievement across Australia have shown little improvement despite an overall per student increase in expenditure. The ACT has not been immune from this trend. The ACT is traditionally reported as the highest performing Australian jurisdiction in international standardised testing, and at or near the top in most domains for Australian standardised testing, such as NAPLAN. At least some of this achievement is due to a generally higher socioeconomic demographic than other jurisdictions.

The Auditor-General utilised analysis, commissioned by the Education Directorate in 2016, to obtain a more detailed, like-for-like analysis of the performance of ACT public schools, to find that ACT schools are performing below similar schools in other jurisdictions, particularly in relation to numeracy.

The Auditor-General found that the Education Directorate has recognised this and commenced initiatives to improve the use of student performance information in schools. Initiatives include developing sound principles for school improvement, identifying better ways to manage and use student performance information and developing systems and tools to support student performance information collection and analysis. The school improvement model identifies the importance of using evidence to support school improvement and the need for systems to collect and analyse school-level data. It also identifies the need to provide accurate, accessible and consistent information about students’ achievements to families and carers.

In 2016 the government implemented a more rigorous school review process based on the nine domains of the national school improvement tool. In order to establish the strongest possible implementation of this process, the Education Directorate commissioned trained experts from the Australian Council for Educational Research as external review panel chairs. Each panel also includes one principal and an external expert. The new school review approach enables closer interrogation of each school's evidence against each of its priorities and, importantly, enables an explicit examination of each school's overall performance based on system data.

This government is committed to further enhancing the ACT public school system. As members are aware, in February 2017 I made a statement in the Assembly emphasising the core value of equity in the ACT school and early childhood education and care systems and the benefits that accrue when equity is achieved.

The government's future of education consultations will shape a clear vision for the future of ACT education for the years ahead. We are consulting broadly and deeply with the ACT community, students, parents and carers, educators, education leaders and community leaders from different fields. We are bringing different perspectives to the issues facing students and helping to guide the government's pursuit of greater equity in a high performing education system.

The response to date has been very encouraging and the findings will inform the future of education strategy expected to be released in 2018. The direction for education will address multiple aspects under one strategy which reflects extensive community engagement throughout all stages of its development. Developing a strategy for the future of education will be underpinned by strong, rich, sustained conversations with the ACT community.

Parents and carers must be confident that their own financial or social circumstances will not significantly affect or restrict the quality of the education available to their children. Through the conversation, we will explore local factors that enhance or hinder a successful education experience being accessible to and successful for all children and young people. Achieving a thriving and inclusive education community where no-one is excluded because of their background, culture, gender, class, religion, sexuality, wealth or ability is vital, and everyone benefits when we achieve this equity.

As Minister for Education and Early Childhood Development, I am committed to an equal chance for every child to have a great education and be prepared for a bright future, regardless of their circumstances, characteristics or background. Over the coming year I want to take our education system even further and use these conversations with the community to build on the lessons that we have learned from the Auditor-General's audit of performance information. I look forward to updating members on the implementation of this in the coming months.

Paper

Mr Gentleman presented the following paper:

Loose Fill Asbestos Insulation Eradication Scheme—Update on the ACT Government response—Quarterly report—1 April to 30 June 2017.

**Electricity Feed-in (Large-scale Renewable Energy Generation) Act—Next Generation Renewable Auction Review—final summary report—government response
Papers and statement by minister**

MR RATTENBURY (Kurrajong—Minister for Climate Change and Sustainability, Minister for Justice, Consumer Affairs and Road Safety, Minister for Corrections and Minister for Mental Health) (3.47): I present the following papers:

Electricity Feed-in (Large-scale Renewable Energy Generation) Act, pursuant to subsection 22(5)—Review of Next Generation Renewables Auction and the Electricity Feed-in (Large-scale Renewable Energy Generation) Act 2011—Final report—NGR and large FiT Act Review—

Report, dated 15 May 2017, prepared by Jacobs.

I ask leave to make a statement in relation to the papers.

Leave granted.

MR RATTENBURY: I am pleased today to table a review of both the Electricity Feed-in (Large-scale Renewable Energy Generation) Act 2011 and two capacity releases made in 2016 which allowed the ACT government to conduct its next generation renewables auction. The next generation renewables auction represented the last down-payment needed for the territory to reach its nation-leading renewable electricity target of 100 per cent by 2020 as well as its commitment to reduce the territory's greenhouse gas emissions by 40 per cent on 1990 levels by 2020. When generating, the successful next generation renewables auction projects will generate around 718,000 megawatt-hours per year of clean, sustainable renewable electricity, enough to power 98,000 Canberra homes.

The intent of the act is to provide feed-in tariff support for large-scale renewable electricity. Supporting this, the act has four objectives: to promote the establishment of large-scale renewable electricity generators from a range of sources in the Australian capital region and elsewhere; to promote the development of the renewable electricity generation industry in the ACT and Australia; to reduce the ACT's greenhouse gas emissions and assist in it reaching its emissions reduction targets; and to reduce the ACT's reliance on non-renewable electricity sources while minimising the cost to electricity consumers.

The large-scale renewable energy generation act was originally passed by the Legislative Assembly in December 2011. Since that time the ACT government has held four reverse auctions for up to 640 megawatts of renewable electricity feed-in tariff entitlements. The auctions awarded feed-in tariff entitlements to three large-scale solar farms located in the ACT with a total capacity of 40 megawatts, and seven wind farms located in New South Wales, Victoria and South Australia with a total capacity of 600 megawatts.

The first successful auction project to begin generation was the Royalla Solar Farm, located south of Canberra on the Monaro Highway, which began generation in August 2014. The last successful auction project to begin generation will be the third stage of the Hornsdale Wind Farm in South Australia that will begin feed-in tariff supported generation in October 2019.

When all the renewable energy generators supported under the act are generating, around 2.3 million megawatt hours of clean, renewable electricity will be generated by them each year, which is enough to supply around three-quarters of the ACT's forecast 2020 electricity supply. The remaining renewable electricity supply needed to reach the 100 per cent by 2020 renewable electricity target will come from the ACT's share of the national renewable energy target, its voluntary GreenPower purchases as well as its rooftop solar generation.

The act requires that a review be undertaken into it after every five years of operation. Its first five years of operation finished in December 2016. The review was required to cover the progress of the construction of successful projects, the act's effectiveness in achieving its objectives and the feed-in tariff costs that are passed on by the successful auction projects to the ACT's electricity consumers. The review of the act included a number of key findings and highlighted the overall success of the act and the ACT government's reverse auction program in general.

In summary, the review of the act found that it has been successful in stimulating competitively priced wind and solar projects that proceeded to commercial operation; that ACT auction processes were well regarded and understood by the renewable energy industry and that this had assisted in delivering competitive auction outcomes; the construction of all the generators awarded feed-in tariff entitlements under the act was on track; the auctions held under the act established and enhanced the ACT's reputation as a hub for renewable energy; the act was achieving all of its objectives; and the net cost of the ACT's large feed-in tariff scheme compared favourably with the support cost of the commonwealth's renewable energy target scheme.

Importantly, the review validated the government's use of the reverse auction mechanism to support large-scale renewable electricity generation. It also found that after 2025 the ACT's large feed-in tariff scheme should have no net cost to ACT electricity consumers and, in fact, the supported wind and solar generators will eventually be making net payments back to ActewAGL distribution, which manages the feed-in tariff payments. This forecast needs to be treated with some caution because it is based on a number of assumptions, one of which is that Australia will reintroduce national carbon pricing in 2022. However, the prediction is a major endorsement of the design of the large feed-in tariff scheme and shows that, in the long run, ACT electricity users should not be penalised because of the territory's ambitious renewable electricity target.

The next generation renewables auction opened for proposals on 1 April 2016 and closed on 25 May 2016. Fifteen proposals were received from 14 proponents. The total capacity of all the submitted proposals was 1,078 megawatts, around six times

the capacity for which feed-in tariff entitlements could be granted. On 23 August 2016 the former government announced the 109-megawatt Hornsdale Wind Farm stage 3 and the 91-megawatt Crookwell 2 Wind Farm as the successful next generation renewables auction proposals. The Hornsdale Wind Farm stage 3 located south-east of Port Augusta in South Australia is the third stage of the Hornsdale Wind Farm that was a winner in the first and second wind auctions conducted by the ACT government in 2014 and 2015. When announced, its feed-in tariff price of \$73 per megawatt hour was the lowest publically known wind support price in Australia.

Like other successful auction projects, the Hornsdale Wind farm stage 3 and the Crookwell 2 Wind Farm will deliver significant local economic benefits to the ACT. These include the establishment of a new hydrogen mobility and storage program, in partnership with industry. A further very significant local investment delivered by both the Hornsdale Wind Farm stage 3 and the Crookwell 2 Wind Farm is \$25 million in funding to support the government's new next generation energy storage program that will support up to 5,000 renewable electricity storage units across the territory and will be one of the largest storage rollouts for domestic households in the world.

Both proposals represented exceptional value for money for the ACT government, and this has been supported by the review's findings. I am also pleased to report that both projects are making excellent progress, with the Hornsdale Wind Farm stage 3 reaching financial close in February and the Crookwell 2 Wind Farm reaching financial close in November last year. Both are currently proceeding to construction.

The act requires that a review of each capacity release be undertaken within six months of its last grant of feed-in tariff entitlement. The act also requires the responsible minister to present a copy of the review to the Assembly no later than six months after the end of the period in which the review is undertaken. On 19 January 2016 the Environment, Planning and Sustainable Development Directorate engaged Jacobs Australia to undertake the review of both the auction and the act. Its review of the auction was delivered to the directorate on 17 February 2017, within six months of the last grant of feed-in tariff entitlement under the capacity release which was made on 18 August 2016.

The review included wide consultation with successful and unsuccessful auction proponents, members of the next generation renewables auction advisory panel, renewable electricity industry participants and members of the government. The review of the act included a number of key findings and highlighted the overall success of the act and the ACT government reverse auction program in general.

In summary, the review found that the administration of the auction was efficient and effective and well received by industry; the auction was more refined and had greater clarity than previous auctions; the auction process was not excessively burdensome for proponents; the auction's framework was transparent and well received by proponents; a high level of competition was generated and high value-for-money outcomes were obtained in the auction; and the auction was successful in fulfilling the objectives of the act.

As well as tabling the review document I would like to table the government's response to its key recommendations. Both this document and the review itself will be published on the website of the Environment, Planning and Sustainable Development Directorate. This information is relevant to many governments across Australia and the world, following the ACT government's leadership in the use of reverse auctions. The review made nine recommendations, two of which are duplicates of each other. Of these, the government fully agrees with the following: to review the risk of excessive concentration in future auctions; and the possibility that feed-in tariff entitlement holders may surrender their entitlements needs to be explicitly considered. The government considers responding to these recommendations will contribute to ensuring effective, best practice auction processes.

The government agrees in part with all remaining recommendations, which are: in future auctions specialist consultants should consider the energy storage contribution and its value for money impact on ACT electricity consumers; the uncertainties that are associated with the various elements of the ACT's 100 per cent by 2020 renewable electricity target should be given more consideration in any future auction; members of the advisory panel and subpanels of any future auction should have both subject matter and industry expertise; the act should make clear that large generation certificates created under it that are transferred to the ACT government must be voluntarily surrendered; the wholesale electricity price reference point for the ACT's feed-in tariff payment settlements should be New South Wales instead of the reference point in each feed-in tariff supported generator's host state; and the energy storage contribution in the next generation renewables auction should be included in the act.

The government has noted the recommendation that the act should make clear that the large generation certificates that are transferred to the ACT government must be voluntarily surrendered. The government has committed to the voluntary surrender of the LGC's transferred to it by the renewable electricity generators supported by its large-scale feed-in tariff program. It retains the right to reconsider whether this remains appropriate in the context of the current review being conducted by the commonwealth government of its climate change policies or other matters as the case requires. The ACT government is awaiting the outcome of the commonwealth government's current review of Australia's climate change policies before it can have certainty that voluntary surrenders will necessarily add to the national emission reduction effort.

