



Debates

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Tuesday, 22 August 2017

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Tuesday, 22 August 2017

MADAM SPEAKER (Ms Burch) 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.

Suburban Land Agency Ministerial statement

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) (10.01): In 2016 the Chief Minister announced this government's intention to establish two new land agencies—one to focus on urban renewal in a declared urban renewal precinct and another to promote and develop greenfield suburban development and urban renewal in established centres and suburbs outside declared urban renewal precincts.

The Assembly passed the City Renewal Authority and Suburban Land Agency Act 2017 on 11 May 2017. The act commenced on 1 July 2017, establishing the two new land agencies—the City Renewal Authority and the Suburban Land Agency. At the core of the act are the following principles: development of the community's land assets that is based on social inclusion, community engagement, environmental sustainability and the provision of affordable housing; clarity of roles and responsibilities between the two new entities; engagement, consultation and collaboration with stakeholders; and robust governance arrangements.

It is in this context that the new Suburban Land Agency is established to deliver new homes in new suburbs and to oversee land releases that will support urban renewal projects in town centres and suburbs. As an entity, the agency has retained the business expertise necessary to ensure that the government receives coordinated advice on how to develop our suburban spaces to achieve the social, financial and environmental outcomes reflected in the act in a way that is consistent with the Territory Plan and the broader requirements of the Planning and Development Act 2007.

This Assembly, through the debate of the bill, the passage of the act and more recent hearings, has provided for the creation of the Suburban Land Agency governing board. I have now had the opportunity to meet with the new chair of the board and have articulated the government's priorities for suburban development for the ACT. Whilst the government has reinforced the independence of this body through the legislative arrangements, it has also ensured that the Suburban Land Agency will function on the basis that there will be a closer nexus of control over development outcomes for the Canberra community.

As minister, this provides me with the ability to give a written direction to the agency about the exercise of its functions or to request that it undertake additional functions. This ministerial direction provides the relevant minister with the ability to have direct input into the SLA's activities, in consultation with the board, and through an instrument that is notifiable. I have notified the chair that I will be providing this statement of expectations in coming days. Setting a strong framework to enable the government to deliver the best outcomes in developing and renewing Canberra is a key responsibility that the government has for the community.

The act has been established in a way that will ensure that board members will offer a duty of good conduct to me, as the responsible minister, through my direction and involvement in establishing important priorities and within the current administrative arrangements. The agency will be supported by the Environment, Planning and Sustainable Development Directorate.

This duty of good conduct supplements the obligations and responsibilities for board members that arise under the Financial Management Act 1996 and the Public Sector Management Act 1994. As the approving minister, I am keen to establish an early standard in my work with the new agency, to ensure that we create an environment of clarity and openness and a mirroring of community expectations. The Minister for Urban Renewal will also play an important role in guiding and approving policy and projects that promote good practice urban renewal outside the City Renewal Authority's defined precincts.

In establishing these two new entities, the government has listened to the views of community members and met our commitments through the parliamentary agreement, ensuring that the collective membership of both boards is informed by the broad social, environmental and financial objectives which have been clearly set out in the act. This will help to ensure that the Suburban Land Agency's operations are supported and informed by a robust breadth of skills and experience, including urban design and planning; social inclusion and community building; civil engineering and civil works; real estate sales; property development; law, public administration and governance; affordable housing, community housing and public housing; and environmentally sustainable development. The Chief Minister has appointed the members of the Suburban Land Agency board to deliver on the strategic directions set by the ACT government for the benefit of the ACT community.

In December last year I outlined as one of my strategic priorities finding a new approach to housing so that more Canberra families can secure a home that meets their needs. Whilst this is a broad debate that covers many different spheres and stakeholders across the community, it is a priority that the Suburban Land Agency will be fundamental in bringing to fruition. Members may recall that recently I launched the community engagement program to enable the development of a new housing strategy for the ACT. This is important because we know of all the vital things which flow from a stable home—safety, security, health, confidence, employment and happiness.

It is also essential that the new suburbs that we design and create are being built in a way that will stand the test of time for members of our community and our city as a whole. The built form needs to promote the vibrancy and lifestyles that we want: good health and livable communities that are well connected and innovative. Developments need to consider all aspects of our planning system, such as climate change adaptation, integrated transport options and recreational and environmental requirements. To do this, we must always be engaging in different ways to reach the views of those who count—the Canberra community.

The agency's work will be guided by government and community expectations. In part these expectations are reflected within the legislative framework, which ensures that they are exercisable, with approval of the minister. The board will reflect these expectations in its acknowledgement response and in framing its first statement of intent under the Financial Management Act 1996. The board, through its statement of intent, is required to develop the ACT's suburban space to ensure that people are at the centre of its planning and development decisions.

Members will recall that, as part of the government's commitment to strengthening the governance arrangements for the territory's land entities, important work was commenced prior to 1 July 2017 to redesign and re-establish robust governance practices. This work will continue as a key priority. This work includes the central procurement of valuations through the sales and marketing team within the Suburban Land Agency to ensure a consistent approach and provide quality assurance for instructions to valuers; a whole-of-government policy on commercial engagements, with former ACT public service executives to manage any actual, potential or perceived conflicts of interest arising from engaging former ACT public service executives in commercial activity with the territory; the centralisation of requests for legal advice in order to improve transparency and ensure that the chief executive officer for the agency is aware of all requests and can monitor responses; training and education sessions for staff on sourcing valuations and instructing valuers, fraud and ethics, records management, financial delegations, and procurement; and guidance for staff on the land acquisition policy framework.

In establishing the new agency, governance will be further strengthened through a number of activities. These will be developed in collaboration with the Environment, Planning and Sustainable Development Directorate, which has a key role in oversighting and monitoring the agency's activities and providing advice on financial and non-financial performance and governance to the agency itself. These activities will ensure that the Suburban Land Agency meets its compliance and accountability requirements while effectively and efficiently delivering the government's suburban renewal and land development agenda.

Specific initiatives include the development of governance systems and frameworks for performance monitoring, risk management and compliance assurance; project management governance, including standardised frameworks, methodologies and monitoring systems; document control and records management, including the rollout of an electronic document and records management system, standardised document

control processes and training and on-the-ground support for records management compliance; operational policy and procedural updates on issues such as land transactions, due diligence and sales and marketing; and ongoing training and professional development across key governance capabilities.

In relation to acquiring land from private lessees, the government is working to finalise revised land acquisition directions that will provide certainty, transparency and consistency in the information that is required to inform acquisition decisions and ensure that these decisions are aligned with the government's strategic plan for land management and development across the territory. This direction will be a disallowable instrument and will be publicly available. As required by the legislation, I will present a report to the Legislative Assembly after the end of each quarter on any land acquired by the agency during that quarter, providing any valuations and other information prescribed by regulation.

The government articulated its vision for Canberra in relation to suburban land development and urban renewal particularly as the population of the ACT approaches half a million people. We need to continue our work to ensure the availability of new homes in new suburbs and the delivery of safe, inclusive, sustainable and affordable neighbourhoods across Canberra. The ACT government has a duty unique among state and territory governments to ensure the appropriate planning, development, financial return and social dividend for this community's finite land assets. Equally, this provides a unique opportunity to achieve great outcomes for Canberra. We can achieve best practice governance and planning, and make sure that as many Canberrans as possible have access to safe, secure and affordable housing.

This is an opportunity the government is determined to realise and, as the responsible minister, I will be working hard with my ministerial colleagues to ensure that our strategy is clear and achievable, contemporary and best practice, and representative of the community's needs and wants. I present the following paper:

Suburban Land Agency—Progress—Ministerial statement, 22 August 2017.

I move:

That the Assembly take note of the paper.

MS LE COUTEUR (Murrumbidgee) (10.13): The Greens welcome the establishment of the SLA, and I am very pleased to hear this summary of work to date from Minister Berry. The government has clearly made a good start, but there is a lot more to do. I must admit I was very surprised when the minister said that the ministerial directions were going to be set in the coming days, which sounded like it would happen very soon. Why didn't we have this statement once we actually knew what the government had told the SLA to do?

Given that the government has not yet done so, I will go through some of the things that I think are very important. With respect to affordable and public housing targets, the minister mentioned the need for affordable housing in the ACT. This has been

debated at some length throughout this term of the Assembly. Clearly, we need more affordable housing and we need more public housing in the ACT. The statement of intent, when it is released, needs to have a very strong emphasis on delivering more affordable housing.

It also needs to have a strong emphasis on environmentally sustainable development. The ACT has the goal of being net carbon neutral by 2050. Clearly, our built environment is a considerable contributor to carbon impacts—our environmental impact. I think that is really important.

The minister talked a bit about better governance, which I was pleased about. Clearly, whatever the SLA is, we do not want it to have the cowboy culture that its predecessor, the LDA, had. And with respect to better community engagement, I think we can all agree that the LDA was sadly lacking in that area in some regards.

One of the things that the SLA needs to recognise more is that it is in fact dealing with most of Canberra's urban areas and that we are not all suburbs. We are not all suburban. Light rail stage 2 is coming to Woden, and this will need as much care, love and creativity to make it work as light rail stage 1 has. With light rail stage 1, you could say the City Renewal Authority will deal with the areas which will be redeveloped as a result of that. But light rail stage 2 does not seem to have any of this sort of care and attention as yet.

It is not just light rail stage 2. One of the other obvious ones is the Kingston arts precinct. This will be very different from suburban development. You would hardly describe the Kingston arts precinct as suburban development. Of course, there are the other town centres as well. We do not want Canberra to turn out to be just Civic and the suburbs. That is not how Canberra was planned. This seems like a total rejection, in fact, of the NCDC's idea of distributed town centres. While I am not totally in favour of the NCDC's plans, because of the transport implications that they had, we will also have real problems if we just have Civic and the suburbs.

However, despite this, the Greens are very positive about the idea of the SLA, which may be a step up from the LDA. We welcome its establishment and we look forward very much to seeing its statement of intent.

Question resolved in the affirmative.

Bushfire abatement zone

Ministerial statement

MR GENTLEMAN (Brindabella—Minister for Police and Emergency Services, Minister for the Environment and Heritage, Minister for Planning and Land Management and Minister for Urban Renewal) (10.17): I wish to make a statement in regard to bushfire abatement zones as a response to the Assembly resolution of 7 June. As members would be aware, this report to the Assembly is the result of the motion passed in June this year in Mrs Jones's name. I would once again like to thank Mrs Jones for her motion on this important matter.

In line with the motion, my report will include information on: the rationale behind the changes made in 2011 to clarify response arrangements, as agreed by the then chief officers of ACT Fire & Rescue and the ACT Rural Fire Service; the current command and control arrangements in the bushfire abatement zone, or the BAZ; fuel reduction burning in the BAZ; and actions undertaken by the ACT Emergency Services Agency, or ESA, regarding built-up areas close to the New South Wales border.

I would like to start by informing members that the ACT community, the ACT government and the ACT Emergency Services Agency have learnt a lot from the 2003 bushfires. This includes the scrutiny that came with Ron McLeod's review, the coronial inquiry, and at least four reviews by the ACT Auditor-General. Information gathered from many other significant natural disasters and emergencies that have occurred across Australia since that time also assists in this learning.

Since 2003 and those bushfires, significant changes have occurred in the prevention and management of emergency incidents in the ACT. One of these changes was the adoption of the BAZ, which was a key recommendation out of the McLeod inquiry. The BAZ is currently reflected in the Emergencies Act 2004 and remains in place exactly as intended following the McLeod inquiry. A BAZ is declared under section 71 of the Emergencies Act to incorporate rural areas immediately surrounding the built-up area where specific measures may be required to reduce risk to life and property in the built-up area of Canberra from fires occurring in that zone.

The changes in 2011 referred to in Mrs Jones's motion were to clarify response arrangements in the BAZ. These response arrangements were agreed by the then chief officers of the ACT fire brigade and the ACT Rural Fire Service and were considered appropriate to meet the needs at the time.

The Emergencies Act is periodically reviewed to ensure that the ESA is able to continue providing best practice emergency services. On 29 October 2015 the review into the Emergencies Act 2004 was tabled in the Assembly. The review identified that one of the areas for further improvement was the responsibility of fire control in the BAZ. The review stated that the procedure for determining which service has control of a fire in the BAZ was cumbersome and potentially problematic. While the response arrangements were considered appropriate in 2011 by the then chief officers of the ACT fire brigade and the ACT Rural Fire Service, the review in 2015 advised that this was an area that could be even further improved. In short, the review proposed that a single service be given specific responsibility for fire control and planning in the BAZ.