With respect to the recommendations the government agrees to in part, it is appropriate that uncertainties about the various elements of the ACT's 100 per cent by 2020 renewable electricity target should be recognised and assessed. The uncertainties need to be bound by reasonable tolerances. It also appropriate that members of the advisory panel and subpanels of any future auction should have both subject matter and industry expertise; however, this may be constrained by possible conflicts of interest.

In relation to which wholesale price reference node is used to settle FiT payments, the government considers that allowing renewable energy generators to settle their

FiT price against the local regional reference prices was appropriate in previous auctions. This created effective national competition on price and delivered the lowest possible costs to ACT consumers. Transferring the wholesale price reference node to New South Wales for all generators retrospectively would transfer significant settlement risk to the generators and will therefore not be contemplated for existing FiT entitlement holders. It is appropriate, however, that the advantages and disadvantages of requiring settlement against the New South Wales node be considered in any future auction processes.

The energy storage contribution was explicitly agreed to by government and its inclusion in the act would not have strengthened government support for it. Shifting the wholesale electricity price reference point for the ACT's feed-in tariff payment settlements to New South Wales, away from the reference point in each feed-in tariff scheme supported generator's host state, would represent a retrospective change to auction rules and may have adverse feed-in tariff cost outcomes.

I confirm that the review is consistent with the findings of the recent independent review into the future security of the national electricity market, otherwise known as the Finkel review, which was released on 9 June 2017. Importantly, the ACT's review found that the ACT's policy had been successful in stimulating competitively priced wind and solar projects that proceeded to commercial operation. Further, the ACT has set the standard for renewable energy support during a period of extreme policy uncertainty nationally.

As other jurisdictions progress similar policies, the need to integrate climate policy and energy policy will become increasingly important. The ACT government continues to strongly advocate within the COAG energy council for this, and the Finkel review is a prime opportunity to establish a reform path that furthers climate change mitigation objectives while strengthening power system security and delivering improved outcomes for energy consumers.

In summary, the review found that both the act and the next generation renewables auction were successful in incentivising the uptake of large-scale renewable electricity at highly competitive prices, which ultimately will result in renewable electricity being delivered at lower cost to ACT electricity consumers. The next generation renewables auction built on the experience of the solar auction held in 2012 and 2013, the first wind auction, held in 2014, and wind auction II, held in 2015, to deliver two high quality wind projects that will not only deliver competitively priced renewable electricity but also produce major local investment benefits for the ACT.

The success of the next generation renewables auction continues to move the ACT towards meeting its 100 per cent by 2020 renewable electricity target and demonstrates the territory's continued leadership on climate change and renewable energy. I commend the review to the Assembly.

Papers

Mr Gentleman presented the following papers:

Subordinate legislation (including explanatory statements unless otherwise stated)

Legislation Act, pursuant to section 64—

Animal Diseases Act—Animal Diseases (Import Restriction) Declaration 2017, including a regulatory impact statement—Disallowable Instrument DI2017-188 (LR, 13 July 2017).

Blood Donation (Transmittable Diseases) Act—Blood Donation (Transmittable Diseases) Blood Donor Form 2017 (No 1)—Disallowable Instrument DI2017-198 (LR, 4 August 2017).

Dangerous Goods (Road Transport) Act—Dangerous Goods (Road Transport) Fees and Charges Determination 2017—Disallowable Instrument DI2017-189 (LR, 10 July 2017).

Discrimination Act—Discrimination Amendment Regulation 2017 (No 1)—Subordinate Law SL2017-22 (LR, 27 July 2017).

Electoral Act—Electoral Commission (Acting Electoral Commissioner) Appointment 2017 (No 1)—Disallowable Instrument DI2017-194 (LR, 31 July 2017).

Health Act—Health (Fees) Determination 2017 (No 2)—Disallowable Instrument DI2017-193 (LR, 25 July 2017).

Land Titles Act—Land Titles (Fees) Determination 2017 (No 2)—Disallowable Instrument DI2017-190 (LR, 17 July 2017).

Major Events Act—Major Events (Rugby League World Cup) Declaration 2017—Disallowable Instrument DI2017-196 (LR, 3 August 2017).

Public Health Act—Public Health (Cooling Towers) Risk Activity Declaration 2017 (No 1)—Disallowable Instrument DI2017-165 (LR, 20 July 2017).

Public Place Names Act—Public Place Names (Taylor) Determination 2017 (No 2)—Disallowable Instrument DI2017-195 (LR, 31 July 2017).

Road Transport (General) Act and Road Transport (Safety and Traffic Management) Act—Road Transport Legislation Amendment Regulation 2017 (No 2)—Subordinate Law SL2017-23 (LR, 7 August 2017).

Road Transport (Third-Party Insurance) Act—Road Transport (Third-Party Insurance) Amendment Regulation 2017 (No 2)—Subordinate Law SL2017-19 (LR, 13 July 2017).

Sale of Motor Vehicles Act—Sale of Motor Vehicles (Fees) Revocation 2017—Disallowable Instrument DI2017-192 (LR, 20 July 2017).

Traders (Licensing) Act—

Traders (Licensing) (Fees) Determination 2017—Disallowable Instrument DI2017-191 (LR, 20 July 2017).

Traders (Licensing) Regulation 2017—Subordinate Law SL2017-21 (LR, 20 July 2017).

Victims of Crime Act—Victims of Crime (Victims Advisory Board) Appointment 2017 (No 2)—Disallowable Instrument DI2017-197 (LR, 3 August 2017).

Waste Management and Resource Recovery Act—Waste Management and Resource Recovery Regulation 2017—Subordinate Law SL2017-20 (LR, 14 July 2017).

Leave of absence

Motion (by **Mr Gentleman**) agreed to:

That leave of absence be granted to Ms Burch for this sitting week for family reasons.

Appropriation Bill 2017-2018

[Cognate bill:

Appropriation (Office of the Legislative Assembly) Bill 2017-2018

Cognate papers:

Estimates 2017-2018—Select Committee report

Estimates 2017-2018—Select Committee—government response]

Detail stage

Schedule 1—Appropriations—Proposed expenditure.

Chief Minister, Treasury and Economic Development Directorate—Part 1.5.

Debate resumed.

MR WALL (Brindabella) (4.04): I rise to speak to the budget line items relating to economic development, business and industrial relations—as well as, briefly, on tourism—which fall within the portfolio area that is Chief Minister, Treasury and Economic Development. This government is always very quick to put a positive spin on the state of our economy. Very rarely is there any acknowledgement of any shortcomings or any recognition that there is room for improvement.

During the estimates process Pegasus Economics was engaged to assist the select committee in its consideration and review of the 2017-18 budget and, in doing so, provided the committee with a review paper. This review indicated that the economic forecasts for 2017-18 and beyond were based on reasonable assumptions and trends. However, with respect to diversification the expert advice was quite scathing about the government's own influence in diversifying the ACT economy. Section 2.6 of the Pegasus report states:

In the 2017-18 Budget the ACT Government (2017, p. 21) outlines its economic strategy to diversify the economy and claims that progress on diversifying the ACT has already been achieved:

Jobs growth is expected in a range of industries including construction, education and research, defence and intelligence, tourism, and sectors associated with household consumption. This is further evidence of the progress being made through the ACT Government's efforts to diversify the Territory's economy ...

Pegasus has significant reservations regarding any claims made to the effect that any progress has been made in diversifying the ACT economy, particularly in relation to greater private sector involvement in the ACT economy. A diversified economy is one that has multiple sources of income. A diversified economy is considered desirable as it reduces the dependence on any one sector of the economy as a source of income in the event of a shock and/or downturn in that sector. As already seen above, the ACT economy is heavily dependent on the public sector, especially the Commonwealth Government.

Analysis of the available data suggests the ACT economy remains very much a 'company town' highly dependent on the Commonwealth Government. An examination of the latest national accounts reveals that over the past decade the ACT economy has in fact become even more dependent on the Commonwealth Government as outlined in Figure 5 ... The contribution of the Commonwealth Government to total final demand in the ACT economy has increased from 55.6 per cent in the September quarter 2007 to 60.1 per cent in the March quarter 2017.

Rather than becoming more diversified over the last decade, the ACT economy has become far less diversified as the public sector—composed of both the Commonwealth and ACT governments—have increased their overall contribution to ACT final demand from 62.4 per cent in the September quarter 2007 to 67.3 per cent in the March quarter 2017 ...

This is a record high. It shows that, despite the rhetoric of the Treasurer there is still a great deal of work to be done in achieving genuine diversification for the territory.

I spend a great deal of time out talking to the engine room of our economy. The engine room of our economy is made up of many locally owned businesses operating in our town centres and in our suburbs and is most likely not tuned in to the proceedings happening here today. They are probably not aware of the detail of the process that is being gone through. They are simply too busy doing what they do best: running their businesses and creating employment and further opportunities for Canberrans.

The sheer lack of understanding and common sense around some decision making in this town beggars belief. The effects on local business can be profound. After so long in government there are simple changes that could be made but that just have not been a focus of this government—simple examples that would ensure more efficiency in business, a streamlining of process and ultimately better bottom lines and job creation.

They are simple things like aligning payroll tax payment dates to PAYG payment dates, a greater efficiency as business would only have to do their great day of accounting one day a month rather than two; focusing on red tape reduction that reduces and streamlines businesses' administration, not just governments' administration; incentivising development in the right areas of town through LVC, not gouging the construction industry with a 400 per cent increase as we have seen in this year's budget; making sure that there is a greater emphasis on the weighting for local businesses in procurement processes; and making sure that businesses get paid for the

work they do—a very simple thing but one that is very rarely taken seriously or given proper consideration by those opposite.

Securing payments for smaller contractors is essential to make sure that the economy remains viable. We see too often examples such as the collapse of SMI, which happened earlier in this term. Many local businesses missed out on payments because of that collapse.

Another example: just a few weeks ago I heard from a medium-size civil contractor who has been left owed over \$70,000 on two government projects. This local business was engaged as a subcontractor to the government's head contractor and has not been paid for the work that it has done. The contractor that they were working for is hiding behind a commercial dispute. The individual who is owed \$70,000 is fearful that that money is being used to prop up less viable projects that the other company has, at the expense of their being paid for the work that is being done, despite having already paid for the materials, the work, the staff and all the on-costs involved in completing the project as an agent for the ACT government. The response as to what options were available, when I wrote to the Chief Minister and Treasurer in this regard, was "This is a business dispute. It needs to be sorted out between the businesses."

Consider, if this were an example of an employee rather than a business, what the union movement that they are so beholden to would be doing in relation to a worker not being paid for the work that they had done. But it seems that when it happens between businesses it is completely okay—forgetting the fact that these businesses are the ones that create the opportunities, create the jobs and pay the salaries of the staff that they employ. A solution to this would be, you would think, simple and forthcoming, but there has continued to be an unwillingness to address substantial issues in our economy such as this.

Moving to workplace safety and industrial relations, it would be remiss of me not to mention the proposed changes mooted by the minister in this space. I would like to once again place on the record that any legislative change to enshrine the unions' power of veto, as seen in the MOU between the Chief Minister and UnionsACT, in legislation will never be accepted by the Canberra Liberals. We rely on good governance, transparency and a level playing field, not favouritism to vocal lobby groups. The MOU is inappropriate, unfair and continues to give unions unprecedented veto power and influence over government contracts.

In relation to the ACT's record on workplace safety, I was very pleased to hear Minister Stephen-Smith speak positively about the safety rates for workers in the ACT when she said in her opening statement during the estimates hearings on 21 June:

I am pleased to inform the committee that injury rates across the ACT public and private sectors continue to fall. Public sector data indicates that the number of work injuries in 2016-17 is four per cent lower than in 2015-16 and 13 per cent lower than the previous year. In the private sector the most recent independent actuarial review shows that lost time injury rates are at 10-year lows.

This is an important fact to remember, and it was pleasing to hear the minister confirm that this is indeed the case, in the face of the ongoing scare campaigns and what seems to be a personality battle being waged by unions in the ACT against the Workplace Safety Commissioner.

In light of these safety rates, I would like to make mention of recommendation 41 in the estimates committee report, which recommends that the ACT government publish work health and safety data to give the ACT a comparative ranking by key industries compared to other jurisdictions. This will give the committee, and the Assembly more broadly, an understanding of any shortcomings by comparison to other industries—in a sense, comparing apples with apples.

It is also important to note that the work and the functionality of WorkSafe ACT under the guidance of the Workplace Safety Commissioner continues to be independent. This issue has been raised in a number of quarters recently, most notably by the unions and UnionsACT in conjunction with the CFMEU. I look forward to Minister Stephen-Smith's speech in this area. Hopefully she can convey her full confidence in the continuation of the existing WorkSafe commissioner, which I think is something that many in the community are looking for. (*Second speaking period taken.*)

There is a considerable amount of work being done in many quarters in the community to promote the development of a convention centre in the territory, and I note that there is an inquiry ongoing in one of the Assembly's committees looking into this issue. But it is quite concerning and has upset a number of people in the community—the line that the Chief Minister has taken in playing cheap political games with such a big-ticket item that so many in the community have placed a lot of hope in and have stated will make a big change to the way tourism and business operate in the ACT.

I refer to an article in the *Canberra Times*, published in February this year, which says, in relation to the convention centre, that Chief Minister Andrew Barr:

... would push for federal funding as part of negotiations on a “city deal”, but did not believe the Commonwealth was “fair dinkum about supporting the project”.

“If they're not interested, and there's every indication to date that they're not, the nature of the project changes,” he said.

It has come to light that, whilst the Chief Minister was saying that the commonwealth was not interested in this project, he himself was actually writing to the commonwealth saying he was not interested in this project. And what interest can you expect the commonwealth to take when the leader of the local government is saying, “Do it, and do it all on your own bat, but locally there's no support and there's very little interest”? This is an instance where the Chief Minister is trying to play cheap politics and say the commonwealth is neglecting the territory, when in fact it is the Chief Minister and Treasurer who is letting down the Canberra business community and not leading by example.

We can all remember the Chief Minister's own Commissioner for International Engagement and all the effort that he made in promoting the convention centre. And now he has him in his back pocket. He has put him on the payroll as a public service employee, taken him out of this place and parachuted him in there. Let us not detract from the Auditor-General's critical words about the process by which that appointment happened. No sooner does the greatest advocate of the convention centre leave this place and start working directly for the Chief Minister than the project gets dropped like a hot potato. It is very fascinating. There are many people in the business community and, more broadly, the Canberra Business Chamber, who are very disappointed in the Chief Minister's attitude towards pursuing great projects that will bring a lot of benefit to the territory.

As I said earlier in this debate, the government is keen to spruik the money it is spending, the new programs it is launching and the problems it is seeking to fix, but we all need to remember that the problems this government seeks to fix are a product of its policy failures over the last 16 years. There has never been an honest assessment of the progress being made. Instead, if the figures are trending in the wrong direction they simply move the goalposts or create a new target. This simply is dishonest. This parliament deserves better and deserves to be treated with more respect. More importantly, the taxpayers and the ratepayers of the ACT deserve to be treated with a bit more integrity.

MR RAMSAY (Ginninderra—Attorney-General, Minister for Regulatory Services, Minister for the Arts and Community Events and Minister for Veterans and Seniors) (4.17): I rise to speak on the work of the Gambling and Racing Commission within Access Canberra. The government has continued to deliver on its key strategic policy priorities for the racing and gaming portfolio, as have been outlined in the parliamentary agreement for the Ninth Legislative Assembly.

In this budget Canberrans will see commitments to ensure gambling operators' compliance with legislation, as well as the ending of the greyhound industry in the territory, with support made available to those who are affected. Work is well underway on delivering on these commitments. However, as I announced in June, and in line with community values and expectations, the government is committed to ending the greyhound racing industry in the territory. Greyhound racing and trialling will be prohibited in the territory, with the closure of the racing industry occurring by 30 June 2018.

As outlined in the budget, grant funding for the greyhound racing industry in the ACT ceased on 30 June 2017, with funding of \$1.033 million in 2017-18 being redirected to the transition program to assist workers to re-skill, as well as making arrangements to rehome and care for the greyhounds. This work has already started. These reforms are a priority for the government. We are committed to continuing to work with industry participants, and the government has invited those people who will be affected to contact the task force to find out more about the support that will be available to them. I also look forward to providing more on this next week in a ministerial statement on ending the greyhound racing industry.

As for the other racing codes, recently I signed a five-year memorandum of understanding with the Canberra Racing Club and the Canberra Harness Racing Club. The MOU provides for greater communication and information exchange between the clubs and me, outlines what an inaugural industry and government committee might consider and highlights that animal welfare is considered a priority by the industry. The budget continues to support these two clubs, with over \$7 million allocated to them in the 2017-18 financial year, and again into the outyears. I look forward to an ongoing relationship with the Canberra Racing Club and the Canberra Harness Racing Club and to supporting a vibrant and viable horseracing industry in the ACT.

Reducing the impact of gambling harm continues to be a top priority for this government. The government continues to support the Gambling and Racing Commission in its function to monitor and research the social effects of gambling and gambling harm. This financial year, the Gambling and Racing Commission will approve expenditure of more than \$1.1 million from the problem gambling assistance fund to fund projects that reduce gambling harms experienced by Canberrans and increase our understanding of that harm. These projects include the provision of face-to-face, telephone and online gambling help services and research projects that improve our understanding of gambling harm and also prevention. These will continue to inform the Gambling and Racing Commission in its efforts in reducing harm caused by problem gambling.

Access Canberra continues to support the Gambling and Racing Commission to meet its obligations under the legislation. The commission continues to play a crucial role in ensuring the lawful conduct of gambling and racing in the ACT. With the efforts in this space, the government continues its commitment to ACT residents to ensure gambling operators' compliance with legislation. Access Canberra is not only committed to conducting a comprehensive inspection program to ensure operators comply with relevant legislation, but also it is increasing its efforts to engage and educate operators. In fact, this year, Access Canberra's efforts in engaging and educating gambling and racing operators is anticipated to be approximately 92 per cent of all its compliance activities and efforts in gaming and racing.

This government is also committed to undertaking a review of the current community contributions scheme, with a view to maximising the direct benefit to the community from the scheme. We acknowledge the need for reform in this space and we are doing something about it. My directorate is working with the Gambling and Racing Commission, which has identified some options for improvement, to review the scheme and to make recommendations for change. The government will also be undertaking broad community consultations on the issue later this year.

Finally, in this budget the government is showing its absolute commitment to all of the election commitments made in the gaming and racing space in last year's election. We are working responsively with our industry stakeholders and listening to the Canberra community to ensure that harm minimisation continues to be at the forefront of our agenda and that operators are compliant with gaming and racing legislation.

MS STEPHEN-SMITH (Kurrajong—Minister for Community Services and Social Inclusion, Minister for Disability, Children and Youth, Minister for Aboriginal and

Torres Strait Islander Affairs, Minister for Multicultural Affairs and Minister for Workplace Safety and Industrial Relations) (4.23): The budget's work safety and industrial relations measures reflect this government's priorities in this space. We are committed to, first, preventing injuries and illnesses at work from happening through supporting WorkSafe to deliver innovative, targeted education and effective compliance and enforcement, as well as the ongoing tripartite work of the Work Safety Council, which has a particular focus on high-risk industries such as construction, as well as on vulnerable workers. Of course, significant work and investment across directorates have contributed to the reduction in workplace injuries that Mr Wall talked about—stealing some of my own speaking notes in that regard. It has also contributed to a reduction in Comcare premiums, which is of broader benefit.

We are also committed to getting injured workers back to work by investing in return to work measures, which I will speak further about shortly, investigating options to become a self-insurer under Comcare and seeking to improve our own performance by taking responsibility for that.

Of course, we are committed to improving outcomes for Canberra workers more broadly, which includes advocating in the sphere of federal influence, whether that means lobbying for increased resources for the Fair Work Ombudsman in the ACT, supporting the inclusion of family and domestic violence leave in the national employment standards or opposing cuts to penalty rates—and there is no evidence that this will create additional jobs but we know for sure and certain that it will cut the pay of some of our lowest paid and most vulnerable workers, including many young workers.

We will continue to work closely with unions, industry and workers to deliver on these priorities. As we all know, when it comes to work safety, prevention is far better than any cure. I would like to acknowledge the critical, ongoing role of our work health and safety regulator, WorkSafe ACT, in improving safety outcomes in the territory across the public, private and not-for-profit sectors.

In 2016-17 WorkSafe ACT carried out 4,391 workplace inspections. Of these, 1,682 related to proactive campaigns and events, including the National Multicultural Festival, the Canberra Show and the night noodle markets. In the last financial year WorkSafe issued 130 improvement notices under work safety or dangerous substance laws and 54 prohibition notices.

In response to community feedback, Access Canberra has recently made some changes to enhance the Work Safety Commissioner's capacity to deliver improved work health and safety outcomes for all Canberrans. We will continue to monitor the effectiveness of current arrangements to ensure that workplace health and safety has the prominence it deserves.

While we still have more work to do in reducing serious workplace injuries, as Mr Wall did note, a recent independent actuarial review of 2015-16 workers comp data revealed a reduction of almost 19 per cent in the serious injury frequency rate over a three-year period. In addition, in the ACT public sector, work injury numbers

are also trending downwards. In 2016-17 the number of work injuries was 13 per cent lower than in 2014-15.

To build on these promising trends, we will invest \$1.4 million over the next four years in enhancements to return to work and retraining services for our public sector workers. The design of the funded initiatives is being informed by detailed consultation with public sector unions and experts in the field of injury management, which was conducted throughout 2016.

That budget commitment follows on from 2016-17 changes to the private sector workers compensation scheme, mandating the appointment of trained return-to-work coordinators in our biggest and riskiest businesses. Insurers have advised that this initiative has been well received by businesses, who acknowledge the social and economic benefits of getting injured workers back to work as soon as it is safe to do so.

As I mentioned, after much consideration and consultation, the government recently announced that it will not be seeking to exit the Comcare workers compensation scheme. Rather than make changes to the types of compensation services that an injured worker may receive, we will focus on improving public sector injury prevention and management practices. The government is therefore now investigating whether it should become a self-insurer within the Comcare scheme, which would allow us to take more responsibility for the care and rehabilitation of injured public sector workers and to develop a best practice injury management model.

The government recognises that the ACT public service is integral to delivering on the government's progressive vision for the city and providing high quality public services to the community. We are absolutely committed to negotiating, through current enterprise bargaining agreements, in good faith to reach agreements that are fair and reasonable for our employees.

It is clear that more needs to be done to protect vulnerable workers, particularly young people and migrant workers. We take very seriously the findings of UnionsACT's survey of young workers, which has indicated that bullying, harassment and unsafe work practices are too common in our workplaces. WorkSafe ACT in the last year has been undertaking proactive efforts across workplaces such as retail and hospitality that employ young workers to ensure that young workers are aware of their rights and that employers, particularly, are aware of their responsibilities in relation to worker safety and are held to account for this.

We also look forward to the outcomes of the education, employment and youth affairs committee's inquiry into the extent and impact of insecure work and to considering what steps the government can take in relation to this matter.

Mr Wall mentioned procurement, and I wish to touch on this briefly. The government makes no apologies for believing that governments can and should be model purchasers and should use their purchasing power to encourage best practice in industrial relations, upholding workers' rights and protecting workers' safety. The secure local jobs package that the Chief Minister recently recommitted to will make

clear the government's expectations that the companies it purchases from are behaving ethically in their dealings with workers and indeed subcontractors.

It will simplify the procurement process and reduce duplication. This will not only ensure that workers' rights are protected and improve job security; it will also create a level playing field for businesses. Too often over recent years we have seen evidence, both locally and nationally, of employers entering into sham contracting arrangements, exploiting visa workers and avoiding their industrial workers compensation and taxation obligations. Quite simply, these are not the sorts of employers to whom governments should be giving their business.

These practices are not only bad for workers; they also enable unscrupulous businesses to undercut those that are doing the right thing. Indeed, many of the complaints received about the behaviour of contractors come from other businesses. The secure local jobs package will promote job security, ensure that government contracts are awarded only to companies that meet the highest ethical and labour standards and create an efficient, clear and transparent governance regime. It is hard to see what the opposition could object to in that list.