This proposal was put forward through the Emergencies Amendment Bill 2016, which was debated and passed in the Assembly on 9 June 2016. The explanatory statement for the bill detailed the cumbersome and potentially problematic procedures from 2011 that were used to determine the service responsible for incident control in relation to fires in the BAZ. During debate on the bill, the then shadow spokesperson for police and emergency services and the ACT Greens spokesperson articulated the issues perfectly. They highlighted the reasons why amendments to arrangements for command and control in the BAZ were necessary.

The 2011 procedures are summarised as follows: the service responsible for incident control in relation to fires in the BAZ used to be decided by the officers in charge on scene from each service, liaising with each other and jointly determining the priorities and strategies for the management of the fire, including incident control. If agreement were not quickly achieved on scene, the officer in charge on scene from each service would immediately contact their respective chief officer. The chief officers would then liaise with each other and appoint an incident controller and other key incident management team, or IMT, roles as required.

If, in the opinion of either of the chief officers, the fire was likely to escalate or had escalated into a complex incident threatening life, property or significant environmental assets, or multiple incidents were occurring that may compete for resources, the fire would be under the control of an off-scene located IMT. If an IMT were not in place, the chief officers would liaise with each other and appoint an incident controller and other key IMT roles as required, taking into consideration the risk profile of the incident.

In the event that agreement was not reached between the chief officers, the commissioner would appoint an incident controller and other key IMT roles as required. It is easy to see why the review found that the old procedures from 2011 were cumbersome and potentially problematic. So thank you to the then shadow spokesperson and ACT Greens spokesperson for telling us exactly how it used to be, and thank you to the previous Assembly for the passage of the bill last year.

The amendments have now made the accountabilities very clear. They clarify that ACT Fire & Rescue is responsible for the complex hazards of a large city in a built-up area and the ACT Rural Fire Service remains responsible for any fire incidents in bushland, such as parks, reserves and farms. The Emergencies Act ensures that the roles and functions of the ESA commissioner and the chief officers are clear not only in times of emergency but in training, planning and community education roles.

As I advised the Assembly on 7 June 2017, I was made aware of an administrative error in amending the Emergencies Act 2016, which was to delete section 29(3)(d), giving the chief officer of ACT Fire & Rescue responsibility for operational planning in the BAZ. While this Assembly debated and passed this change on the basis that the amendment had been made as intended, the administrative error meant that the legislation does not reflect the Assembly's intent.

This is an oversight that will be corrected through the next Justice and Community Safety Legislation Amendment Bill, scheduled to be introduced in the Assembly in September this year. Despite this oversight, the Emergencies Act has been applied as intended, following the amendments made to the legislation last year. The feedback I am receiving from the people that matter most—those who apply the legislation and seek direction in the event of an emergency incident—is that these arrangements are working extremely well. This was highlighted during the most recent 2016-17 bushfire season, when both ACT fire services worked together collaboratively and cohesively.

To ensure that this continues, I can assure the community that, as Canberra expands, regular reviews of the built-up area will continue to make sure changes in the urban landscape are reflected in arrangements. The most recent of these changes was in April this year, where the built-up area boundaries were updated to include the suburbs of Throsby and Jacka as built-up areas. This was notified by the acting ESA commissioner in a notifiable instrument. ACT Fire & Rescue is responsible for built-up areas and the ACT Rural Fire Service is responsible for everything outside the BUA. However, it is important to point out that any changes to the BAZ and built-up area do not alter existing response arrangements, which are that the first response to all grass and bushfires in the ACT will be by the nearest available, most appropriate resource, irrespective of the jurisdiction or service.

In relation to built-up areas encroaching on the New South Wales border, I am advised that this is not expected to occur for a number of years. However, I understand that consideration is already being given to this matter and that discussions have commenced with New South Wales through cross-border reforms. I am assured by the ESA that prior to any built-up areas encroaching on the New South Wales border, appropriate arrangements will be put in place, not just for emergency services but for other general services as well.

The government has anticipated the need to ensure that the community continues to be protected to the highest levels in the face of the increasing threat of climate as the city continues to grow and expand. This is why the government introduced section 77B of the Emergency Services Act, which allows the commissioner, under the strategic bushfire management planning framework, to set high standards of protection in planning and development so that the safety of the community continues to be the first priority of this government.

The strategic bushfire management plan, or SBMP, underpins all of the ESA's work in relation to bushfire management. The focus of the SBMP is to protect the community and its assets by preventing bushfires, mitigating their impact, and coordinating across government during emergencies and recovery. It is a dynamic document that allows emergency services and fire managers to have the flexibility they require to implement measures that reduce bushfire risk and to apply improved methods and knowledge as they are developed.

The SBMP is reviewed and renewed every five years under section 72 of the Emergencies Act and sets out complementary and integrated strategies through which the government and the community will reduce the risks of bushfire in the ACT. Another important aspect of the SBMP is to focus attention to where the risk is the greatest. The ESA is able to refine its focus from a broadbrush approach to pinpoint exactly where the ACT is most vulnerable as a community.

The ESA is also able to use science to better map where risks are greatest. Ongoing changes to prediction and information systems, and improvements to systems for issuing warnings and alerts, mean that the ESA is far better placed than ever before to provide the community with the best possible early advice to assist in their protection.

Improved warning and alert systems are just one area where both the ESA and the ACT community are benefiting from the significant investments made by the government in emergency capability. Others include additional firefighting appliances, upgraded fire trails, better communication systems, community fire units, aircraft, the Hume training centre and airbase, heavy machinery, new updated accommodation and the Emergency Coordination Centre at Fairbairn, which enables the whole of the ACT government and utility companies to coordinate services to the community during a major incident.

The ACT Rural Fire Service currently has access to 67 vehicles, two contract helicopters during the bushfire season, over 500 volunteers and 150 ACT parks and conservation service staff to deal with any fire incidents in bushland. ACT Fire & Rescue has nine frontline pumpers, as well as tankers that can navigate through the bushland. In times of bushfire, these ACT Fire & Rescue resources can be used to complement the ACT Rural Fire Service resources when and where appropriate.

I would also like to acknowledge the important work of the ACT parks and conservation service, supported by the ACT Rural Fire Service volunteer members, that sees the ACT as the only jurisdiction achieving its bushfire hazard reduction targets. Prescribed burns come with elements of risk, but the ACT government is willing to accept these risks in order to achieve greater public safety outcomes. Other bushfire mitigation activities that prepare the ACT for bushfire seasons include slashing, grazing, mowing and the physical removal of vegetation.

The Canberra bushfire ready campaign has also been extremely successful in encouraging Canberrans to take the necessary steps to minimise the threat of bushfire. This includes reminders to give their homes and yards a general tidy up, clearing away unnecessary garden clutter and ensuring that residents have a bushfire survival plan. These messages are reinforced by our firefighters and emergency workers, who doorknock the streets that are most vulnerable to the impact of bushfire. Landholders are also reminded of the requirement to maintain proper fire breaks around their properties and to manage fuel levels appropriately. The ESA partners and supports farmers in the BAZ to ensure easier access for firefighters in the event of an emergency incident.

Madam Speaker, the devastation caused by the 2003 bushfires provided a test for our emergency services like no incident ever experienced in this region. As I stated earlier, lessons have been learnt and the appropriate measures have been put in place. The community can have complete confidence that if we ever experience another major incident of this nature, things will be a lot different next time. The ESA is well placed, as it has ever been, to protect and preserve life, property and the environment. I present the following paper:

Bushfire Abatement Zone—Ministerial statement, 22 August 2017.

I move:

That the Assembly take note of the paper.

Question resolved in the affirmative.

Greyhound racing industry 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): Members would be aware that in July 2016 the Chief Minister announced that the ACT would end greyhound racing in the territory, following the report of the special commission of inquiry into the greyhound racing industry in New South Wales. We have been clear and consistent in our position for over a year now and, as I confirmed in June this year, the government remains committed to ending the greyhound racing industry in the territory. This is in line with community values and expectations.

The closure of greyhound racing will happen through a process of transition that will be complete by 30 June 2018. That means that in ten months time the commitment to end this industry in Canberra will be fully realised. I will shortly introduce in this place legislation to end greyhound trialling and racing in the ACT in order to facilitate the appropriate transition by 30 June 2018. We are focused at this point on ending greyhound racing in the territory, but the government also intends to examine the regulation of breeding and training of greyhounds in the ACT to determine if those measures require strengthening. Breeding and training practices in relation to greyhounds will be carefully monitored over the next two years to identify the future of these practices in the ACT.

Members will recall that I released Mary Durkin's report *Greyhound Racing Industry Transition Options Analysis* in June, and it made specific recommendations to the ACT government about how to transition out of greyhound racing in the territory. The decision to end the industry in the ACT had already been made when this report was commissioned, and Ms Durkin was tasked with considering how the transition could best be managed. She made sensible recommendations which the government has accepted.

Ms Durkin brought together contextual information, such as feedback from relevant stakeholders, with research and the New South Wales experience. Her report provides valuable data, knowledge and analysis that are now informing the government's approach to industry transition. Both the Durkin report and the New South Wales special commission of inquiry that preceded it show that this is a dangerous sport for greyhounds. There have already been far too many injuries suffered, ranging from minor injuries to animals being euthanised after races.

The Durkin report analyses data that indicates that, of around 27,288 dogs that raced over the five years from 2012 to 2016, 171 greyhounds experienced minor injuries, 92 greyhounds experienced medium injuries, 39 greyhounds experienced major injuries and 26 greyhounds experienced catastrophic injuries and were euthanised at the track on the day of racing. The Durkin report further notes that injury rates and the later euthanasia of dogs following their participation at race meetings do not always appear in the data made available to the public. While the Canberra Greyhound Racing Club has introduced a number of safety measures to reduce injuries, the reality is that the community does not want greyhound racing to continue or for dogs to continue to be euthanised at these rates.

The Durkin report also clearly demonstrated why it is not possible to consider the operation of the greyhound racing industry in Canberra in isolation from the New South Wales industry. The ACT industry is small and is part of a broader regional network of greyhound racing activities. New South Wales owners and trainers represent a significant majority of participants in greyhound racing in the ACT.

In 2016 approximately 71 dogs that raced here were based in the ACT, while 1,107 were from New South Wales. Many dogs are kennelled in New South Wales and the ACT greyhound racing industry, including participants based in the territory, are licensed and overseen by Greyhound Racing NSW. If greyhound racing were to continue in the territory, the Canberra community would have no certainty that dogs being brought to the ACT from other jurisdictions to race would not come from breeders and trainers engaging in the abhorrent practices highlighted by the special commission of inquiry in New South Wales.

While the New South Wales government has embarked on a significant series of reforms in an attempt to address animal welfare concerns in the industry, the outcome is not assured. We do know that this is a lengthy and extraordinarily expensive exercise and that New South Wales will spend \$41 million over the next five years to implement the recommendations of its greyhound industry reform panel. This includes \$11 million for establishing an independent greyhound welfare and integrity commission. As outlined in the Durkin report, it could take years before the New South Wales government knows whether its reforms have been effective. This is too long to wait. The ACT community does not support the inhumane treatment of greyhounds or the risk inherent in their participation in the industry.

There is no guarantee that even after embarking on such a significant process of reform the regulatory framework in New South Wales could be relied on by the ACT greyhound racing industry to eliminate animal welfare breaches in the future, nor is it reasonable to expect the ACT community to meet the cost of directly regulating greyhound racing ourselves. The government's memorandum of understanding with the Canberra Greyhound Racing Club concluded on 30 June this year, after which ACT taxpayers are no longer subsidising this industry. They are instead funding a fair and equitable transition towards the end of this industry. A small number of people and businesses will be impacted, and we encourage them to come forward and take up the support offered through \$1 million in transition funding.

Following Ms Durkin's report, the ACT government established the greyhound industry transition task force to oversee funding and support arrangements for those exiting the industry. ACT employees of the Canberra Greyhound Racing Club will be eligible for support. Contractors, businesses and their employees who provide racing-related services to the club will also be eligible, as well as ACT residents active and registered as breeders or owners of racing greyhounds. Anybody who is substantially affected by the end of the industry can make an application to the task force for support, and we encourage them to do so.