MR PARTON (Brindabella) (4.31): It is a pleasure to rise today to speak about the gaming and racing portfolio. I do note that the government has chosen since the election to bury the portfolio inside regulatory services. This has seen an outcome in the budget papers as well, through the gambling and racing policy function being split from the administrative side, with policy moving inside JACS and the administration being taken care of through Access Canberra.

Perhaps it is this split that has been the cause of the lack of leadership and direction from the minister in this space. We watched as the minister flip-flopped over a policy position regarding the greyhound industry, and there have been a number of thought bubbles in regard to our community clubs. It must be said, though, that one must feel for the minister at times. It can be hard to find a suitable policy position when the Chief Minister has barred you from consulting with the industry group that represents over 70 per cent of Canberra's community clubs.

Mr Barr: We do not need to consult to work out what our policy is, Mark. We know that. We went to the election on it.

MR PARTON: Yes? We went to an election with a policy of barring the peak body? We have been constantly subjected to rants by those opposite about how they are the only viable option for Canberrans to support job growth and stability. What this Labor government fails to communicate to Canberrans is that this only fits in to the trendy "hipster Braddon" view of the world. It was not enough for the government to just remove the funding allocated to the greyhound industry in Canberra. When this government realised that the Greyhound Racing Club was made of tough stuff and was going to be viable and had the ability to run without funding from the government's sale of ACTTAB, we saw yet another change in policy.

This government is so intent on destroying local jobs that it has gone to extreme lengths to ban the industry in the ACT. What has made this policy decision even more

bizarre is the current proposal from Queanbeyan to relocate over the border. Instead of taking control of the reform process, which the club in Canberra has indicated multiple times it is willing to undertake, it is happy to watch the club relocate over the border, taking with it a number of local jobs.

I have said this before and I will say it again: if this policy was about animal welfare then the government would be taking strong steps to ensure that the Canberra Greyhound Racing Club was taking the lead in reforming the industry nationwide. It certainly goes without saying that the Canberra Greyhound Racing Club is an absolute beacon in terms of how greyhound racing should be run in this country. Unfortunately, that seems like a step too far for this government. I am heartened to see that the minister has finalised a new MOU with the racing industry—at least those that remain alive—for the next five years, and I look forward to seeing the details of it.

I would also like to take a moment to talk about our local community clubs. They are a valuable part of Canberra. Canberra's local clubs contribute millions of dollars to the local economy, employing over 1,700 people. This is along with the vast number of local community groups that clubs support through the community contribution. In my electorate of Brindabella alone, a club like the Tuggeranong Vikings supports 51 sporting and social clubs, such as badminton, BMX, calisthenics, chess, cricket, dog training, lawn bowls, pony club, senior citizens club, squash, tenpin bowling and Toastmasters, just to name a few.

The contribution that our local clubs make cannot be understated. With these contributions in mind, the anti-club campaign by Green members of this place is a real shame. Reducing the risk of gambling harm is very important. However, branding clubs as the “gambling lobby” and profiting from gambling, I feel, is misguided. Reducing the risk of harm from gambling is important, and something that I believe all of us in this place take seriously. It is in this space that I believe we have found some common-sense middle ground. I noted the government response to the estimates committee report recommendation 26, which stated:

The Committee recommends that the ACT Government provide the Assembly with a response to the Access Canberra report on cash withdrawing facilities in gaming machine venues, including any legislative and regulatory changes, by the end of September 2017.

I am pleased to see that the government agrees to this recommendation, as well as the consequent legislation. As I mentioned earlier, I am pleased that we have come to a common-sense conclusion on this particular issue. When it comes to further gambling harm minimisation strategies, the minister would do well to break the Chief Minister's rejection of ClubsACT. Unlike this government, ClubsACT have admitted that they are not above criticism and that there are always improvements that can be made in launching their harm minimisation policies. Last month Clubs ACT said:

We accept the community has a trust issue with clubs when it comes to the management of problem gambling.

If only we had a government that had the ability to admit that it does not always get everything right. Instead, we are stuck with a stubborn government that refuses to deal

with anyone who dares to disagree with it. In the meantime we have a situation where ClubsACT is trying to take harm minimisation seriously and we have a government that refuses to engage in reform because of a personal vendetta between the Chief Minister and ClubsACT.

In reference to the Gambling and Racing Commission, I want to commend the work of the commission in what has been a rather contentious time surrounding many of its functions. Since my time in this Assembly, I have participated in a number of very loud and often controversial public conversations about the regulatory framework of gaming machines, about community contributions from our clubs and of course about greyhound racing.

When the bright spotlight is shining on you, it can often make it much more difficult to go about your day-to-day business. But all of this controversy has not affected the day-to-day operations of the commission. I want to say well done to all those involved. I have had continual conversations with stakeholders in this space over many months, and the overwhelming response that I get is that the commission is doing a great job in administering the regulatory functions of gambling in the ACT.

My anecdotal feedback from some stakeholders is that there are perhaps too few foot soldiers doing much work, but that, to their credit, the work is being done to the highest standards. The commission have done and continue to do a good job in applying their strategic plan. I refer in particular to minimising the possibility of criminal or unethical activity in regard to gaming and wagering in the territory, minimising the negative impact of problem gambling, keeping informed about developments in gambling harm minimisation strategies and providing the public with factual information. The commission also holds the responsibility for ensuring that community clubs are reporting their community contributions correctly, as per the legislation. This shadow minister has nothing but praise for the Gambling and Racing Commission.

MS BERRY (Ginninderra—Deputy Chief Minister, Minister for Education and Early Childhood Development, Minister for Housing and Suburban Development, Minister for the Prevention of Domestic and Family Violence, Minister for Women and Minister for Sport and Recreation) (4.38): I thought I would start by talking about sport and recreation and the commitments that have been made by the ACT government.

I want to start with the Australian Sports Commission, which earlier this year released the participation data from Ausplay, the new national survey of active participation levels and activity types. The survey indicates that the ACT has the highest participation rates across all ages and has done for the past 16 years. The ACT is the participation capital of Australia. It is something that many Canberrans choose as a pastime, and recent statistics show our rate of weekly participation at 85 per cent, which is the highest in the nation.

The ACT government invests in supporting our local sport and recreation sector to ensure that our community is afforded great places to play across a diverse range of sport and recreation facilities. A quarterly survey of visitor satisfaction indicates that

91 per cent of customers are satisfied with the management of our sportsgrounds. Sportsgrounds in the ACT are fully maintained and operated by the government, at an 86 per cent subsidy rate to assist the affordability of sporting participation for families. Sportsground rangers are on site for each booking to open gates and turn on lights, to assist seamless access for training and games. On-call services for the community are also available to support volunteers in facility-related management issues.

From 1 July there was a functional realignment within the sport and recreation business unit, with areas responsible for sportsgrounds moved to Transport Canberra and City Services and aquatics moved to the ACT Property Group, respectively. I am advised by the sporting community that the transition has been completely seamless and that there has been no real change in how the community communicates with the government in ensuring that they can make bookings for fields and the maintenance of sporting facilities.

The government will progress the reform of combat sport regulation. We have committed \$624,000 over the next four years. This will be a landmark year ahead for combat sports, with a reform agenda in play for combat sport as well. The community's expectations are that we make sure that the integrity of combat sports and the safety of spectators as well as participants remain paramount. The ACT government will continue to make sure that there is greater integrity and safety in the participation in combat sports in the ACT.

This year brings unprecedented support for women's sport in the ACT through our commitments in the ACT budget. The Canberra Capitals have a strong history of success in the Women's National Basketball League, having been grand finalists nine times in the past 16 seasons. The operational costs and expenses associated with attracting a high calibre of players to breed successful programs relies on government as well as commercial support in matching attendance and a strong membership base. Similarly, Canberra United boasts a solid performance history in the W-League, the top division women's football league in Australia, with two championship titles and seven semifinal berths in the last eight seasons.

The ACT government has committed \$250,000 per year for four years for the Canberra Capitals and \$125,000 per year for four years for Canberra United, recognising the importance of these two great elite women's teams to our ACT community and ensuring that highly regarded female sports programs continue to attract some of Australia's finest basketball and football talent.

This is part of the ACT government's firm commitment to support greater gender equality in sport and recreation. It sits alongside redirected funding to support the promotion, development and participation of women and girls, the creation of an online portal for HerCanberra to inspire and assist access to opportunities and infrastructure investments to attract women and girls to sport.

The government is committed to supporting new participation in motorsports through safe driving environments and driver training. Training and development initiatives in all sports, including motorsports, are currently eligible for support through the SRGP. However, the number of motorsport applications in recent years has been limited. The

dedicated grants category for motorsports will ideally encourage clubs to be more proactive in seeking funds, leading to greater delivery of and access to training and development opportunities.

The ACT indoor sports facility study which was released in January 2016 identified a shortage of indoor sporting facility provisions across the territory. It noted that with the further development of west Belconnen there will be additional demand for indoor facilities in Belconnen as well as in Gungahlin and in Woden. The terms of reference for the study will be completed by October 2017, with the procurement of a consultant by the end of 2017. This feasibility study responds to a recommendation from the ACT indoor sports facility study which identified the shortage of sports facilities across the city. Once complete, the recommendations of this work will guide future decisions about the affordable delivery and sustainable operation of indoor sports facilities in the region.

Under the 2016-17 budget \$33 million was committed for the design of the Stromlo leisure centre and will allow for future expansion of the facility. As the capacity grows, over time the Stromlo Forest Park will become a peak and unique sporting destination in the ACT for Canberrans but also for visitors to our city. Consultation with the community and key stakeholders to understand what they saw as priorities for the development of the pool has been completed. That closed on 25 January 2017, with over 700 submissions received. Following a review of the submissions received, the ACT government has modified the design scope to include provisions for a gym/health club; a splash park; program pool modifications, including hydrotherapy, leisure/toddler amenities; increases to seating capacity; and increases to lighting specifications as well. We look forward to the program for the pool in the Stromlo precinct being developed and to seeing how the facility could be expanded into the future.

In the budget \$785,000 was included for Manuka pool refurbishment and filtration plant upgrades. Some of the work that has been identified in the recent Manuka pool condition report, such as restoration of the front facade and repairs to seating, will be completed before the start of the 2017-18 summer season out of residual funds. The work being undertaken as part of the 2017-18 pools improvement program includes replacement of precast lintels on male and female change rooms; replacement of window frames; repainting the entire facility; design of the new filtration plant for the main pool; and supply and installation of the new filtration plant.

The Manuka pool is a very important facility in the ACT, with many memories for the ACT community, young and old, of the use of this pool. This program of works will ensure that the upgrades will be sympathetic to the heritage values of the facility, and they are in line with the conservation management plan.

Madam Assistant Speaker, I thank you for the opportunity to talk about some of the commitments that have been made in the ACT budget and I look forward to reporting back to the Assembly on these programs. I look forward to reporting on the success of our two women's elite sporting teams, the Canberra Capitals and Canberra United, over the coming years and how this funding that has been provided by the

ACT government will support them and the rest of our community to be engaged in sport, no matter what sport that is.

MS FITZHARRIS (Yerrabi—Minister for Health, Minister for Transport and City Services and Minister for Higher Education, Training and Research) (4.47): I would like to take this opportunity to speak about my portfolio responsibilities in relation to the higher education, research and training sector and why the ACT government is taking a very active and considered approach to this critical sector in the ACT economy. Of course, I say this after the very exciting announcement made by the Chief Minister earlier today about the possibility of a second University of New South Wales campus here in the ACT. The government will be doing the work to develop an MOU over the course of the next few months with the University of New South Wales.

The ACT government is one of the few state or territory-level governments that have a dedicated minister for higher education and research, which demonstrates our strong commitment to the sector and the importance it has for the future of economic development in Canberra. Our last official data showed that in 2014 the sector added \$2.7 billion to Canberra's economy and about 16,000 jobs. Of this \$2.7 billion, about one-third was the contribution of international and interstate students. The remainder was the non-student contribution: staffing and administrative costs of the education sector, along with research organisations such as CSIRO, Geoscience Australia and Data61.

Since then, education exports have increased by 21 per cent and now contribute \$579 million per annum to Canberra's economy. While updated data is not yet available for the other components, a conservative estimate would now value the sector at at least \$3 billion per annum in value-added economic activity. To put this in perspective, recent data indicates that the defence industry contributes approximately \$4.3 billion per annum to Canberra's economy and the tourism industry approximately \$1.9 billion per annum.

But beyond the economic data there is the human dimension to the higher education and research sector that is worth reflecting on. At any one time, there are around 44,000 students, of which 14,000 are overseas students experiencing Canberra and relaying their experiences to the world. And just over 18 per cent of all Australian government funded R&D is performed right here in Canberra—or, looking at it another way, about one in every nine resident Canberrans are either working directly in the sector or are a full-time student. Then there is the relationship that the sector has with our broader community—the business community, the major commonwealth agencies and employers—as well as its role in the arts, health, sports and many others.

Successive ACT governments have worked closely with the sector and its institutions, and many important projects have been delivered with great outcomes. The deed of agreement negotiated with ANU some years ago has transformed the western edge of the CBD, and this town-to-gown nexus continues to grow and add life to our city, with benefits for the broader community.

The piece of planning reform work we completed with the University of Canberra in 2015 will underpin UC's development strategy over the next decade and deliver similar, far-reaching benefits for communities in north Canberra and indeed more broadly. Our funding for Data61 has led to hundreds of PhD computing graduates applying their skills in new businesses and giving real meaning to Canberra's brand as a place where big, technical issues are researched and solved.

The establishment of the CBR Innovation Network as a partnership between ANU, University of Canberra, UNSW Canberra, CSIRO, CIT and Data61 has provided the education and research institutions with an opportunity to partner with the ACT government to develop the innovation ecosystem necessary for them to successfully commercialise knowledge.

The key learning from our work to date is the premium of collaboration, working with the sector to explore what is possible with a joined-up effort, and achieving national and international impact through collective scales and collective approaches that are mostly beyond us all individually. We work with the sector to maximise economic development outcomes but always in a way that supports our goals for our city and community over the longer term.

For example, how can the strengths of ANU and UNSW Canberra in areas such as cybersecurity and space technologies contribute to our goal of diversifying Canberra's economy? How can the development of the new UCPH at University of Canberra and its strengths in the areas of allied medicine and sports technology contribute to our goal of a healthier Canberra population? As UC grows, how does that growth translate into a more connected Canberra? And as CIT continues its physical and operational transformation, how can we ensure that it is providing educational pathways that meet the needs of Canberra's diversifying economy as well as servicing the critical trades skills that all economies need?

As a key driver of our diversification strategy, the higher education sector is an important part of our overall economic development agenda. As a result, I will work closely with the Chief Minister, as economic development minister, to ensure that we deliver on our commitments. A key instrument for our engagement with the sector is through the Vice-Chancellors Forum. Chaired by the Chief Minister, it provides high level oversight by the leaders of the ACT's premier higher education institutions in coordinating programs that create jobs, new companies and attract investment. The members of the forum all know that a vibrant Canberra will help support their institutions to reach new heights, and an engaged Canberra will be a fertile ground for students and would-be entrepreneurs and a great place for their staff and families. At the last Vice-Chancellors Forum, members agreed to support the implementation of a fresh approach to investment attraction; that is, how we attract new investment into our city. A number of capability areas were identified that present major opportunities for attracting investment—researchers, businesses and institutions—to Canberra.

In the next six to 12 months we will continue to work with the sector to progress opportunities in cybersecurity, space technologies and renewable energy. Further to this, there will also be several opportunities over the next three to five years to

develop globally competitive and world-leading capabilities in plant and agricultural sciences, healthy ageing, active living and education pathways. While the tertiary education institutions will have primary responsibility for the delivery of these opportunities, the ACT government will work closely with them to overcome regulatory barriers to the growth of these sectors as well as working with agencies such as Austrade to promote investment opportunities in these sectors.

In the skills development area, we have continued to undertake a range of reform activities to achieve a flexible, responsive and high quality vocational education and training sector. CIT, as the sole public provider of VET in the ACT, continues to train the majority of the ACT's skilled workers and has a reputation for innovation and quality and enjoys the trust and respect of the community. The strong quality framework we have in place also gives us confidence in the vibrant private training provider market, able to deliver government-supported training through our contestable training initiatives, the Australian apprenticeships program and skilled capital. The reporting of total VET activity has also demonstrated the significant amount of training activity occurring in the fee-for-service market.

This is just a snapshot of a great deal of activity going on within the tertiary education, training and research sector, all of which is playing a vital role in both diversifying and energising Canberra's economy. It is an exciting portfolio in an exciting time of growth and great opportunities.

For this financial year, my key priorities are: to continue to act as a champion of the tertiary education and research sector across the ACT and externally; to work with the ACT Vice-Chancellors Forum to develop activities and initiatives focused on creating new jobs, new companies and attracting investment, including the implementation of the investment attraction framework report; and to implement the government's international education strategy, Canberra, Australia's education capital.

Further priorities are: to strengthen engagement with industry, business and other stakeholders to maximise training and employment outcomes; to take a proactive approach to regulatory issues that impact on the higher education and research sector and minimise regulatory hurdles to the sector's development; to support training in the areas of highest need, to best provide the skills needed by industry, students and the ACT community; to develop strategies to address the low proportion of females in male-dominated, traditional trades; to assist mature workers to upskill and re-skill; to continue to work closely with the Australian government to achieve the best training outcomes for the ACT and to deliver on agreed national priorities; and to work to ensure all parties demonstrate their commitment to the skills and training sector.

In summary, the ACT government are committed to the development of the tertiary education and research sector here in Canberra and we have partnership strategies in place across a range of areas. Our investments and commitment to this sector are clear, through the positive impact the higher education and training sector is having at a range of levels outlined today. We will continue to pursue opportunities to build on our reputation as Australia's education capital, to attract talent and investment and to advance our already world-leading education and research institutions to diversify and grow Canberra's economy.

MS CHEYNE (Ginninderra) (4.56): I love this city. I take great pride in calling it my home, and I relish the mix of nature, culture and career opportunities that we have on our doorstep. But it is the last of those, career opportunities, that is the deciding factor in many people moving to Canberra or staying here after completing their education. The unique work offerings in Canberra are one of our great strengths. From world-class education and cultural institutions to federal and territory governments, the Defence Force and a prosperous private sector, we have a lot on the table.

Without a doubt, a strong economy and job market are key players in ensuring our future success. We have been excelling on this front in recent years. Some 4,000 new jobs were created in 2015-16, and we backed this up with another 2,500 jobs last financial year. We have the second lowest unemployment level of any jurisdiction in Australia. To say that we are punching above our weight is an understatement. We will not rest on our laurels. We want to see the ACT continue to grow. That is why the ACT government is investing in more and better jobs for the territory. We are investing across a wide range of sectors, from tourism and events to the arts, sport, innovation and trades.

The tourism industry is a big boon for Canberra's economy. We are already seeing more people come to Canberra, stay for longer and spend more money while they are here. And for every person who books a flight here, stays in our hotels, eats at our restaurants and visits our attractions, our economy grows. It will not be slowing down any time soon. The ACT government is investing \$4.1 million in our tourism industry over the next four years to promote Canberra as a holiday and business tourism destination. We will keep working to get Canberra on more flight paths, both internationally and domestically.

As you well know, we have built a strong relationship with Singapore Airlines and now have the benefit of successful flights between Singapore, Canberra and our friends over the ditch. Qatar Airways has announced Canberra to Doha flights, starting early next year. Singapore opens us up to all of Asia. Doha will open us up to Europe. And we are working on connections to North America from New Zealand. With our efforts, Canberra will be an attractive destination for people from all over the world.

The ACT government will establish in this budget a new major events fund to attract and acquire major events and shows for the territory—a bonus for tourists and for the locals. Over four years, \$7.5 million will be spent to put on events that will dazzle and excite Canberra punters. Calendars will fill up as Enlighten and Floriade return, as well as SpringOUT, the Canberra Writers Festival and Canberra Day celebrations, among many others. We will also be treated to the Queen's Baton Relay in the lead-up to the 2018 Commonwealth Games on the Gold Coast. Canberra will proudly be the starting line for the relay. These events not only generate jobs and revenue to build our economy; they also cultivate our culture, excite our community and shape Canberra's reputation as a great place to visit and to live.

Of course, our investment in the economy is not limited to just tourism and events. Over the next four years we will see significant investment in the arts and sport in

Canberra. My own electorate of Ginninderra will benefit from the completion of stage 2 of the Belconnen Arts Centre, bringing new opportunities for local artists to explore and share their talents. The government will spend \$15 million to finalise the design of stage 2 and build it. Stage 2 will make significant improvements to the Arts Centre, including a new 400-seat multipurpose theatre, new workshops and studios, and space for creative residencies and improved galleries.

The ACT government will create more and better jobs by also supporting the continuing growth of our education sector. One in every nine Canberrans works or studies at one of our five local tertiary institutions, including the University of Canberra, in Belconnen. We will continue to build our name as a study destination, attracting both interstate and international students, who make a significant and direct contribution to our economy. And, of course, there was the announcement a few hours ago.

I am also very proud that we will be investing to increase the role of women in developing our economy. A career as a tradesperson is a fantastic option for someone looking for a practical, interesting and rewarding job. I am sure I do not need to tell you that, Madam Assistant Speaker. That is true whether you are male or female. Unfortunately, this is not reflected in the number of women in many trades. For too long, male-dominated industries missed out on the skills and ideas of women who did not know about them or did not feel comfortable in putting up their hand. The government is investing \$1 million over four years to deliver a strategy to address the low proportion of females in some trades and to assist mature-age workers to upskill and to re-skill.

We are also making significant investment in women in sport, to build the opportunities for professional female athletes. The performance agreement with the Canberra Capitals basketball team will be extended, with a commitment of \$250,000 per year for four years, and a new permanent basketball court will be built in the convention centre for the team's use. We are also increasing our support for the Canberra United women's football team to \$125,000 per year.

The ACT government is investing to make sure our economy continues to diversify and strengthen. We are not just a public service town, despite what some in the federal government may think. We are a tourism hotspot, a cultural hub, a sports centre, in some places a construction zone, and so much more. Our economy is growing, and we are creating more and better jobs for Canberra. With our efforts, we can expect around 3,000 jobs to be created every year over the next four years. Not bad for our nation's capital.

MR BARR (Kurrajong—Chief Minister, Treasurer, Minister for Economic Development and Minister for Tourism and Major Events) (5.03): I thank members for their contribution to the debate on the Chief Minister, Treasury and Economic Development Directorate appropriation. The directorate leads the territory's public sector and works collaboratively, both within government and with the broader community, to achieve positive outcomes. The directorate serves to drive a focused, one-government approach to the delivery of services to the people of the ACT, along

with ensuring that economic development is at the centre of the government's policy deliberations.

CMTEDD leads the ACT public service. It provides strategic advice and support to me as Chief Minister, Treasurer, Minister for Economic Development and Minister for Tourism and Major Events but also provides advice and support to the Minister for the Arts and Community Events; the Minister for Higher Education, Training and Research; the Minister for Regulatory Services; the Minister for Sport and Recreation; and the Minister for Workplace Safety and Industrial Relations. The directorate also supports cabinet by providing advice and support on policy development, budgeting and reporting, financial and economic policy, service delivery, whole-of-government programs and issues, high-value and complex investment development proposals, sport and recreation policies and programs, tourism, government business enterprises and taxation revenue management.

The key initiatives in the directorate funded in this budget include, as we have heard, \$15 million to design and construct the next stage of the Belconnen Arts Centre; nearly \$15 million over the next four years to continue the implementation of the government's business development strategy; funding for improvement to Manuka Oval's broadcast, media and spectator facilities; capital funding to develop a new whole-of-government payroll and human capital management system; capital funding to construct an access road to the new Canberra brickworks precinct; funding to support significant events in the territory; additional funding to support the arts sector, as the minister has outlined; funding to support the growth of the tourism sector; funding to make Canberra an even better place to study; additional funding to support major sporting venues on top of the money provided to the major venues themselves; \$1.8 million over the next two years to support reforms stemming from recent legislative changes to the Freedom of Information Act; the establishment of an office for lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, intersex and queer affairs; and additional money to support women entering into male-dominated traditional trades and to assist mature-age workers to upskill and re-skill.