The transition task force has expanded on the recommendations in the Durkin report to offer a suite of creative and practical options for support, guided by individual need. The task force will work with those affected to develop support packages that address their specific circumstances. The options available for inclusion in these individual transition support packages are: training and reskilling opportunities, including subsidised places in training programs; short-term financial support for those employed within or who can demonstrate significant dependence on the industry and who are not able to access a redundancy payment; business skills support, including subsidised assistance in business planning; specialist advice, guidance and planning about future career options; access to financial counselling and planning services; provision of interest free loans to meet immediate individual needs or micro-credit loans to re-engineer existing small businesses or support new small business ventures; and access to counselling to provide emotional support for anybody involved in the industry transition.

As well as looking to assist individuals and businesses affected by industry transition, the safety and welfare of greyhounds in the transition process will also be central. Transition support will extend to those working to rehome greyhounds, particularly where there are capacity issues or other needs. I would strongly encourage anyone who is substantially affected to express an interest in a transition support package via the greyhound industry transition task force website at www.act.gov.au/greyhoundtaskforce.

I know members are as concerned as the government is about animal welfare issues and share the community's concerns about the treatment of greyhounds in the racing industry. The transition process is a very measured and well-planned process to ensure positive outcome results for all involved as we lead the nation and bring this industry to a close in the territory.

I present a copy of the statement:

Greyhound racing industry—Ending—Ministerial statement, 22 August 2017.

I move:

That the Assembly take note of the paper.

MR PARTON (Brindabella) (10.41): With respect to my friend Mr Ramsay, what we have just heard is 10 minutes of absolute codswallop. Sometimes I seriously wonder whether the minister believes all of this stuff. Having known him for quite some time, I do not believe he does, which heightens my disappointment in him at the role he has played in the execution of this sport. This has always been a completely flawed and absolutely misguided policy disaster.

The minister asserted in his statement that it has been a consistent position from the government. Of course it has not been. It has flip-flopped on so many occasions. This is about elitism. We have the Labor-Greens government telling people which pastimes they are allowed to enjoy. Greyhound racing does not fit in with the Chief Minister's vision of Canberra; it certainly does not fit in with the Greens' vision of Canberra. The dismantling of this legitimate sport will appease the Greens and those on the left, so let us march on and do it.

Greyhound racing will not end in this region. Despite the nanny state meddling of this Labor-Greens government, the Canberra Greyhound Racing Club will survive and will continue racing in this region, whether it be at the current site at Narrabundah or over the border in Queanbeyan. When we get to the end of this process—I do not think there will be an end because it is just going to continue—nothing will have been achieved.

What this government is putting people through is nothing short of disgraceful. It is based on rumour and innuendo. The Canberra Greyhound Racing Club is a model of how greyhound racing should be run, and to shut it down for no reason is ludicrous. I have consistently asked the minister and his office to provide any details, any information, any hint of proof of any animal welfare breaches involving the Canberra Greyhound Racing Club, and there are none. They have responded time and again by telling us that there have been no breaches.

I cannot believe the minister continues to trot out these figures involving 27,000 dogs racing over five years and 26 of them suffering life-ending injuries. We are talking one-tenth of one per cent. If we are to shut down an industry over one-tenth of one per cent of animals suffering life-ending injuries then we must shut down thoroughbred racing, we must shut down harness racing and we must shut down equestrian sports. If we had 27,000 dogs running around in suburban backyards for a year I dare say the death rate for those dogs from injury would be similar.

The New South Wales greyhound industry is going through some massive changes as a consequence of the findings of the McHugh report. I know that the industry there will be much better for it. The minister has also suggested that the ACT industry is small and that New South Wales trainers represent a significant majority of participants in greyhound racing. If the government wishes to follow that line, I assume they will shut down Canberra stadium as an NRL venue because the overwhelming number of participants come from interstate, as is the case at Thoroughbred Park. And when it comes to our very large investment involvement in AFL, 100 per cent of participants come from interstate.

At the start of this whole debate the government continued to assert that the industry must close because “we will not continue to spend money on it”. Well, we are not spending any money. As the minister outlined, it ceased a couple of months ago. The funding has been removed. The industry has proven that, unlike thoroughbred racing and harness racing, it can actually support itself. It does not need government funding. What is truly shameful is that this ACT government, which has declared that greyhound racing is out of step with community values, continues to accept money from Tabcorp that comes directly from the turnover of greyhound racing. Yes, Madam Speaker, you heard me right—despite cutting the funding to greyhound racing and then attempting to cut the greyhound racing industry off at its knees, we continue to get money that comes from the turnover of greyhound racing.

When asked about the greyhound money in estimates we were told that this money is not from turnover; this is just the ongoing licence fee. If you are receiving money from Tabcorp, I think it is safe to say that the money did not come from the sale of hamburgers. I think it is pretty safe to say that the money came from turnover. When you consider the growing percentage of turnover that is from greyhound racing, it is very clear that we are continuing to accept this blood money. What a disgrace that this government continues to accept millions of dollars over the forward estimates from betting on greyhound racing which it says is out of step with community values.

The transition packages will not be required because nobody is transitioning out of anything to anything else. I note that minister suggested in his statement that:

We are focused at this point on ending greyhound racing in the territory, but the government also intends to examine the regulation of breeding and training of greyhounds in the ACT to determine if those measures require strengthening. Breeding and training practices in relation to greyhounds will be carefully monitored over the next two years to identify the future of these practices in the ACT.

I made contact with members of the industry to inquire as to whether there had been any consultation with them on this front, and, of course, there has been none. I look forward to the court process. I look forward to the continuation of greyhound racing in Canberra.

Question resolved in the affirmative.

Work health and safety—annual statement Ministerial statement

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) (10.47): I appreciate the opportunity to stand before the Assembly today to provide members with my first annual update on work health and safety in the territory.

Before proceeding further, I would like to acknowledge that two people have died from work injuries in the ACT since the 2016 safety statement was issued. I offer the government's condolences to the families, friends and colleagues of those two people who tragically lost their lives at work. I also acknowledge those individuals and their families who have been affected by serious workplace injuries and I renew our commitment to do all that we can to reduce the health, social and economic consequences of work injury. There is no question that every worker has the right to work in a safe and healthy workplace. Every family should expect to see their loved ones come home from work safe and sound at the end of every day and every shift.

The past 12 months have seen mixed reports on the state of work health and safety in the territory. A national comparison report released recently by Safe Work Australia shows that the rate of serious injury and disease in ACT workplaces has fallen each year since 2010-11. Although this downward trend is positive, the injury and illness rates are still unacceptably high, especially in the construction and health and community services sectors. While we still have more work to do in reducing serious workplace injuries, a recent independent actuarial review of the 2015-16 workers compensation data reveals that lost time injury frequency rates in the ACT reached a historic low of 0.26 for every million dollars in wages earned. This represents a reduction of almost 19 per cent in the serious injury frequency rate over a three-year period.

The report also showed that for the third year in a row the healthcare and social assistance industry experienced the highest rate of lost time injuries, followed by the construction industry. These two high-risk industries together account for more than 40 per cent of all lost time injuries, despite the fact that they employ only around 20 per cent of the private sector workforce. In both industries the most common causes of work injury were manual handling, slips and falls, which accounted for more than half of all injuries. Identifying ways to reduce the serious injury rate in the healthcare and social assistance industry is a priority for the ACT Work Safety Council. Its recommendations will inform our approach.

WorkSafe ACT, in collaboration with representatives of employers, employees and training organisations, recently developed a series of safety videos that have been distributed on social media and can be used during training, toolbox talks and onsite briefings to address some of the most common and concerning safety issues in the construction industry. In addition, it has undertaken targeted audits in areas of high concern. In the construction sector, these have included two crane safety audits and a scaffolding audit. The safety of apprentices in the construction industry is also a matter of ongoing concern, and I would emphasise the responsibility of all employers to ensure that apprentices are both well trained in workplace safety and appropriately supervised at all times.

WorkSafe inspectors have also undertaken a series of structured visits to our local shopping malls, where retailers and food outlets employ a high proportion of young people and people in insecure work who may not be as aware of their rights and obligations as older, full-time workers. These visits focused on raising awareness of

work health and safety issues such as safe lifting, slips and falls, and bullying and harassment. In the ACT public sector, work injury numbers are also trending downwards. In 2016-17 the number of work injuries was four per cent lower than in 2015-16 and 13 per cent lower than in 2014-15.

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 territory 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.

As a demonstration of our commitment, the 2017-18 budget has set aside \$1.4 million over four years to fund new injury prevention initiatives, including training and early intervention health services. In addition, we know that occupational violence is a risk in a range of industries, and this issue has recently become more prominent in our schools. Last month, the Deputy Chief Minister announced a new occupational violence policy and management plan with the Australian Education Union ACT branch to ensure public school staff are safe and confident in doing what they are most passionate about: teaching and facilitating learning.

I cannot emphasise strongly enough the critical role of our work health and safety regulator in improving safety outcomes in the territory across the public, private and not-for-profit sectors. There has been some recent reporting of Safe Work Australia figures for 2014-15. I am pleased to report that, since that time, there has been a significant increase in workplace visits, particularly in relation to proactive inspections. In 2016-17 WorkSafe ACT carried out 4,923 workplace inspections. Of these, 1,933 related to proactive campaigns and events such as the National Multicultural Festival, the Canberra Show and the night noodle markets.

In the last financial year WorkSafe issued 141 improvement notices under work safety and dangerous substance laws and 58 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.

Many in this place will be aware that the 2012 *Getting Home Safely* report on safety in the construction industry identified poor safety culture as a key driver behind what was at the time a deteriorating work injury rate. The inquiry panel's recommendations for change were based on the principle that improvements to the sector's health and safety capability could only be achieved in the context of a strong safety culture and that everyone has a role to play—employers, employees, unions and government.

In the following years, lost time injuries in the territory's construction industry reduced from 521 in 2011-12 to 363 in 2015-16. Government and industry focused heavily on improving construction industry safety during this period. Major interventions included establishing the Industrial Magistrates Court; the delivery of active certification and revised comparative tender assessment processes, aimed at ensuring that only the safest construction companies are awarded government construction projects; hiring additional work safety inspectors and bringing together the construction services branch, WorkSafe ACT, and the office of the Work Safety Commissioner within the new Access Canberra to facilitate a coordinated compliance approach; increasing inspectorate powers to conduct investigations; and introducing new on-the-spot fines to emphasise the importance of safety on construction sites.

In conducting the recommended review of *Getting Home Safely* implementation and outcomes the government was determined to dig deeper and gain an understanding of the state of the safety culture in the construction industry. In January 2017 the Royal Melbourne Institute of Technology University was selected via a competitive tender process to investigate and report on the state of the ACT construction safety culture. The RMIT investigation included four industry focus groups, 13 worksite visits and an online industry survey that yielded over 400 responses. The people RMIT consulted work in a broad range of professions within the commercial, industrial, residential and civil engineering sectors of the construction industry.

I will shortly be releasing the RMIT report but can advise the Assembly that one of its key findings is that there has been an increase in awareness of and support for worker safety. However, industry culture in relation to the protection of worker health is perceived not to have kept pace with the improvement in safety. In particular, work-family balance and mental health were identified as significant problems for construction workers and that there were significant differences in safety climate perceptions between participants in different positions. Upper level managers were the most positive, and lower level managers were more positive than frontline workers. RMIT has suggested this pointed to a disconnect in the perceived emphasis placed on work safety in construction organisations.

I have referred the report to the construction safety subcommittee of the ACT Work Safety Council and have tasked it with developing and recommending a new strategic plan to improve safety and health. Along with the RMIT report, I have also referred the directorate's review of the *Getting Home Safely* recommendations and their implementation. Of the 28 recommendations, 26 have been implemented. Those that have not been implemented called on the major industry associations to lead the development of frameworks for the management of safety on ACT construction sites, recognising the practical needs of varying sized businesses and the differing sectors. However, these organisations have argued that they are not the appropriate bodies to develop such frameworks.

Overall, it is clear that significant effort was made in 2013-14 to raise awareness of construction industry safety and improve performance, and a number of important steps were taken. Continuing to reduce injury rates in the construction sector will

require an ongoing effort and focus. I hope that the process of undertaking the RMIT study has, in itself, caused those workers and employers engaged in the work to think more deeply about workplace health and safety. And I look forward to receiving the Work Safety Council's recommendations for actions we all can take over the next few months and years.