So it is a very diverse range of areas supported by the directorate, in addition to its whole-of-government responsibilities.

Madam Assistant Speaker, I will quickly respond to a range of issues that were raised in the debate. Firstly, there was this preposterous suggestion that ACT government policies are driving people away from Canberra. In fact, our population growth has been the fastest of any state or territory over the last five years, and our city has been growing faster than the national average. So the statistics would tend to indicate that in fact Canberra has been able to attract more people than other parts of the country. Assuming that people vote with their feet and have the opportunity to live anywhere in this country, in the last five years more have chosen to live in Canberra, and our growth rate has been faster than any other state or territory.

In relation to commentary around taxation policy and the level of consultation required before any changes to taxation policy, I will issue a note of caution in this regard: it is generally not the case that governments negotiate over taxation policy. I do not think that anyone in this place—though perhaps those on that side of the

chamber—would advocate some form of negotiation with the banks, for example, over what level of tax it is appropriate for them to pay.

I note that in most other areas of taxation policy we do not generally let industry lobby groups determine what the government policy should be in that regard, and that the government, rightly, sets itself aside from that sort of pernicious lobbying that you will see from industry associations, who obviously seek to minimise the amount of tax that they pay. If all government policy were determined in consultation with industry groups, taxation in this country, I imagine, would be set at almost zero, because that would be the preferred position of most industry groups.

Whilst I acknowledge that there is always a role for engagement in relation to broad taxation policy settings, I just will not accept, and I do not think any government should accept, that industry groups will set taxation rates or that the amount of tax you pay is a negotiation. It is not. The government of the day, elected by the people, sets tax laws. That is what we do in this place, and that is what we will continue to do.

This approach of not being wholly-owned subsidiaries of industry groups is a very significant point of difference, as we have heard in this debate already on the matter of gaming. I do not need ClubsACT to tell me what my approach to harm minimisation and gambling policy will be. I have not outsourced all of my policymaking or intellectual capacity to an industry lobby group. That is not my approach to public policy. I did not stand for election in this place to outsource all of that to an industry group.

I have a very clear position, and the government has a very clear position that we took to the last election. We are implementing that policy. It is not a negotiation. ClubsACT, or any other group, is not going to come in and determine what our policy is. We have outlined our policy, and we took our policy to the last election. It was, as members opposite have acknowledged, a highly contested issue. There could not have been a more high profile issue in the last election, given the amount of money that was spent—

Mr Hanson: I think the tram was.

MR BARR: Maybe there were two. And we won on both. How about that? How about that, Madam Assistant Speaker?

In relation to questions of diversification of the economy, I note the commentary from Pegasus Economics. The government has responded to that report in some detail and to the estimates committee. But I just advise people to broaden their minds a little on the concept of diversity. Diversity in our economy does not just mean between the global public sector and the global private sector. There can be diversity and encouragement of diversity within the private sector and there can be encouragement of diversity within the public sector. So diversifying the economy is more than just the relative share of public versus private. It is what comprises the totality of the ACT economy.

Let me give a hypothetical example. If all public sector activity in the ACT was in, say, the Defence portfolio, and that was the only portfolio where we had public sector activity, diversification in the public sector would mean other areas of the public sector growing. Similarly, going to the private sector, if we were a one-company town where there was only one major private sector employer or one that was dominant, for example, we could look at what has been experienced in South Australia in relation to the ending of the motor vehicle industry in that state. They do not have a diverse private sector, so one industry goes and that is it for them. They are very difficult economic circumstances.

So diversity is not just about the relative share of public versus private. It is about more than that. It is about how many different sectors or areas of activity make up the totality of our economy. That is what we are seeking to do. We are seeking more diversity in the public sector, more diversity in the private sector, continuing growth, supporting growth in both sectors. It is not a competition. You can grow the public sector and the private sector. They are not mutually exclusive. That is what our government is seeking to do.

Finally, in relation to commentary on the convention centre, I simply repeat the points that I have made ad nauseam over the last 10 years, I think, in relation to this debate. This century we have had one election in the territory where a political party took to that election building a convention centre and funding it as the centrepiece of their economic strategy, putting all of their resources and essentially all of their capital expenditure into that platform. That was the Brendan Smyth led Liberal Party in 2004. If those opposite were serious about the convention centre they could have run on it in 2008; they could have run on it in 2012. Mr Hanson could have run on it in 2016. But there have now been three elections where it has not been the centrepiece of the Canberra Liberals' election agenda. That is fine. I have no problems with that. You make up your own mind as to what you want to run for election on. But for the last three elections it has not been your policy. You have not put any significant money aside for a convention centre. I think the former Leader of the Opposition might have put \$2 million aside for a study, but there has been no serious commitment since Brendan Smyth in 2004.

It is very hard to take seriously any commentary from anyone opposite that we are not doing enough to build a convention centre when it has not been your policy for the last three elections either. I would take you seriously, and perhaps the business community and other people would take you seriously, if you were prepared to get up now or at some point in the next few years and commit to \$700 million, \$800 million or \$900 million or whatever you would like to commit to for a convention centre.

Mr Coe: Is it a billion? Is it a billion yet?

MR BARR: It could be over time. It depends on what you build. By the time you get to the mid-2020s, through escalation, inflation and the like, it could well have got to \$1 billion. It depends on what you want to commit to. I have been clear, time and again, that it is not my government's number one infrastructure priority. Yes, it sits within a list of projects that would be dozens long.

Mr Hanson: What number is it?

MR BARR: It is certainly not number one, Mr Hanson; I will tell you that. We have committed to stage 2 of light rail. We have committed to major investments in our health system. And the major piece of social infrastructure that we have committed to progressing in this parliamentary term is further work on the development of a new theatre for Canberra.

We have also announced today our strong support for the further development of the higher education sector, entering into a memorandum of understanding with the University of New South Wales Canberra to facilitate a major investment in a new city east education precinct for Canberra. This is a significant opportunity for our city, with thousands and thousands of opportunities for students, researchers and academics; with jobs; with prosperity; with our city's single largest export industry, the biggest earner of revenue for this city, brought in from outside.

If I have said it in this place once, I have said it 100 times: we will not grow as a city and our economy will not grow if we only buy or sell from each other. We must be more nationally and internationally engaged. Today, with the Microsoft announcement and the UNSW announcement, we are giving two very practical examples of hundreds of millions of dollars of new investment, new jobs, new opportunities, and growth for Canberra in sectors that we do exceptionally well in. This is the future for our city's economic development. That is why we continue to support the rapid growth of higher education. I commend this appropriation, Chief Minister, Treasury and Economic Development, to the Assembly.

Proposed expenditure agreed to.

City Renewal Authority—Part 1.6.

MR COE (Yerrabi—Leader of the Opposition) (5.18): The commencement of the 2017-18 financial year has seen the discontinuation of the somewhat disaster-prone Land Development Agency and the establishment of the CRA and the SLA to take its place. The CRA will be responsible for urban renewal and managing major projects within declared urban renewal precincts. Its functions apparently include: carrying out urban renewal; acquiring, selling, holding and managing land and other property on behalf of the territory; making arrangements for developments; supporting public and private sector investments; and participating in urban renewal.

The 2017-18 budget statements E provide over \$14 million for the CRA in the current financial year. The Chief Minister has ministerial and administrative responsibility over the CRA. However, it has been included in the Environment, Planning and Sustainable Development Directorate's budget statement. In addition, the Minister for Urban Renewal will in no way be associated with the CRA, despite urban renewal being its primary focus. Furthermore, the new arrangements will see the city activations unit and the city centre marketing and improvement levy transferred to the CRA.

The Canberra Liberals wish to state again our position. The splitting of the LDA into the CRA and SLA does not by itself resolve the recurring integrity issues that became a distinguishing feature of the former agency. At the public accounts committee hearing on 26 July the Auditor-General condemned the loose governance arrangements and loose management within the LDA and found that it had been loose with documentation, which opens up opportunities for fraud. The government blocked attempts by the Canberra Liberals to address these issues for the new authorities in legislation earlier in the year.

The opposition intends to follow the CRA and spending on urban renewal closely to point out where the Labor-Greens government is being loose with taxpayer money. The government's public relations exercise in creating the CRA and SLA is costing the taxpayer over \$860,000 a year for each board and for the CEOs. We have effectively doubled the cost while halving the workload. The taxpayer now has to pay two boards, two chief executives and two agencies for work that could be done by one well-governed board, one principled chief executive and one accountable agency.

However, I believe that the government made a somewhat flippant decision to go with the two-agency approach in the midst of the Auditor-General's report last year. Because of this government's typical stubbornness, I think they were committed to going with the two-agency approach. They have now realised that the City Renewal Authority perhaps does not have a huge workload. So I would not be at all surprised if in time the CRA ends up taking on parts of government such as EventsACT and other marketing and economic development work, because I simply do not think there is going to be enough work for it to do.

Of course, the Suburban Land Agency will always have a role, but I really think that the actual workload for the CRA is going to dry up, especially if, as confirmed, the planning authority is going to continue doing the policy work, as is the case for the land use planning. It really does beg the question: what is the CRA actually going to be doing on a day-to-day basis? It seems to me like a very expensive contract management arm. There are two capital initiatives for the CRA in the 2017-18 budget. The bulk of the capital injection for the CRA is the \$7.5 million allocated to stage 2 of the city to the lake project. This second stage of infrastructure works includes construction of the lake wall and boardwalk, land reclamation and associated infrastructure works.

The Canberra Liberals have uncovered through questioning that the government expects to spend \$22.4 million over stage 2 to complete 500 metres of the boardwalk alone. This works out to about \$45,000 per square metre. This spending is in addition to the nearly \$6.3 million already spent on the first 150 metres. Of course, when you are spending this sort of money it is no wonder that rates are going up; it is no wonder that fees, taxes, fines and charges keep going up.

The 2017-18 budget also allocates \$2 million for an initial works package, including land sale preparation work for city to the lake, the delivery of city activation events and the implementation of the Haig Park master plan. The Canberra Liberals are pleased to see that, five years after the draft Haig Park master plan was published, the

government has finally decided to do something. The opposition hopes that the government will commit to taking on board the thoughts and opinions of Canberrans and produce a plan that is reflective of community ideas and expectations.

Finally, I would like to speak on the transfer of the city centre marketing and improvement levy from In The City Canberra to CRA. This decision was only made by the government in June. It has blindsided In the City Canberra by stripping them of their funding. In the City Canberra was formed to address the government's own failings—that is, to maintain and promote the city centre. Just a few of the events In the City Canberra has sponsored include the Multicultural Festival, Skate in the City, Christmas in the City, the curry festival, Ramadan in the city and the Chinese Moon Festival. They have also supplemented the maintenance of the city centre by removing graffiti from buildings, refurbishing artwork, installing waste enclosures and bike racks, and providing the funds for refurbishment and the construction of West Row Park.

When questioned at estimates, the government made no commitment to continue this work. In a few months, In the City Canberra will cease to receive funding. The residents and businesses deserve clarity on how the levy will be spent to improve their surrounds. While there has been an occasional critic of the state of the city, the supplementary municipal works of In the City Canberra do make a difference to people's enjoyment of the space. There is no additional expenditure in the budget to offset the loss of this service and no pledge by the government to continue these much-needed additional urban services.

We have yet to see evidence that integrity has been incorporated into the CRA by virtue of a name change. Not only that; we are still eagerly awaiting the announcement on who the government is going to appoint to some of the senior management positions. I note that even as recently as a couple of weeks ago they were still advertising for a CEO, despite the fact that the government said back in May that they needed to rush through the legislation urgently so that they could hire a CEO. Here we are, still waiting. The Canberra Liberals support wise and measured spending that demonstrates value for money. However, we have real concerns that the culture that existed in the LDA may well continue in its successor organisations as well.

MS LE COUTEUR (Murrumbidgee) (5.26): The Greens have supported the creation of the CRA and the SLA. Given all the issues with their predecessor, clearly change was needed. We are very positive about the idea of the CRA as a group, an organisation, which effectively can curate the development down the central part of Canberra with light rail stage 1. We think that for light rail stage 1 to reach its full potential it needs some real care, love and attention. I think that is basically why the CRA has remained under the oversight of the Chief Minister. It is clearly an area that he is very involved with, and I think that is great.

I would, however, say that the rest of Canberra also needs care, love and attention. We have the Suburban Land Agency, but not all of the rest of Canberra is suburban. I think that the name is kind of showing the government's priorities. We hopefully will have light rail stage 2 going to Woden. Woden is the first town centre outside Civic. It also will require considerable love and attention to make it flourish again.

There has been a lot of concern about derelict buildings et cetera in Woden. Woden revitalisation is needed as much as anywhere else.

Just today there was an example. UNSW is expanding in Canberra, which is great. It is expanding in the Reid CIT precinct. Why not the Woden CIT? We really need attention to go to the whole of Canberra and I think calling the other agency the Suburban Land Agency does leave it open that that is really not where we are putting our thoughts. Apart from that, I note that establishing the CRA is only the first of the steps that are going to be needed to address the issues that the Auditor-General articulated very well in her report and, in addition to her articulation, the public perception that the LDA has had far too much power.

We are very pleased that the government has agreed that there will be affordable and public housing targets. We are looking forward to seeing those and we are looking forward to the statement of intent from the CRA that emphasises better governance, better community engagement, a focus on delivering affordable housing, the delivery of development that supports our move to carbon neutrality and a change in culture. We very much look forward to hearing about all of these improvements to come.

MR BARR (Kurrajong—Chief Minister, Treasurer, Minister for Economic Development and Minister for Tourism and Major Events) (5.29): The City Renewal Authority has been established to drive revitalisation of the defined city renewal precinct. This includes Dickson, Northbourne Avenue, Haig Park, Civic, city east and the West Basin. An appropriation of \$79.539 million has been allocated in the budget over four years to establish the authority and enable it to assist with the revitalisation of these central parts of Canberra.

Now our city is a city for people; it is a city open to change, to talent, to business, to diversity and to innovation, and our city centre needs to reflect this modern, progressive and forward-thinking community. Over the past 10 years we have seen the face of the city change, and there is certainly an emerging urban energy in Canberra. It is one that we are keen to grow and foster. As this change continues, our city continues to grow. More than 6,000 new people each year are calling Canberra home, and many of these new arrivals will live and work in the city precinct, where they have access to high quality services, comfortable and efficient public transport and a wide range of rich and vibrant recreational opportunities.

This growth and change is already highly visible. Anyone who travels along Northbourne Avenue or spends time in the CBD or in Dickson will have seen it. High density development—at least in the Canberra context, not in a global context—is taking place at a fast rate to keep up with the demand of our growing city. New dwellings are rising up right throughout the precinct as part of mixed use developments that are providing not only the residential dwellings that we need but also the services that are required to help build vibrant communities for these new residents. You do not have to look hard to find these developments. In Dickson there are a number under construction already, changing the skyline a little. When completed and filled with new Dickson residents, they will certainly add more to the area's culture as they make it their home.

On Northbourne Avenue, where the delivery of light rail is changing the way people view that corridor, we are seeing dozens of changes. Mixed use buildings in precincts at various stages of development are occurring right along the Northbourne Avenue corridor. Some of this redevelopment is as the result of the government's sale of aged, outdated and concentrated public housing, through the asset recycling initiative, but it is worth observing that a larger amount of the redevelopment is actually occurring on privately owned land, and this is taking place as property owners increasingly see the value of a renewed and more accessible Northbourne Avenue.

Similarly, the CBD skyline is marked by many cranes. As property owners in the CBD respond to the demand for more residential homes in the centre of the city, the increase in residential dwellings will continue into the future and the increase in the number of people living the city will, of course, assist its transformation from just a place of business to being a district that has a thriving, beating heart 24 hours a day, seven days a week.

The City Renewal Authority will encourage and promote this vibrant city precinct through increased activation and the delivery of design-led, people-focused urban renewal, with a particular emphasis on social and environmental sustainability. The authority will collaborate with Canberrans to identify, understand and deliver the shared vision for the city's potential. The government strongly believes that local stakeholders are best placed to identify where changes and improvements are needed, and the community contributions will be invaluable in revitalising the city centre.

The government has outlined its expectations of the City Renewal Authority. One of the first jobs will be to progress the work that is already underway on the West Basin waterfront. Construction of the first stage—150 metres of boardwalk—started in November of 2016 and was completed in May of 2017. The creation of the adjoining point park has begun and is scheduled to open to the public early in 2018.

The creation of a high quality foreshore public realm shows our commitment to deliver renewal and improvement in the broader city precinct. It will also facilitate mixed-use land release in the West Basin precinct. Proposed land release, though, is still a number of years away as the government plans to significantly develop the public realm first, prior to releasing land for mixed use development.

Market research and further community engagement will be undertaken to guide the future development of the city renewal precinct to determine the sorts of housing, amenities and services that people want to see in the precinct in the future. The authority has been asked to start work on ways to enliven and renew the city bus interchange. It will also work with other directorates such as Transport Canberra and City Services to ensure the continued delivery of an open boulevard space along Northbourne Avenue to enable safe pedestrian movement and connection to services and facilities along the gateway.

The authority will be focused on activating the city's parks, streets and laneways, working within Canberra's built environment to create places that encourage diverse street life. This work will include rejuvenating older and underutilised parts of the city,

such as Haig Park, creating places that Canberrans will want to spend time in and that meet the needs of the community. The authority will work closely with stakeholders to develop events that highlight areas of the city, encouraging engagement with underutilised spaces, driving community and business activities in the area.

The renewal of these urban spaces also aims to improve community and business confidence in the local areas, with the potential to reduce the maintenance and insurance costs of unused spaces and to propel investment and create new job opportunities. The authority will actively engage with building owners in the city precinct to ensure delivery of cohesive renewal and maintenance works. The authority understands that, to achieve the best outcomes for the community, robust community and stakeholder engagement is essential. The government encourages all community members, businesses and property owners to continue their already active and very positive engagement and to continue to share their hopes and visions for our CBD.

I am delighted that a number of highly experienced board members have agreed to be part of the board and the process to lead the renewal of our city centre. The governing board includes professionals with expertise in urban design, architecture, town planning, sustainable development, affordable housing and community engagement. Working with the local community and businesses, the authority will rejuvenate and activate the central parts of Canberra, creating a precinct that is safe, that is attractive, that is lively but, most importantly, a place that is fun and an exciting place in which to live, explore and enjoy. I commend this appropriation to the Assembly.

MS LAWDER (Brindabella) (5.37): I rise today to speak about the appropriation of funds for the City Renewal Authority in this budget. The new City Renewal Authority oversees the revitalisation of areas of Canberra that the Chief Minister has deemed worthy of revitalisation. A month out from the 2016 election the government announced it would divide the work of the LDA between two ACT public sector delivery entities, one focusing on leading and facilitating the redevelopment of Civic and the Northbourne Avenue corridor to be called the City Renewal Authority and the other dedicated to developing new suburbs, the Suburban Land Agency.

My colleague Mr Coe and I have spoken considerably here in the Assembly on the integrity issues of the LDA, including the Auditor-General's report, and I will not spend my time today talking about that. I would like to remind the government of the importance of communication and consultation with the community, which appears to be a particular issue in planning infrastructure and development.

The introduction of the CRA is an opportunity for the government to correct the issues that the LDA faced. It is a good opportunity to focus the government's attention on the revamping of our city centre. The City Renewal Authority will be responsible for leading and managing urban renewal works in declared urban renewal precincts, the first of which has been declared, encompassing Civic, Northbourne Avenue corridor, Haig Park and the West Basin city to the lake project.

In 2013 the government undertook a consultation on the city to the lake project that included a new stadium, a new 50-metre pool, apartments along the lake and the much-needed new convention centre. However, as time goes on, the current city to the

lake project that the CRA is to develop is looking less and less like the one Canberrans were consulted on. In June last year the government downgraded the 50-metre pool to a smaller leisure pool and city beach at the lakeside, and in February we shelved the convention centre but then later backflipped on the promise of a new stadium.

We can see that in 2017 the city to the lake project, which was once such a grand plan, has now become apartment blocks and a boardwalk. That is not to say there is anything wrong with the change of plans. Plans do change, sometimes positively. But it just shows the difference between what was consulted on and what the community ends up getting. The government should not be using a 2013 consultation on the grand design as an okay to implement a boardwalk and apartment blocks.

I believe the Haig Park master plan from five years ago—the draft—provides a good opportunity for the government to show how seriously the City Renewal Authority takes consultation, and Mr Coe has already spoken about that. I do hope the government will listen, reflect and take on board the submissions and opinions of the Canberra community and create a Haig Park that is reflective of a vibrant, inclusive Canberra.

I will move on to talk briefly about In the City Canberra and the city centre marketing and improvement levy. In the City Canberra was formed and received appropriations from the ACT government for the first time in 2007-08. That appropriation is raised through the city centre marketing and improvement levy. In the City Canberra was formed because it was felt by some traders that the government was not adequately completing the basic services local businesses expected. We have had much debate about, for example, bins in the newly reinvigorated Braddon precinct.

In April this year the government announced a review of the city centre marketing and improvement levy, and shortly afterwards In the City Canberra were blindsided by this budget and the fact that after 10 years the government is instead allocating those funds to the City Renewal Authority. To add insult to injury, during the estimates hearings, when asked if they would use the city centre marketing and improvement levy to continue the work In the City Canberra has been undertaking, the government refused to commit to it, leaving us to wonder how the levy will be spent.

The people of Canberra want a government that communicates with them, a government that will listen to them and a government that will speak to the average person on the street, not just their friends in the unions and the property industry. The government for too long has talked the talk but has not walked the walk of consultation.

The implementation of the City Renewal Authority is an opportunity for the government to take a step forward to communicate effectively. It is an opportunity the government must grasp with both hands. Good governance is only possible when politicians and policymakers listen to those on the ground. The integrity issues that plagued the LDA must be addressed so that they cannot be repeated in the new agency. We will be listening to those on the ground, we will be talking with people and we will be keeping a close eye on the City Renewal Authority as it rolls out.

Proposed expenditure agreed to.

Community Services Directorate—Part 1.7.

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

Adjournment

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

That the Assembly do now adjourn.

Mr Toby Francis

MR RAMSAY (Ginninderra—Attorney-General, Minister for Regulatory Services, Minister for the Arts and Community Events and Minister for Veterans and Seniors) (5.44): I rise this afternoon to pay tribute to one of Canberra's great artistic exports, the talented Toby Francis from my home suburb of Latham. Toby is currently starring as Charlie Price in the Australian production of Cyndi Lauper's smash hit musical *Kinky Boots*, which has just finished its season in Sydney and opens in Brisbane soon. I understand that Toby has just arrived in Brisbane to prepare for the new season.

Twenty-eight-year-old Toby won the role of Charlie ahead of many Australian and international hopefuls. This success in such a relatively short career is a tribute to his upbringing in a city which values the arts as an integral part of life and an important part of our identity. It is a part of Canberra's life which is dear to me, as the father of children who are musicians, directors and sound and lighting engineers, as the husband of a talented artist and museum exhibition designer and as a musician myself.

Toby Francis took to the stage in Canberra early, following his mother, Linda, with roles in productions such as *The Lion, the Witch and the Wardrobe*, *Tom Sawyer* and *Bye Bye Birdie*. His singing lessons with the late Phil Perman were paid for by his grandmother, who remains today his biggest fan.

After attending St Francis Xavier College, Toby went to Hawker College to take part in the school's high calibre drama program. While performing regularly in lead roles there he met his fiancée, Lauren Peters, now an award-winning set designer and producer. In late 2008 Toby was invited to audition at the prestigious Australian Institute of Music in Sydney, immediately gaining a place to study musical theatre.