The construction safety subcommittee is one of several that have been established to focus safety policy expertise on high priority issues. Another subcommittee is examining occupational violence risks and the protection of vulnerable workers—critical issues in the context of rising insecure work and the ongoing exposure of vulnerable worker exploitation. In addition, in view of recent serious safety incidents involving apprentices, I have written to the council chair requesting that a time-limited subcommittee be established to consider how best to ensure that apprentices and young people are working in safe environments and are aware of their workplace safety rights and obligations.

To complement these work safety initiatives, the government is also developing a multifaceted ACT secure local jobs package which will streamline procurement requirements and provide a more transparent process for resolving issues that arise with respect to ACT government contracts. 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.

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. The secure local jobs package will use the government's purchasing power to deliver better jobs for Canberrans by establishing clear, fundamental principles to ensure employee safety, fair pay and conditions on public projects.

Madam Speaker, thank you for the opportunity to make this ministerial statement and to reaffirm the government's commitment to workplace health and safety in the territory. I present the following paper:

Work health and safety—Annual statement—Ministerial statement, 22 August 2017.

I move:

That the Assembly take note of the paper.

Question resolved in the affirmative.

Lands Acquisition Amendment Bill 2017

Debate resumed from 8 June 2017, on motion by **Mr Gentleman**:

That this bill be agreed to in principle.

MS LAWDER (Brindabella) (11.00): The Lands Acquisition Act provides for compensation to be paid following the compulsory acquisition of an interest in land. This is consistent with section 23(1)(a) of the self-government act, to the effect that the Legislative Assembly has no powers to make laws with respect to the acquisition of property otherwise than on just terms.

Currently, the procedures for effecting a payment of compensation are triggered by the interest holder making a claim under section 56 of the act, but if the interest holder does not make a claim, no payment of compensation occurs. Currently, there is no time limit on the making of a claim by the landholder, landowner or other interest holders. This is contrary to the need for timely payment of compensation to the holder of the relevant interest in land—the interest holder—and contrary to the efficient administration of territory finances and of the Lands Acquisition Act.

This bill amends the act to provide that if a person whose interest in land is acquired—the interest holder—and the interest holder does not make a claim for compensation within three years of an acquisition, the executive has the option of making an offer of compensation. Once the executive makes the offer, a claim for compensation will no longer be able to be made under section 56 of the act.

This amendment provides the executive with a mechanism to effectively put a time limit on the making of a potential claim, should it wish to do so. At the same time this does not diminish the rights of the interest holder to receive adequate compensation. The government has had to make this amendment due to, for example, issues surrounding the 2015 acquisition of the Dickson bus interchange land. The bus station at Dickson will act as a transfer station for passengers between light rail and bus services when the Dickson light rail interchange opens.

The government is unable to finalise the costs of the project due to the fact that there has been no claim for compensation. In a briefing, government representatives assured me that while it has been three years since the government acquired this land, they will not make an offer to the interest holder for another three years so that these changes are not retrospective. It appears that this is a common-sense bill, and the Canberra Liberals are happy to support the changes to the act today.

MS ORR (Yerrabi) (11.03): I thank members for their contributions and support for the Lands Acquisition Amendment Bill 2017. I would like to make some comments about the underlying principles of land acquisition and their relationship with this bill. After all, any amendments to the act must be consistent with the standing requirement that any compulsory acquisition of property be done on just terms. I would also like to talk about the application of existing review mechanisms to the measures in this bill, transitional arrangements, including a proposed government amendment, and other matters.

The bill reflects this government's commitment to ensuring that fair and just compensation is paid expeditiously when land is compulsorily acquired. The explanatory memorandum for the original Lands Acquisition Act noted a number of key principles behind the making of the act. These principles included the following: first, open procedures in the acquisition of property; second, public accountability of decisions to acquire property; third, compensation for people whose interest in property is acquired which recognises their interests, concerns and rights of appeal; and, finally, completing the acquisition of land expeditiously. In my view, this bill is consistent with these four underlying principles. In particular, it preserves existing procedural rights and facilitates the expeditious acquisition of land.

In considering any amendment to the Lands Acquisition Act, it is necessary to ensure that the amendment is consistent with the standing requirement that any compulsory acquisition of property be done on just terms. As members would be well aware, this is what section 23(1)(a) of the commonwealth Australian Capital Territory (Self-Government) Act 1988, otherwise known as the self-government act, requires.

This requirement is currently met by the Lands Acquisition Act, affirming the right to compensation and setting out the general principles for calculating the compensation amount. Specifically, section 42 of the act affirms the right to compensation. Section 45 and related sections detail the general principles for calculating the amount of compensation, including the need to have regard to the market value of the interest in the land and a number of other matters. Section 78 of the act expressly gives the Supreme Court and the High Court the power to review a compensation decision and substitute its own if considered necessary to ensure just terms of compensation.

In summary, this bill is to permit the territory executive to make an offer of compensation in the event that three years pass by without the interest holder making a claim. If such an offer is made after this three-year period, the interest holder relinquishes the right to make an original claim but retains the right to make a counter offer. This is the effect of new section 61A, inserted by clause 5. The offer of compensation and any review of the compensation amount must be consistent with the compensation principles I referred to earlier. As a result, this modest, targeted measure has no impact on the underlying compensation principles. The measure is, however, effective in facilitating the compensation negotiation process. I feel it will benefit both the territory and the people whose land is subject to compulsory acquisition.

I now turn to the application of review mechanisms to the measure in this bill. As my colleague has noted, the bill maintains existing rights around negotiations and review as to the amount of compensation to be paid. This has been achieved by expressly applying existing internal review and ACAT merit review processes to executive offers of compensation under new section 61A. In specific terms, these mechanisms are applied in the following way. An offer of compensation by the executive under new section 61A is an internally reviewable decision, as made clear by the amendment to section 104AA in clause 12. New section 62, inserted by clause 6, permits the recipient of an executive offer of compensation to accept or reject the offer. If the interest holder rejects the offer, the person must put forward an alternative sum or counter offer and indicate the reasoning behind this.

Consistent with the fact that the decision is an internally reviewable decision, the executive must assess any counter offer from the interest holder before making a final decision. The executive has two months to do so. The executive must put its final decision, its final offer of compensation, to the interest holder. This is the effect of existing section 63, as amended by clause 7. The interest holder may either accept the final offer or reject it and seek a merit review of the final offer in ACAT. This is made clear in existing section 64, the heading to which section is amended by clause 9. The right to seek ACAT merit review of such a final offer is made clear in schedule 1 to the act that lists the decisions subject to merit review. This schedule is amended by clause 15.

I now refer to provisions relating to advance payments of compensation. Existing section 70 of the act provides for the executive to make an advance payment of compensation in certain circumstances. If the executive accepts a claim and makes an offer pursuant to the claim then section 70 requires the executive to make an advance payment of compensation ahead of any final acceptance or determination of the compensation amount. The advance must amount to no less than 90 per cent of the value of the offer of compensation. The receipt of an advance payment does not constitute acceptance of an offer by the interest holder. The bill makes it clear that this requirement for advance payment applies to offers made by the executive under new section 61A. This is the effect of clause 10 and new sections 70(2) and 70(3).

I now turn to the transitional arrangements under the bill. In doing so I will refer to comments of the Standing Committee on Justice and Community Safety, in its legislative scrutiny role, and the government's proposed amendment of the bill in response. Clause 14 of the bill inserts new part 15 on transitional matters. The intention is for new part 15 to cover existing cases where land has been compulsorily acquired under the act but a claim for compensation has yet to be made. I am informed that there are currently seven outstanding matters where no claim for compensation has as yet been made.

The intention is for the three-year time limit to apply to these matters. The purpose of new section 201, inserted by clause 14, is to apply this three-year period, with the effect that if the interest holder has not made a claim for compensation within three years from the commencement of this bill the executive may make an offer of compensation. In its report No 7, the Standing Committee on Justice and Community Safety, in its legislative scrutiny role, commented on these transitional provisions. The committee suggested there may be some procedural unfairness about this approach in that it was conceivable that the three-year time limit could expire without the interest holder being made aware of the new time limit.

While this issue could possibly be addressed through administrative practice, without an express legal mandate, to remove any doubt as to the proposed process the government proposes to amend the bill so that new section 201 will require a notice to be sent to the interest holders who have not yet made a claim for compensation when the bill commences and for the three-year period to run from the date of the notice. The executive must send the notice within 14 days of the commencement of the bill.

This 14-day time period is the same as the time period for notice about compensation to be given to an interest holder following a new compulsory acquisition under section 38. The proposed notice will have similar content to the notice that goes to persons subject to a new acquisition post the commencement of the bill—that is, it will include a copy of the acquisition declaration, compensation form, notice about the three-year time limit and that the three-year period runs from the date of the notice.

To finish, I would like to thank the legislative scrutiny committee for their careful consideration of this bill and for their comments, which ensure that this bill does what it needs to do without compromising the rights of interest holders and without compromising procedural fairness in an area where it is an imperative that things be done on just terms. I commend the bill to the Assembly.

MS LE COUTEUR (Murrumbidgee) (11.11): The Greens will also be supporting this bill and the government amendments. I will not go through all the issues because they have been adequately canvassed by previous speakers. The current system does seem a bit strange, I must admit, whereby there is basically no time limit for this and it just drags on and on. I am sure the people who wrote the bill originally never envisaged that this could happen. There is no reason for things to drag on forever. Three years does seem to be a reasonable amount of time to make a claim for compensation. So the bill does seem like a sensible fix to the system.

As Ms Lawder and Ms Orr have said, it is quite reasonable that anyone affected should be notified that the rules have been changed. It may not have been necessary to have been part of the legislation, because clearly it is a transitional arrangement which I understand impacts only one interest holder; nonetheless, it is a sensible change and the Greens will be supporting the bill and the amendments.

MR GENTLEMAN (Brindabella—Minister for Police and Emergency Services, Minister for the Environment and Heritage, Minister for Planning and Land Management and Minister for Urban Renewal) (11.12), in reply: I thank members for their input into this bill. The bill, as we have heard, makes a number of limited amendments to the Lands Acquisition Act. The purpose of the bill is to introduce another way to facilitate negotiations on the payment of compensation for the compulsory acquisition of land under the act.

From the outset I would like to emphasise that the proposed amendments do not change the basic structure of the act, including the right to receive compensation and the calculation of compensation amounts payable. In particular, the bill makes no changes to the process for the acquisition of land, the factors to be considered in determining a compensation amount or the process for negotiation and review of compensation amounts payable following an initial claim or offer. These procedures remain exactly the same as they are now under the Lands Acquisition Act.

At this point, I confirm that the government is putting forward two minor amendments to the bill in response to comments from the Standing Committee on Justice and Community Safety, in its legislative scrutiny role, and I will refer to these in more detail shortly.

I will now refer to the present procedures for claims for compensation in order to highlight some of the problems currently being experienced. When land is acquired by compulsory process, the landowner and other people who hold an interest in that land are entitled to compensation. The amount of compensation is determined under section 45 of the act and related provisions in division 6.2. The process for effecting a payment of compensation is currently triggered by the interest holder, such as the person whose lands have been acquired, making a claim under section 56 of the act. If the interest holder does not make a claim then the compensation process does not commence and no payment of compensation occurs.

Currently, there is no time limit on the making of a claim under section 56. It is possible for land to be acquired under the act with no follow-up claim for compensation to be made for years afterwards, or indeed at all. If no claim is made, it is not currently possible for the territory to step in with a formal offer of compensation. The territory cannot take statutory action to bring the compensation matter to resolution. This has implications for both the interest holder and the territory. It means that the territory can have a liability for compensation of an uncertain, undefined amount for an indefinite time period. This is not in anyone's interest. It is contrary to the need for timely payment of compensation to the interest holder, the efficient administration of the territory's finances and the efficient administration of the Lands Acquisition Act.

Consistent with section 45 of the act, the amount of compensation potentially includes legal or other professional costs reasonably incurred by the person in relation to the acquisition. As the act currently stands, these costs could potentially increase for an indefinite period, to the cost of the territory. This delay in determining compensation payable is not consistent with one of the principles behind the making of the original act—that is, the completion of the acquisition of land process expeditiously.

With this in mind, I now turn to the key amendments. The amendments made by this bill address these issues in the following way. The proposed measure in the bill applies if three years elapse since the acquisition of the land and a claim for compensation has still not been made. The bill makes it possible for the executive, after this three-year period, to make an offer of compensation to the person whose interest in the land has been acquired. This is the effect of new section 61A, inserted by clause 5. New section 61A(3) requires the offer to be made by written notice, setting out the quantum of the compensation on offer and the methodology used by the executive in determining the compensation amount.

Importantly, the making of an offer by the executive in this circumstance has a particular effect. If the executive makes an offer under new section 61A, the interest holder loses the right to initiate the compensation process by making a claim for compensation under section 56 of the act. This is the effect of new section 61A(4) in clause 5.

In this way the proposed measure facilitates the compensation process because it permits the executive to effectively kickstart the compensation process with a formal

offer of compensation. Once the offer is made, the interest holder will have the ability to assess the offer and the means by which the compensation amount was determined. As is presently the case, there is no specific time limit on the consideration of the position of the executive on the compensation amount. The interest holder therefore has ample time to assess the offer and to do so in light of any necessary professional land valuation and legal advice.

The bill maintains existing procedures and rights around negotiations and review as to the amount of the compensation to be paid. In effect, existing internal review and ACAT merit review processes are expanded to the new scenario where the executive makes an offer under new section 61A. This has the result that the interest holder can accept or reject the executive's offer of compensation. If the offer is rejected, the executive must reconsider its first offer and make a final offer. If the interest holder does not accept the final offer, an application can be made by the interest holder for ACAT merit review.

As I noted earlier, the Standing Committee on Justice and Community Safety, in its legislative scrutiny role, in its report No 7, made two comments on the bill with substantive implications. One of the comments of the standing committee touched on the provision of notices in connection with proposed transitional provisions. My colleague has already addressed those other transitional matters. The standing committee commented that section 106 of the act may not apply to the scenario proposed by the bill where the executive has made an offer of compensation under new section 61A. Section 106 of the act permits the executive or a private person who has claimed, or may claim, compensation to apply to the Supreme Court for a determination of the nature of the relevant interest and who holds it, and also for the Supreme Court to make consequential declarations.

There is no intention to depart from this process in relation to the new process. The intent is to permit an application to be made under section 106 to the Supreme Court in circumstances where an offer of compensation under new section 61A(2) has been made. To remove any doubt about this, new clause 13A substitutes a new section 106(1)(a). This new section makes it clear that the Supreme Court may determine the nature of an interest in question and the person or persons who hold it when a claim for compensation has been, or may be, made or an offer of compensation has been made under new section 61A(2). This government amendment is consistent with the government's intent to make no changes to the basic structure of the act through this minor amendment bill.

In summary, the bill retains significant mechanisms for the owner to have input into, negotiate and seek review of the compensation amount while allowing the executive to kickstart a compensation process after three years, if necessary. I commend the bill to the Assembly.

Question resolved in the affirmative.

Bill agreed to in principle.

Detail stage

Bill, by leave, taken as a whole.

MR GENTLEMAN (Brindabella—Minister for Police and Emergency Services, Minister for the Environment and Heritage, Minister for Planning and Land Management and Minister for Urban Renewal) (11.20): Pursuant to standing order 182A(c), I seek leave to move amendments to this bill that are in response to comment made by the scrutiny committee together.

Leave granted.

MR GENTLEMAN: I move amendments Nos 1 and 2 circulated in my name together and table a supplementary explanatory statement to the government amendments [*see schedule 1 at page 3175*]. I have already spoken to the amendments in the previous speech, so I ask Assembly members to agree to those amendments.

Amendments agreed to.

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

Bill, as amended, agreed to.

Gaming Machine Amendment Bill 2017

Debate resumed from 3 August 2017, on motion by **Mr Ramsay**:

That this bill be agreed to in principle.

MR PARTON (Brindabella) (11.22): Broadly speaking we agree with most of this bill. We are, however, not comfortable with the gaming tax rebate section—clause 13—because (a), it is not an equitable way to distribute such a large sum of money and (b), we do not believe this measure will result in genuine diversification away from gaming. The Canberra Liberals will be opposing clause 13 simply because it is bad policy. We cannot support this government handing back \$5 million of forgone revenue primarily to three clubs with no real checks and balances on how they spend the money.

This was a policy in the midst of an election campaign. It was a policy designed to reward clubs who had abstained from the campaign that this government still cannot see past. It was a policy entirely based on finding a reward for those clubs who chose not to raise an opinion counter to that of the government. Indeed, if the minister were constructing policy in this space now, outside of the context of an election campaign, we could all be certain that this is not how it would look. This was a thought bubble from a desperate government. What we see in the gaming tax rebate is pure election campaign politics. The policy was announced for no other reason than to stem the

bleeding of support from the clubs sector. As our own Mr Hanson described the policy at the time, it is “a big electoral bribe designed to cause friction and divide and conquer”.

The Canberra Liberals believe this is not a genuine attempt at helping clubs to diversify away from gaming revenue. There is no accountability for how this rebate is used or applied; it is just a free handout, with the majority going to Labor-friendly clubs. And we are talking about an enormous gift here. The budget papers tell us, as I mentioned, that over the forward estimates the government intends to gift \$5.3 million of forgone revenue straight back to clubs that it says are addicted to gaming revenue. I am not sure that increasing the supply of an addictive drug will help the addict to kick the habit. Eighty-five per cent of this rebate goes to just three clubs, two of which have been key players in the government’s attempts to fracture the clubs traditional peak body, and this is no coincidence. I am most disappointed that the Greens cannot see this aspect of the amendment bill for what it is.

I dare say we would be supporting a formal scheme whereby clubs could apply for LBC relief on specific projects that would genuinely lead to diversification. I dare say we would be supporting an extension of the small clubs grant scheme with a much higher cap than the current \$10,000. I dare say we would be supporting a fairer rejig of the current gaming tax brackets to more evenly distribute the tax breaks across the board and to genuinely help clubs to diversify. But we cannot support this.

It is fascinating that we have got the small clubs grants scheme, which I know is not technically included in this bill but certainly accompanies it. The small clubs must go through an exhaustive process of applying for the grant and providing copious amounts of information to support how they intend to spend the money. So we have a case where some clubs have to jump through multiple hoops to get \$10,000 whereas some other clubs do not have to; there are no checks and balances for them to secure millions of dollars. We just cannot support this.

I know we will hear from Mr Rattenbury. He will tell us that he does not want to rock the boat. He will tell us that he is convinced that these three clubs will be spending the money on genuine diversification. But I think it is clear that the Greens, as is usually the case, are just going to be prepared to look the other way while this government does whatever it likes to do with ratepayers’ money. I implore them, even at this late stage, to reconsider. We will be vehemently opposing clause 13.

MR RATTENBURY (Kurrajong) (11.26): The Greens will be supporting the Gaming Machine Amendment Bill because we believe it provides small and medium clubs with an opportunity to diversify their business models and decrease their reliance on poker machine revenue. The Greens have long said that a business model that relies on revenue from problem gambling is a broken business model, and we want to support our community clubs to move away from poker machines and start taking addictive gambling seriously. This bill provides an opportunity for a more diversified club sector, and I hope those clubs that are eligible will use this additional revenue to invest in assets and activities that will benefit their local communities.

The Greens recognise the role that clubs play in our community. Canberra has a wide range of clubs which have been part of the social fabric of this town for many years. Clubs are established to support people with shared cultural, professional or social interests, including multicultural communities, sports teams and activities such as lawn bowls. There are still more than 40 clubs in the territory, but the reality is that the environment that clubs operate in has changed and clubs need to evolve to make sure they are sustainable in the long term. Canberra's clubs offer a great number of benefits to their members and local communities. Clubs provide a great place to meet up with some mates, have an affordable meal with their family or simply watch the footy. They provide venues for community group meetings and support local sporting clubs with sponsorship and facilities. There is no doubt that the clubs play a valuable role in our community.

At the same time many clubs continue to be overly reliant on revenue from poker machines in order to fund these sorts of services. We know that the risks of problem gambling are higher for people who play poker machines than for other types of gambling. The Productivity Commission reported that around 15 per cent of regular poker machine players are considered problem gamblers and that their share of total spending on these machines is estimated at around 40 per cent. The link between poker machines and problem gambling is clear, and that is why the Greens have led on this issue, because we believe that the social licence to profit from the pokies has expired.

Clubs have both a moral and a financial responsibility to diversify their business models away from a reliance on poker machine revenue. The moral imperative is that, as I have already mentioned, around 40 per cent of the revenue generated from these machines is estimated to come from people who experience harm as a result of their gambling on poker machines. For problem gamblers, their families and friends, poker machine addiction causes real harm, and we have a responsibility to put real protections in place to prevent this from happening.

Another aspect of this issue is that the number of people playing poker machines continues to decrease. Notably, the ACT Gambling and Racing Commission annual report anticipates an increase in gaming machine revenue in 2016-17 despite anecdotal evidence that fewer people are playing the pokies. This suggests that fewer people are putting more money into the pokies, even though the evidence suggests that at least 15 per cent of them are likely to experience harm from this. While poker machines continue to generate considerable revenue for clubs, they are no longer the preferred entertainment choice of most people in the ACT. At the same time they cause significant harm for a significant number of people in our community and, therefore, the choice is clear: it is time for clubs to diversify their business models and identify other revenue streams that will benefit their members and the ACT community.

We recognise that this process cannot happen overnight and that there are things the government can and should do to support clubs in this transition. From the public conversation that has taken place this year, it is apparent that the current reliance on

poker machine revenue is not acceptable to the community and is not sustainable going forward. Today's bill is a good first step as part of a broader and longer term conversation we need to have about diversification and the future of clubs here in Canberra.

At the last election the Greens put forward a transition plan to wean clubs off their reliance on pokies revenue, including tax concessions for those clubs that invest in stronger harm minimisation measures. We also recognise the investments that clubs make in local sporting facilities, such as ovals and bowling greens, and that the cost of maintaining these assets is significant. That is why we proposed a subsidy for water use for community purposes through an extension to the community water abstraction charge. We also support a review of liquor licensing laws that would look at a reduction in licence fees for low-risk venues. These are just some examples of how government could support clubs to be viable without a reliance on gaming revenue.

While today's bill does not address all of these issues, we are supporting it because we believe it offers an opportunity for clubs to diversify away from poker machines. At the same time, clubs also need to be proactively looking at new opportunities, and I know from my conversations with a number of clubs that this planning has started for some groups. There is benefit in starting a broader conversation with industry groups, unions, the Canberra Business Chamber and other interested stakeholders on what the future of the clubs industry looks like. By starting this conversation now, our clubs and our community will be better off in the long term.

I recognise that this transition will be challenging for some clubs, particularly small and medium venues who do not have the capital on hand to invest in new projects. That is why today's bill is focused on small and medium clubs, and it makes the important distinction between individual clubs and those who are part of a club group. While the conversation about diversification needs to include clubs of all sizes, today's measures are focused on the immediate cash flow issues identified by small and medium clubs, and so they are rightly targeted to those venues.

We also need to recognise that there are a significant number of small clubs who will not benefit from this initiative because they do not make enough revenue from their poker machines to pay gaming machine tax. These clubs will be eligible for a one-off \$10,000 grant as part of this package, but there is much more that we need to do to assist small clubs to find a long-term sustainable solution, particularly those who wish to divest from poker machines entirely.

I also want to raise the point that there are a few small clubs across Canberra who have already divested from poker machines and will not be eligible for this package. While we go through this process, it is important that the government continues to support those clubs that have taken the courageous decision to move away from poker machine revenue, despite the financial difficulties that decision has brought. While this package may not be the right vehicle for addressing this issue, I urge the minister to keep those clubs without poker machines in mind as he works to support a sustainable clubs sector into the future.

The other element of this bill I want to note is the amendment to the social impact assessment process. I raised this issue in a motion in the Assembly earlier this year and I am pleased that the minister has taken action to address this obvious transparency problem. The Greens have long called for changes to make it easier for people to participate in our democracy, and that is why I am pleased that now local residents and concerned community members will be able to access social impact assessments through the commission's website, making it much easier to lodge submissions in response to applications for new poker machines. The number of poker machines in local areas is a matter of concern for many residents, and this change will better allow them to have a say in these decisions.