He later won first place in the Sydney Cabaret Showcase festival with his one-man show *Blokelahoma!*, a performance which caught the attention of another great entertainer and producer, David Campbell, who soon became a friend and a mentor. Toby became a key member of the Hayes Theatre in Potts Point, where Campbell is a director, where he has staged his cabaret shows and performed in independent musicals, including Tim Freedman's *Truth, Beauty and a Picture of You*.

Toby continued to write and to perform his own shows, winning the 2014 Sydney Theatre Award for best cabaret production and performing it at the 2016 Adelaide

Cabaret Festival, all to rave reviews. In 2015 Toby was offered a place with the popular and long-running Australian phenomenon the 10 Tenors for their US, Australia and New Zealand tours, and in early 2016 he performed with them at the Canberra Theatre, to the delight of his hometown audience.

At the end of the 10 Tenors tour Toby found that he had landed the role of Charlie in the Australian production of *Kinky Boots*. As we fast-forward to the show's opening night with Cyndi Lauper on the red carpet in October last year, the critics were united in their praise of the lad from Latham with the dynamic stage presence and the amazing voice.

Toby Francis comes from a local family well known for its community service. His grandfather, the late Lieutenant Colonel Neil Harris, worked tirelessly for his community through his long association with the Belconnen Lions Club. His enormous contribution was recognised by an Order of Australia, selection as a torchbearer in the Sydney Olympics and, posthumously, the naming of Neil Harris Crescent in Forde.

Toby followed in his grandfather's altruistic footsteps with a stint as Camp Quality's travelling mascot, Giggle, performing for sick children in hospitals across New South Wales. Toby's grandmother, Audrey Harris, is a former Quota Club district convener and a View Club member. Toby's mother, Linda, still lives in Latham with Toby's younger brother, Sam, a talented poet. I was fortunate to have Linda volunteer on my campaign last year. Toby Francis is a Canberra success story. We can all be proud of him. It has been my great pleasure to speak about him today in the Assembly. I wish him well and I hope that he will soon grace a Canberra stage again.

Share the Dignity

MS LEE (Kurrajong) (5.48): I feel privileged to represent an electorate with a diversity of people who embody Canberra's innate sense of compassion, empathy and community spirit. This evening, I rise to speak about a very special cause that commenced on 1 August. Share the Dignity was an initiative founded by Rochelle Courtenay in 2015 after she discovered that thousands of Australian women cannot access sanitary products when they need them.

Over 85,000 Australian women and girls cannot afford or access sanitary products. A topic which at times has been taboo and not spoken about, a situation which we all take for granted, is a tragic reality for homeless women, women in domestic violence shelters and women and girls living in poverty. Ms Courtenay rightly saw this as entirely unacceptable in modern day Australia and was inspired to take action. In March 2015 she held the first sanitary drive in Brisbane, aimed at providing sanitary products to underprivileged women and girls.

Since then, Share the Dignity has grown into a national initiative which has collected over 650,000 packets of pads and tampons from collection points in businesses, schools and other locations all over Australia, including at our very own Canberra handmade markets.

It gives me great pride to know that in the ACT we have 130 businesses, schools and other locations that are generously taking part this month, with 79 volunteers ensuring that the initiative runs smoothly. Every item donated is registered, sorted and sent to services that directly support women and girls in need. I commend these groups and volunteers for their dedication to ensure no woman or girl goes without this necessity.

As some members of this chamber may be aware, Madam Acting Speaker, you brought the initiative to the Assembly in the last few years by converting your office into a collection point for the program and directing a successful Assembly-wide reception where donations from all over the building were coordinated and collected. It is with great pleasure that I announce that during this month's drive my office will be a collection point for the initiative. I must apologise that I am starting later in the month, which means that we will have to dig extra deep, and I can only hope to do the initiative you started justice.

Having access to sanitary products is imperative to upholding the dignity and respect of all women and girls. In this day and age it should be non-negotiable. I take this opportunity to encourage all members to actively get behind this fantastic initiative and donate sanitary products, or even give me the money and I will go buy it on your behalf, to my office so that we can all work together to bring dignity to all women and girls.

I will be doing what I can for the remainder of the month to draw attention to this drive and encourage all members to do the same. I remind members that the United Nations has declared access to sanitary items a basic human right. As Australia's first female majority parliament and a leader in so many ways, we should uphold Canberra's legacy of being a compassionate and empathetic community and support Share the Dignity's August drive. Doing so will send a clear message that Canberra is committed to upholding the dignity of all women and girls.

Tuggeranong Men's Shed Holy Family Primary School—additional classrooms

MR PARTON (Brindabella) (5.51): I rise to congratulate the Tuggeranong Men's Shed after their recent 10th anniversary. Thanks to Frank Vrins and Keith Gilby for inviting me along to the 10th anniversary lunch at the Burns Club. I can report that my colleagues Ms Lawder and Ms Burch were also in attendance. I had a wonderful afternoon sharing stories from Men's Shed members and carving a big hole in the Star bistro fare. I am pleased to say that Keith and Frank then invited me along to do a full inspection of the Tuggeranong Men's Shed workshop in Greenway, which I know that Mr Gentleman is also familiar with.

I want to commend our Speaker, Ms Burch, for her work as patron of the organisation and for ultimately assisting to move the levers that led to the establishment of the current site. I would also like to commend Communities@Work in Tuggeranong for their massive assistance in the early years of the Tuggeranong Men's Shed. I would like to believe that when it comes to organisations such as the Men's Shed, we can

and do adopt a non-partisan approach in fostering their wonderful community activities.

As we get older, particularly for men, it is easy for us to lose connection with networks and to become isolated. I do not think we can underestimate the enormous value of the Men's Shed in reconnecting and supporting retired men and giving them meaningful activity, enabling them to enjoy their lives. Walking through the Men's Shed on a busy Thursday morning, as I did, felt like being in Santa's toy workshop, but the workers looked more like Santa than they did the elves.

I would also like to make mention of one of the best schools in my electorate. There are many wonderful schools, but I speak in particular of Holy Family at Gowrie. I was there as a guest very recently, along with Senator Zed Seselja, my colleague Ms Lawder and the Catholic Archbishop for Canberra-Goulburn, Christopher Prowse, for the opening of a new classroom. Holy Family got a boost with some funding from the feds which they were most grateful for, but they also raised a large sum off their own bat, and they are to be commended, Madam Assistant Speaker.

I did want to register here that every interaction that I have ever had with Holy Family has been exceptional. Everyone from the principal, Mrs Marek, down to the tiniest of students has always been wonderful. I am sure that the students at Holy Family are not always on their best behaviour, but they certainly go to great lengths to always put their best foot forward when visitors come to the school. And the food on offer for the morning tea was out of this world. I want to know who made the sausage rolls. I look forward to the Holy Family fete on November 25 between 10 am and 2 pm.

Palliative Care ACT—fundraising Pigeonhole Theatre

MS CHEYNE (Ginninderra) (5.54): What will you leave behind when you die? What do you want to be remembered for? And will the challenges that you have overcome, your proudest moments and the lessons you have learned, be passed on to your friends and family? These are not easy questions to answer, and they are certainly confronting. But they are the questions that Palliative Care ACT volunteers help dying Canberrans grapple with every day.

On 9 August I attended a fundraising breakfast for Palliative Care ACT on behalf of the Chief Minister. The breakfast coincided with Dying To Know Day on 8 August. Palliative care has as its primary aim not the cure of disease but improving the quality of life of patients, and their families, as they face life-threatening illness. Palliative care aims to prevent and relieve suffering, not only physical suffering but also psychosocial and spiritual suffering. The reality is that for some people death will be a slow and painful process. We cannot avoid that, but we can ease their pain and suffering. Palliative Care ACT does an excellent job in helping Canberrans through some of the toughest battles of their lives.

One service Palliative Care ACT is relaunching is the life stories program. This program will help those in palliative care to record their life story. The process will help people to see the bigger picture and remind them of what they have achieved in

their life. Life stories will help not only those who are coming to terms with their own death but also their families. Research has shown that taking a step back and appreciating a person's whole life story helps the bereavement process.

A life story can be requested by anyone who is accessing the services of Palliative Care ACT, young or old. Life stories will be prepared by trained volunteers with specific life story writing skills. A volunteer will meet with a storyteller for an hour each week for about six weeks to record their life. In between meetings, the volunteer will transcribe the story, and after this time the storyteller will be presented with a printed copy of their life story to share with their family and friends. It is a beautiful memento of an individual's life, full of the memories and wisdom gained along their journey.

The breakfast event I attended raised funds for the specialised volunteer training required, to provide much needed resources for the program. The keynote speaker at the breakfast was Jean Kittson, an Australian performer, writer and comedian. Jean brought her own touch of humour and insight to the topic of death and dying. It was a fantastic event. I extend my gratitude to Palliative Care ACT for having me and wish them the best of luck in the relaunch of their program.

I also want to wish local company Pigeonhole Theatre all the best as they travel to Monte Carlo today to perform their play *Playhouse Creatures* at the world festival of theatre. Pigeonhole Theatre was formed just last year to provide more opportunities and more performance opportunities for women in Canberra in theatre. After a strong season of *Playhouse Creatures* at the Q last year, they were selected to represent Australia in Monaco.

They had to fund themselves to get there. As part of that, I understand that they had a trivia night. Also, last Friday they held another performance of *Playhouse Creatures*, fittingly at the Playhouse. It was extremely well attended; I attended myself. They received a standing ovation for an excellent performance. I just want to extend my congratulations and a bit of a break a leg to the cast and the crew, in particular to director and Belconnen local lass Jordan Best. Thank you.

Mr Johno Johnson

MRS DUNNE (Ginninderra) (5.58): I would like tonight to mark the passing of Johno Johnson, a great member of the labour movement and a great friend, whose passing, I think, is a loss to the Australian community. Paul Keating described Johno in the *Australian* this week as a prince of the Labor Party. I think that the Labor Party has lost one of its great leaders and I do not think we will see his like again.

I first met Johno Johnson in, I think, about 1963. It came about in an unusual way. My older brother won an opportunity to present a poster at a science seminar for schoolboys, for high school students, when he was in about second form. He was sent off to Sydney by my parents. When they were organising it, they did not have anywhere for him to stay. His science teacher asked his old friend, who lived near where the science exhibition was going to be, if he could put up my brother. That was Johno Johnson and his wife, Pauline. The family friendship grew from there.

Johno was born in Murwillumbah on the north coast of New South Wales. In his days as a representative of the SDA, he used to travel to the north coast of New South Wales as a union organiser, and almost every time he travelled north he visited my family home. Over the years I was regaled with great stories about politics and the labour movement, and also his other great love, which was the church. Johno was a great son of the church and a great supporter of the church in Australia and across the world. His role as a great son of the church was recognised in recent years by the bestowing of the honour of knight of the Order of St Gregory upon him.

Johno always liked to recruit people into politics. He intended to recruit people into the Labor Party, and he was very successful at that, but he was not always successful in recruiting people into the Labor Party. He did attempt to recruit Tony Abbott, as I understand it, and that did not work. He also attempted to recruit me and my brother. I think my brother did have a dalliance with the Labor Party for a while. One of my former staffers was also a target for recruitment into the Labor Party, and that did not work either.

Johno always used to say—and I remember this even as a young child—that what Australia needs is people of goodwill to join the political party of their choice. I like to say that after I became a Liberal politician he rephrased that to say the social justice party of their choice. I always disagreed with Johno that there is more than one path to the truth in politics, and I think that he had a grudging acknowledgement of that.

Australian politics is poorer this week for the passing of Johno Johnson. Many of us owe him a great debt. I think, as I said before, that the Labor Party will not see his like again. To see someone of his fierceness and his fidelity, both to his party and to his church, and to not really have to compromise on either part, is an extraordinary achievement. As we on Friday farewell Johno with his family, we say, “Rest in peace.” I am sure that the organisation of raffles in heaven will be greatly improved by the attendance of Johno Johnson.

Question resolved in the affirmative.

The Assembly adjourned at 6.03 pm.