The Greens will be supporting this bill because it gives small and medium clubs support to start the process of diversification and move away from a reliance on poker machine revenue. The bill does not impose significant requirements on clubs to indicate how the income from the tax rebate will be used. From my discussions with both ClubsACT and Canberra Community Clubs in recent weeks, I believe they recognise the need to diversify and will encourage their members to take this opportunity to do so. The harsh reality is this: if clubs do not choose to invest this money into new areas they will not be viable in the long term, and so it is in their interests to act now.

I am also pleased to see that the government has accepted the estimates committee recommendation that a brief investment plan should be provided for recipients of the \$10,000 grants. It is pretty clear to me, from the public and private conversations I have had with clubs, community groups and people who have experienced gambling harm, that more poker machines are not the answer to revenue shortfalls. I hope that the clubs that access this package will take the opportunity to identify other ways to generate income and contribute to the life of their local communities. I believe their members expect it. I believe it is an imperative that they do so; if they do not, I think their long-term viability is well and truly in question. I believe the clubs will take the sensible path and pursue these alternative approaches. If they do not, it will be upon their heads.

MR RAMSAY (Ginninderra—Attorney-General, Minister for Regulatory Services, Minister for the Arts and Community Events and Minister for Veterans and Seniors) (11.36): I am particularly pleased today to speak on the Gaming Machine Amendment Bill 2017. This bill amends the Gaming Machine Act 2004 to support small and medium clubs and club groups. The purpose of this support package is to help clubs move away from gaming machines as a source of revenue.

Importantly, this bill delivers a central part of the government's election commitment: supporting local clubs policy. At the election, Labor promised that it would assist small and medium clubs with gross gaming machine revenue under \$4 million. Today's bill delivers on that promise and it recognises the contribution that a diverse clubs sector makes to the social and economic fabric of our city.

Many in the clubs sector openly acknowledge that a change in their business model is required. Consumer tastes in Canberra are changing. There is increased competition in food and entertainment, where Canberra's vibrant economy offers a wide range of choices. Changing demographics and competition from alternative gambling products mean that gaming machines are declining in popularity. Clubs in the territory know that a business model that depends on gaming machine revenue is not sustainable. The government recognises this and the government is going to support clubs to make the change.

Diversification away from gaming machines will be supported both through this legislation and through a related grants program. The bill will improve the community's access to social impact assessments; it will give a 50 per cent gaming machine tax rebate to eligible clubs and club groups, which provides income support for new investment; and it will reduce regulatory burdens around tax lodgement and payment requirements. The changes to social impact assessments in this bill reflect its broader harm minimisation agenda. When a club wants to introduce machines or increase the number of machines at a particular venue, it is required to apply to the Gambling and Racing Commission first. Members of the community can make submissions in relation to an application and the commission must consider their views in making a decision.

A social impact assessment is required as part of the application process. These assessments provide the commission and the community with an objective piece of analysis on the economic and social effects of a club's proposed changes. Currently, they are made available for interested members of the community to read, but only in physical form and only at the Gambling and Racing Commission's offices. The bill provides for social impact assessments to be published online, in addition to how they are currently made available. Following this change, it will be easier for people to get information about proposed changes to the number of machines in their neighbourhoods and to have an informed say.

The key provisions in this bill, and the ones that deliver Labor's election commitment, are about reducing the need for clubs to rely on gaming machines in the first place. The bill defines small and medium clubs and club groups as gaming machine licensees, or groups of licensees, with aggregate gross gaming machine revenue of less than \$4 million for the financial year. The definitions have been crafted to ensure that related clubs—for example, the Woden and Dickson tradesmen's clubs—are counted as one entity for eligibility purposes. Eligible clubs will receive a 50 per cent discount on their gross gaming machine revenue tax. The rebate will assist small to medium clubs and club groups in exploring or investing in alternative revenue streams to the gaming machine revenue on which clubs can be heavily reliant. Diversification of revenue sources by clubs will support a more sustainable future for this important sector of the ACT community.

The tax rebate takes effect on tax liabilities from 1 July 2017. Eligible licensees will be able to apply for a partial refund of tax that they have paid to date, and this can be offset against future liabilities. Provision has been made in the bill for the repayment

by licensees of rebated amounts if a club or club group's gross gaming machine revenue is no longer less than \$4 million during any financial year. It is important to recognise that this rebate is part of a comprehensive package that supports all small and medium clubs through a range of measures. The community club grant, also a Labor election commitment, ensures that there is support for every small and medium club and club group.

The grants processes will be managed administratively and do not form part of the bill, but they are certainly part of the commitment. If a small club is eligible for the rebate but has no tax liability for the year, it will still be eligible for the \$10,000 grant to support diversification and it will still benefit from the red tape reduction measures in this bill. Consistent with our election commitment, this bill reduces red tape for small and medium clubs by making it easier to deal with their tax liabilities. Clubs eligible for the rebate will be able to lodge quarterly gaming machine tax payments and make quarterly payments to the problem gambling assistance fund, should they choose. These changes will help eligible clubs to manage their cash flows.

The purpose of this bill is to support diversification. I note that Mr Parton has raised questions about whether there should be more in this bill to tie the tax rebate to diversification. But I would like to emphasise that this package comes with built-in accountability measures. The gaming machine tax rebate provisions contained in this bill will be reviewed after two years of operation. The government will be required to report to the Legislative Assembly by 30 November 2019 on the outcome of the review. This will be an opportunity to look at how well the support package has worked to encourage diversification, and members here will be provided with the results.

I am pleased to be delivering on another election commitment and demonstrating the government's support for our local community clubs. Clubs provide Canberrans with enrichment that comes through access to facilities, sport, music, art and other culturally diverse community activities. This bill will support them to focus on providing their services to the community and to reduce their reliance on gaming machines. I commend the bill to the Assembly.

Question resolved in the affirmative.

Bill agreed to in principle.

Detail stage

Clauses 1 to 12, by leave, taken together and agreed to.

Clause 13.

MR PARTON (Brindabella) (11.43): Mr Rattenbury often disappoints me in this place, and he is, if nothing else, most consistent, because he has done it again today. He and his colleague Ms Le Couteur are about to rubber stamp a \$5.3 million gift of ratepayers' money to selected clubs that are amongst the most reliant on gaming revenue. We will be opposing this clause. We are opposing this clause for the reasons that we have outlined earlier.

MR RAMSAY (Ginninderra—Attorney-General, Minister for Regulatory Services, Minister for the Arts and Community Events and Minister for Veterans and Seniors) (11.44): I simply wish to reaffirm that the government believes this clause is an important part of supporting clubs in their business diversification. It was a clear election commitment. As we have often stated, this government is not in a position of revisiting or stepping away from the commitments that we have made. The clubs are already indicating that they know and they have recognised that there is a need for them to move away from a reliance on gaming machines.

Not every piece of policy aim can be reduced to legislation. What we have in this legislation is the establishment of the rebate and the clear establishment also of the review mechanism, which will be required to be tabled in the Assembly by November 2019. It is an important part of the package. It is an important part of ensuring that clubs are able to diversify their income. I support clause 13.

Question put:

That clause 13 be agreed to.

The Assembly voted.

Ayes 10

Noes 7

Ms Burch	Mr Pettersson	Mr Coe	Mr Milligan
Ms Cheyne	Mr Ramsay	Mrs Dunne	Mr Parton
Ms Cody	Mr Rattenbury	Mrs Kikkert	
Ms Le Couteur	Mr Steel	Ms Lawder	
Ms Orr	Ms Stephen-Smith	Ms Lee	

Question resolved in the affirmative.

Clause 13 agreed to.

Remainder of bill, by leave, taken as a whole and agreed to.

Bill agreed to.

Gaming Machine (Cash Facilities) Amendment Bill 2017

Debate resumed from 3 August 2017, on motion by **Mr Ramsay**:

That this bill be agreed to in principle.

MR PARTON (Brindabella) (11.50): The Canberra Liberals will be supporting this bill. Although there has been no formal dialogue between my office and the minister's office regarding this bill, and although I am assuming there will never be any acknowledgement from the minister's office on this front, we feel we have played a role in helping to shape this bill into what it is today. Certainly that is the view in club

land. When we first saw this bill in its final form we saw it as reason to celebrate. What we have before us today is a long way from what it might have been and a long way from what it was shaping up to be.

We have heard a loud and spirited debate on gambling harm minimisation here in Canberra in the last six months. The loudest voices in this debate have come from the extremes on either side, and to some extent I think those loud voices do very much drown out the centre. It must be said that the number of individuals affected by this legislation is very small. We do not have many problem gamblers. It must be said that some of those problem gamblers do face major problems as a consequence of their addiction, and we should do whatever we can to assist them.

We have the lowest problem gambling rate in all of the country, and that is no coincidence. Our community club gaming model is the best in the country, which means that when we have, for argument's sake, anti-gambling advocates borrowing data from Victorian studies often that information does not line up with this jurisdiction. We do not have private gambling operators who are hell-bent on achieving the highest possible profit. Well, we have only got one of them. We do not have the super-clubs that have grown into virtual casinos in parts of Sydney.

ClubsACT have played a major role over many years in helping their member clubs to refine their harm minimisation processes and procedures. They, along with the vast majority of our community clubs, should be applauded for the work that they have done in this space.

Much of the discussion around harm minimisation is centred on an individual's access to their own cash within the gaming venue. There are many from within my party, party members and elected members alike, who are simply diametrically opposed to the concept of restricting an individual's access to their own money. They think that it is a heavy-handed, nanny state impost. There is a part of me that agrees with them. But I can see, in light of the current public debate, that there was the need for some action, and I think the action as outlined in this bill is measured and thoughtful.

Early last month the minister gave a very clear indication that it was likely that EFTPOS withdrawals would be banned holus-bolus in our community clubs. My office has highlighted what a flawed policy that would have been for so many reasons. I think it is very clear that it would have ended in tears as we funnelled club patrons out into the night to access their own money at what would have been unsafe locations, without the chance of positive intervention from club staff. The policy as originally flagged by the minister would have also unfairly targeted those clubs which did not have an external ATM within close proximity.

The one aspect of the Gaming Machine (Cash Facilities) Amendment Bill 2017 that we, the Canberra Liberals, question is the fact that a line is drawn in the sand at 20 machines. The inference is that problem gamblers somehow cannot do their dough excessively at a venue with 19 poker machines. We wonder why the government drew a line at 20, declaring that gambling harm cannot occur at a venue with fewer than that number. To some extent, that very clause makes a mockery of the bill.

If you are specifically looking at things that make a mockery of the bill, you must only go to the Tradies club in Dickson or to the casino—and I know that the casino has been used in the arguments about gambling venues. At both of those venues we have fully functioning ATMs operating for all intents and purposes within the gaming venue, bypassing the ATM restriction regulations. I understand that the ATM in the foyer of the casino is technically located at the Crowne Plaza and that the ATM at the Quality Inn at Dickson is technically outside the Tradies club, but I do not think that any of those technicalities passes the pub test or, in this instance, the club test.

Both of those ATMs, located only several metres away from two of the biggest gambling houses in our city, also allow withdrawal from credit card accounts. Strangely, the machine at the Quality Inn also dispenses money only in \$20 bills, which is a bit of a surprise. The whole background of this amendment bill was the suggestion that some clubs were utilising loopholes to get around the original ATM legislation, and I think we have got two clear examples of venues utilising a different loophole to get around the law. But we all know that ACT Labor and the Greens will just look the other way and pretend that that one is not happening. I think we all know why. Having said all that, we support this bill as far as the cash facilities measures go.

MR RATTENBURY (Molonglo) (11.56): I rise today to give the Greens' support to the Gaming Machine (Cash Facilities) Amendment Bill 2017 and highlight why restricting access to cash is such an important element of the territory's gambling harm minimisation efforts. The changes in this bill do not completely close the loophole identified in my motion earlier this year, which was further confirmed through the recent Access Canberra audit. However, while the Greens would have preferred to see a daily EFTPOS cash withdrawal limit, as exists for ATMs, I recognise that current technology makes this very difficult to enforce. While the bill before us does not represent a perfect solution, it is an improvement on the current regulations and it will go some way to restricting access to cash for people at risk of problem gambling.

As we spoke about earlier this year, it is clear that the original intent of the withdrawal limits applied to ATMs in the Gaming Machine Act was to minimise harm for addicted gamblers by reducing access to cash. The omission of a similar limit on EFTPOS facilities created a significant loophole which was identified back in 2015 but was never properly addressed. When this issue was originally raised as a concern, the government worked with ClubsACT to establish a voluntary code of practice, with guidelines for ensuring that the spirit of the legislation was not being undermined. The code of practice was provided to all ClubsACT members who held gaming machine licences and was supposedly monitored by the Gambling and Racing Commission and subsequently Access Canberra.

Earlier this year, having heard how a number of members of our community were experiencing significant gambling harm, I brought a motion to this place calling for this loophole to be closed. To add to the evidence we had heard through personal stories, the minister then released a compliance report from Access Canberra looking

into cash withdrawal facilities in gaming machine venues. The results of this audit were damning. It was clear that the voluntary code of practice had failed and that cash withdrawal restrictions were being circumvented by using EFTPOS facilities. This was not just one or two clubs; the report found that this was common practice across the sector.

The issue is not just that EFTPOS was available to provide cash to people playing the pokies in clubs but also that a number of clubs were actively encouraging their patrons to use those facilities to feed their gambling habits. Access Canberra found that multiple venues displayed signs near the ATM telling patrons that further cash was available and where it could be accessed. Traditionally, the limits on cash out through EFTPOS range from \$1,000 per day to no limit at all. ClubsACT have since admitted that the community has a trust issue when it comes to clubs in addressing problem gambling. While it is disappointing that clubs were unable to self-regulate on this issue, it is clear that a limit on EFTPOS cash withdrawals needs to be written into the legislation and enforced through regular compliance checks.

As I said earlier, the Greens do not see this as a perfect solution—and I go to some of the comments that Mr Parton has just made—but I sit comfortably with the fact that we are actually taking steps to address this rather than simply taking the laissez faire approach that says, “There’s nothing to see here. We’re going to look the other way and do nothing at all.” These are concrete steps forward. The cash withdrawal limit applied to ATMs is \$250 per card per day, and the bill does not allow customers to go back and make multiple withdrawals above the \$250 limit. I have been advised that the same technology does not exist to restrict EFTPOS withdrawals to a daily limit, and that is why the minister has opted for a \$200 limit per transaction as the next best option.

I acknowledge the additional protections which have been included to try to avoid a situation where a person could make unlimited EFTPOS withdrawals, leading to significant harm. The restriction to one EFTPOS terminal per venue which allows cash to be withdrawn from it still, I understand, allows multiple machines in a venue, because we know that some of these venues have different bars or restaurants and you can still pay for your meal by EFTPOS. But one site where you can take cash out, which needs to be outside the gaming area, is a positive step. It is also pleasing that the legislation requires staff to be directly involved in all stages of the transaction so that they are likely to recognise patrons who are making repeated withdrawals.

While there are currently requirements for staff to have undertaken online gambling awareness training, I would like to see these requirements strengthened so that training should be undertaken face to face with an appropriate community organisation. It is also important that staff update their training on a regular basis.

Despite these extra requirements, it is still possible for a person to continue to access large amounts of cash to fund their gambling through EFTPOS withdrawals. It is also possible that patrons could request multiple \$200 transactions at any one time as a way to try to bypass the new limit. I trust that staff at gaming venues now have a greater awareness of this issue and that every effort will be made to comply with both the letter and the intent of the cash withdrawal restrictions as set out in the legislation.

I also trust that the government will come back to this issue as the technology in this area evolves. Should new technology become available that could restrict EFTPOS transactions to a daily limit per card then that would be a more comprehensive solution to this problem. This solution would provide better protections for problem gamblers, whilst not placing unreasonable restrictions on other club members, who could still take out \$200 in cash and pay for other expenses on their cards.

While, as I have said, this is not a perfect solution, the Greens will be supporting this bill because it is a good first step towards improved harm minimisation in pokies venues. In addition to these changes, we would like to see a number of other reforms which would better protect people at risk of gambling harm, in combination with ATM and EFTPOS cash-out limits. While gambling harm is an under-researched field, the best available evidence supports measures which limit both the time and money a person can spend in a gambling session. At last year's election we called for the introduction of mandatory precommitment and \$1 maximum bets on all poker machines across the ACT, in line with the Productivity Commission's recommendations.

Currently the ACT has a maximum bet of \$10 per spin for a bet, which can lead to spends of up to \$1,200 per hour. The evidence suggests that most people bet between 25c and \$1 per spin, with only 12 per cent of recreational gamblers betting more than that. However, problem gamblers have indicated that the option to bet up to \$10 can encourage them to increase the size of their bets to chase a win. This shows that a \$1 maximum bet is likely to have little effect on most players and would directly target problem gamblers when they are at their most vulnerable.

Another key measure that would help to reduce harm from problem gambling is the introduction of mandatory precommitment. This system allows gamblers to determine how much they want to spend and set binding limits each time they play. We know that the features on many poker machines affect a player's ability to make rational choices. The machines are designed to encourage people to play for longer and to spend more. By requiring a player to set a limit on their spending before they start, the likelihood that they will spend beyond what they intended is reduced. Both of these measures are about creating a safe environment where people can play recreationally but the risk of developing gambling problems is minimised.

Additionally, the government's commitment to reduce the number of poker machines in the ACT to 4,000 will be important for minimising harm. I take this opportunity to recognise the work that has occurred already in preparing the policy paper which was tabled last week by the Attorney-General. Working out how we can get down to 4,000 poker machines in a fair and structured way will be important to help clubs as they seek to diversify their revenue streams. I encourage all clubs and interested community members to engage with the consultation and provide feedback on the options outlined in the paper.

Harm minimisation is most effective when there are a suite of measures in place. Limiting access to cash is one important part of this issue, and today's legislation goes

some way to addressing this issue. EFTPOS limits should sit alongside other measures such as bet limits, mandatory precommitment, reducing the number of machines, self-exclusion, staff training and access to support services. Together they create a packaged approach to harm minimisation in gaming environments.

Today in his remarks Mr Parton perhaps insinuated various motives of members of the Labor Party or the Greens as to how policy measures in this place are put together. I can inform members of the Assembly that I have met with both of the gaming industry groups in this town in recent weeks, both Canberra Community Clubs and ClubsACT, and I also spent quite a bit of time talking to advocates from the community sector who have real concerns about gambling harm.

Where the Greens come from is that we are trying to get the best possible system we can to ensure that people can gamble recreationally, if that is what they do, but to provide the protections that are necessary for people for whom problem gambling is an issue. The challenging part is that we have two votes out of 25 in this place and so we need to find the progress that we can. That is what we will continue to do in this place.

In relation to making comments about who people are informed by and what they are motivated by, I was intrigued to hear Mr Parton use the line, “It does not pass the pub test or the club test, if you will.” Interestingly, those are exactly the same words that my office received in an email last night from Gwyn Rees of ClubsACT. I quote from the email: “It does not pass the pub test or the club test, if you will.” I simply offer that observation. It is an extraordinary coincidence of phraseology that we have heard here in the chamber today.

As I have said, today’s proposed legislation does not completely close the EFTPOS loophole. I hope the government will continue to explore other alternatives as new technology becomes available. But, in the absence of a perfect solution, the Greens will be supporting this bill. I believe that it does make a positive contribution to minimising gambling harm in the territory. I thank Minister Ramsay for the work he has done to bring a solution to the Assembly in such a timely manner. I note that this will take effect from 1 September, and I think it is positive that it is taking effect so immediately. I hope that these new measures will help to prevent some of the cases of significant harm that we have seen in our community in recent times. That is why we will be supporting the bill today.

MR RAMSAY (Ginninderra—Attorney-General, Minister for Regulatory Services, Minister for the Arts and Community Events and Minister for Veterans and Seniors) (12.07), in reply: I am particularly pleased to have the privilege of closing the debate on this important bill. I table a revised explanatory statement.

I thank members for their comments, though I note with some disappointment Mr Parton’s comments about the contact between our offices. I wish to draw to the attention of the Assembly that my office did make contact with Mr Parton’s office yesterday and, unlike other members regarding other pieces of legislation, Mr Parton’s office at no stage requested a briefing in relation to this particular bill.

The Gaming Machine (Cash Facilities) Amendment Bill 2017 is fundamentally about reducing the harms of problem gambling. Restrictions on access to cash at gaming venues are a key component of our harm minimisation rules. Also, despite Mr Parton's comments, which acknowledge that members of his party do not actually believe in them, restrictions on cash are supported by evidence, including from the Productivity Commission's inquiry into gambling, and by the community.

Limiting access to cash inside gaming venues provides a brake on the harms of problem gaming and creates opportunities for people affected to stop and to seek help. And it limits the clear effects of problem gambling not only on the gamblers themselves but also on their extended family and community.

The consequences of problem gambling can be devastating. Professor Laurie Brown has courageously spoken out about her experience with problem gambling. People like Professor Brown who are willing to share their experience show us why it is important to keep focusing on harm minimisation and finding new ways to regulate gambling in the territory.

There is already a \$250 per day limit on ATM withdrawals in clubs on the basis of this evidence. Earlier this year I asked the Gambling and Racing Commission to undertake an audit of the effectiveness of cash withdrawal restrictions. The findings showed that EFTPOS withdrawals could be used as a way around the ATM limits. There is already a voluntary code of practice in place. The audit showed without a doubt that a voluntary code of practice is not enough to address the issue.

This bill responds to the audit findings by introducing mandatory restrictions on EFTPOS withdrawals in clubs. The limitations that we are considering today are reasonable changes. My directorate has worked with clubs to ensure that the restrictions can be effectively implemented, and we have crafted the changes so that they are flexible enough to account for changing technologies.

As I said in introduction, the key features of this bill are that clubs will be limited to one EFTPOS facility where a person can withdraw cash at the premises; cash withdrawals from an EFTPOS facility at a club must not exceed \$200 per transaction; and the person operating the EFTPOS facility must be a staff member who has been trained in the responsible provision of gambling services. Each time cash is dispensed, that trained staff member must personally hand the money to the person making the withdrawal.

Restrictions on cash can help people who are affected by problem gambling to interrupt their gaming and to get help. Providing opportunities for people who are affected to interact with trained staff also increases the potential for them to recognise problem gambling and to intervene.

I thank the Standing Committee on Justice and Community Safety, in their legislative scrutiny role, for their review of this bill. I have provided the committee with a detailed response of the issues that they raised. In brief, the committee noted that this

bill would mean that elements of an offence are created by regulation. The revised explanatory statement, which I have just tabled, also provides further detail about the comments.

As I outlined when introducing this bill, the decision to address the issue through regulation was a deliberate and important feature of the bill. The regulation-making power in the bill has been broadly constructed to allow the government to intervene as needed to minimise gambling harm. The government will be monitoring the effects of the new measures and will respond quickly if there is evidence that cash withdrawals from EFTPOS facilities remain an issue.

The definition of “cash facility” in the Gaming Machine Act recognises that these facilities can include ATM facilities, EFTPOS facilities and any other facility for gaining access to cash or credit. It is appropriate that the regulation-making power reflects all of these elements, rather than being limited to a single form of cash facility.

Small clubs and hotels will be exempt from the new EFTPOS restrictions, as they are, currently, from the \$250 ATM withdrawal limit. These exemptions recognise that gross revenue per gaming machine is generally lower in small clubs and hotels. In addition, hotel customers may have accommodation costs and other tourism-related reasons for requiring access to higher amounts of cash.

We know that Canberrans expect the government to act to reduce gambling harm. Today’s bill represents government getting down to business in meeting that expectation. This bill was developed based on evidence about the availability of cash at clubs. It implements restrictions on cash, a measure supported by expert evidence, and it has been developed through a consultation process that means it can be implemented quickly and effectively.

In supporting this bill, it is important to remember the context. The government recognises that our approach to harm minimisation must be comprehensive. There are a range of regulations already in place to minimise the impacts of problem gambling. We are hard at work evaluating and building on these existing measures to keep on strengthening our harm minimisation framework.

Just this year, the government increased the problem gambling assistance levy; it introduced legislation and provided funding in the budget to help clubs diversify away from gaming revenue; and we are currently looking at the best ways to meet our commitment to reduce electronic gaming machines to 4,000 by the year 2020.

Today’s bill is an important part of our comprehensive harm minimisation agenda. As with all of our harm minimisation rules, we will be monitoring how it is implemented and making sure that it continues to serve its purpose. The government is committed to minimising the impact of problem gambling in this community. As we are doing today, we will keep responding to changing conditions and to new evidence with new and more effective regulations. I commend the bill to the Assembly.

Question resolved in the affirmative.

Bill agreed to in principle.

Leave granted to dispense with the detail stage.

Bill agreed to.

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 17 August 2017.

MADAM SPEAKER: I remind members that in debating order of the day No 4, executive business, they may also address their remarks to executive business order of the day No 5 and Assembly business orders of the day relating to the report of the Select Committee on Estimates 2017-2018 and the government's response.

Detail stage

Schedule 1—Appropriations—Proposed expenditure.

Education Directorate—Part 1.9.

MRS DUNNE (Ginninderra) (12.16): On behalf of Mr Wall, who is otherwise disposed today, I would like to make these comments in relation to part 1.9, the appropriation for education. Education is one of the big ticket items in the territory budget, with an investment of \$1.2 billion. This makes education core business for this government. However, despite the rhetoric emanating from the Labor-Greens government, results do not reflect the investments that are made here in the ACT.

In the Auditor-General's report into the ACT's performance in education, published in May this year, it was noted:

The Government school performance in the ACT report identified that, when comparing ACT public schools with similar schools in other jurisdictions, ACT public schools consistently achieved lower results:

State and Territory results show that after taking account of intake and context differences, ACT government schools on average achieve negative results on every measure.

The auditor goes on to say:

... in Year 5 Numeracy mean scores the ACT records the worst result of any jurisdiction. On average, students are performing 20 points lower than comparable students in [another jurisdiction]. Twenty points represents almost 6 months of learning and suggests that at a school level by Year 5 students in the ACT are almost 6 months behind students in comparable schools in [another jurisdiction].

The results are worse at Year 9 where for Numeracy the deficit is almost 25 mean score points, keeping in mind that selective entry schools have been excluded.

The Auditor-General concludes:

... numeracy is the area of greatest concern. While results are also significantly lower on all Reading performance measures, the Numeracy results are markedly below the rest of the country, compared to what would be expected based on the populations schools are serving in the ACT.

A striking feature is that in Numeracy the ACT schools are performing ... at the lower levels of performance for schools of similar ICSEA values.

I note that the government's response to this report was tabled in this place on 15 August. I am pleased to see that there is agreement for the most part on the Auditor-General's seven recommendations. Wholesale changes are necessary to ensure that the ACT's results reflect the investment and make-up of our city, not just a tokenistic conversation. Government should comprehensively address all students' performances in a more meaningful way.

As my colleague Mr Wall has stated previously in this place, more investment does not equate to better results. The minister must do more than just have a conversation or throw money at education without a realistic plan for better outcomes. There is absolutely no evidence anywhere to suggest that the policies and investment made by the current Labor-Greens government are translating into results for our students.

Madam Speaker, if you talk to parents and educators, a common theme will emerge: we are just sitting inside the margins. The needs of our students on either side of this margin are not recognised sufficiently. Gifted and talented students face the same challenges as students with special needs. There is not enough being done to meet the needs of either group, let alone the students who sit somewhere in the middle.

There are many other issues that face school communities here in the ACT. One very prevalent issue is the rise of mental health needs of students. I note a number of recommendations in the estimates committee report relating to mental health, particularly services directed at the young. While those recommendations are primarily the responsibility of the health budget, it is worth noting the importance of a whole-of-government approach on this issue. Recommendation 12 states:

The Committee recommends the ACT Government conduct a review of access to youth mental health services to ensure timely access and continuing support.

I also note that 20 new psychologists have been promised in this budget, but this is not enough. This is a crucial area where a shortfall in services has serious consequences. All students need to have access to adequate services. Importantly, this also crosses the divide between the government and non-government education sectors.

On a personal note, Madam Speaker, I would like to reinforce the very important point made here by Mr Wall in relation to school-aged mental health services. As the shadow minister for health, I have had extensive conversations with a number of school principals about their growing concern about the prevalence of mental health issues in ACT schools and the slowness of response to some of these issues.

I have encountered principals who have long work experience in the ACT and others who have come from other jurisdictions. The universal message is that mental health is a top-of-mind issue for all principals. It is probably the most important issue that they confront on a daily basis. The clear take-out message is that this government, through a multitude of ministers, is not fully engaged on this important issue.

Mr Wall also asked me to comment on the notion of choice. Canberra families can and do vote with their feet when it comes to which school suits their family needs. It is crucial that families are able to choose the educational setting that is right for their child regardless of their ability, race or religion, or their socio-economic status. The notion of choice extends to the rights of parents and carers to choose the kind of programs to which their children are exposed in the classroom. This is something that we on this side feel very strongly about.

I am not sure how Mr Rattenbury managed to pivot between safe schools and same-sex marriage during the debate in this place on Ms Orr's motion on education last week, but he did. To be clear, the Canberra Liberals believe that parents should be informed about the content of any program that is linked to or includes any content at all from the Safe Schools Coalition programs.

What we do believe is that there is always a place for a dedicated program that teaches tolerance and acceptance and that focuses on real strategies to combat bullying in all forms. Anything associated with the Safe Schools Coalition program, however, should not be tolerated.

To finish on this issue of bullying, it would be remiss of us not to mention the wholesale attack waged on my colleague Mr Wall by UnionsACT. This attack related to a line of questioning during estimates about workplace safety programs that unions were delivering in ACT schools. Mr Wall was not questioning the program but he was questioning—and rightly so—the unions' strategy to use that program as an opportunity to sell unionism. This is a political strategy at its worst.

This attack, this bullying by UnionsACT, was done under the false claim that Mr Wall was questioning the importance of workplace safety. Never once did Mr Wall question the issue of workplace safety. Never once did Mr Wall question the right of every individual to work in a safe environment. But UnionsACT sought to create for

Mr Wall the very thing of which they were accusing him: an unsafe workplace encased in the worst tactics of union bullying. What remains, therefore, is the political motivation of the organisation that is currently delivering this program to our school students.

The minister had every opportunity during the estimates hearing to clarify her view on the appropriateness of this situation, but she did not. Instead, what ensued was a bullying campaign unleashed by the union in Mr Wall's electorate in an attempt to discredit him. The unions sought to spread complete lies about the premise of the issue and Mr Wall's stance on workplace safety. This is union bullying at its ugliest.

In conclusion, on behalf of Mr Wall and on behalf of the Canberra Liberals, I acknowledge the work of our teachers and support staff at every school in Canberra, government and non-government. Teachers' ongoing dedication and professionalism are an inspiration, especially in light of the Labor-Greens government that has no plans for improving educational outcomes for young people.

I also acknowledge the first educators of our children: the parents and carers who start their journey. The continued participation in the day-to-day activities at the coalface is critical for the success of our future as a community.

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) (12.25): I am happy to have the chance to talk about all of the government's election commitments last year that have been followed through in the budget that we are discussing today. In respect of education and the importance of education in our community, I start my comments in the same place as the comments from the opposition about the results of the moment-in-time NAPLAN tests. They are a piece of information that informs the story about what is happening in our schools. But they are not the only thing that is happening in our schools.

The conversation that I have commenced this year on the future of education goes much deeper than a moment-in-time test result to find out what is actually happening in our schools with our students, to find out what their needs are so that we can better meet them, and to find out from our teachers, our school staff and school principals what kinds of supports they need so that they can provide the best education opportunities for our children and the life that they lead after school.

Since I was appointed as education minister, a number of things have occurred in schools across the city in only 10 months. There was the announcement of an occupational violence plan and policy on which the ACT government and the directorate worked very closely with the Australian Education Union and their members to develop. It is nation leading. It is the first policy and plan to tackle occupational violence in our schools. The rest of the country has been very interested to see how the implementation of this policy and this plan will be rolled out across ACT schools, in close collaboration with the Australian Education Union.

It is important to note, of course, that young people and children have a right to education, and so does a worker have the right to a safe and healthy workplace. Both of these rights can work together and that is the plan for this occupational violence plan and policy work, that those two rights can meet in the middle and can provide all the opportunities to our children and our teachers for a safe and happy school environment.

Through the expert advice of the Australian Education Union, the ACT government committed to, and has funded in the budget, additional psychologists in our schools to make sure that we meet the needs of our students and families should they need that support. This was a decision that was made following conversations with the education community to ensure that we were meeting the needs of students in our schools.

We have also provided funding to ensure that assistance continues to support teachers to meet the needs of students in our schools. That has also been budgeted for to make sure that teachers and school principals are supported in making sure that our kids get the best education possible.

Funding has been provisioned for the purchase of Chromebook-type devices in our schools that will be able to support children in their learning. But it is more important to make sure it is understood that every child, no matter what their background or ability, can have access to a device, that everybody has the same device and that that can be used to make sure they get equal access to the best learning outcomes.

It also helps teachers because then teachers only have to learn about one particular tablet or device within a school environment rather than having to be an expert on every single one. Rolling out Chromebooks or tablet devices in our schools will be the best way for kids to be able to have equal access to the best technology they need to ensure they have the best education.

Also funded in the budget is the work going towards developing an early childhood strategy. There has not been an early childhood strategy in the ACT. Arising from the conversations I have started with the early childhood education and care sector, I understand that they are very keen to get to work on what that strategy might look like as an important part of the future-of-education conversation. We all know that the early years of a child's education are the most important. So making sure that we have a strategy that takes that into account in the ACT is important.

As part of this budget, \$85 million will go towards expanding four schools in Gungahlin, as well as continued upgrades to Belconnen High School. The costs of the Belconnen High School upgrades will exceed \$23 million. They will finally bring that school up to a standard that will meet the growing needs of the Belconnen and west Belconnen community and, importantly, ensure that the schools in Gungahlin meet the needs of that growing community as well.

This is a very significant contribution that the ACT government is making towards education in the ACT. I am very happy that the work of the ACT government, working with the Australian Education Union, is digging deeper and talking with our school communities. This budget will fund the best things that a government can do and a community can do to support the needs of young people across our schools.

In addition to the funding that I have already talked about for different initiatives, there is also the safe schools initiative that the government will be implementing in our schools. Now, more than ever, young people, LGBTIQ people particularly, in our schools need our community's support and our government's support. The ACT government is committing to make sure that those kids get the support they need, when they need it, for as long as they need it, through an inclusive program like safe schools so that they can be well supported in the best way possible.

Finally, I make mention again of the significant infrastructure contribution of \$85 million that the ACT government is making to ACT schools. That is significant. It will make a difference to the infrastructure. But more than that, we need to go beyond the advice of academics, other experts and test results and really talk to the students and young people, the parents and families, the teachers, the support staff and the principals in our schools so that we can work towards a strategy for the future of education for children who will be attending our schools shortly or children not even been born yet to make sure that they have the best learning outcomes that we can possibly deliver here in the ACT.

More than that, we have to build really strong school communities through these important conversations that we are having across our school systems—Catholic, independent and public schools—to make sure that we provide the best schools that we possibly can.

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 12.34 to 2.30 pm.

Ministerial arrangements

MR BARR: Madam Speaker, the Deputy Chief Minister will be absent from question time today. I will take questions in the Deputy Chief Minister's portfolios.

Questions without notice

Animals—dog attack compensation

MR COE: I have a question for the Treasurer. The criteria for the Treasurer to authorise an act of grace payment state that the government will assess payments on the basis of three points. The third point is: "The matter is not covered by legislation ... but it is intended to introduce such legislation." In a speech in this place on 2 August, Ms Fitzharris said:

... it has prompted considerable change, including to policy, processes, the administration of Domestic Animal Services, and, notably ... significant legislative change in this place last year.

Treasurer, do Ms Fitzharris's comments confirm that the events surrounding the attack on Jack Hartigan have resulted in changes to "policy", "processes", "administration" and "legislative change"?

MR BARR: I would not read too much into that.

MR COE: Treasurer, do Ms Fitzharris's comments therefore mean that the third point—that is, that the matter is not covered by legislation but that it is intended to introduce such legislation—meets the requirements for a payment of the ex gratia variety as per point three?

MR BARR: I think the line of questioning might be overreaching.

MR PARTON: Treasurer, will you now review your position not to pay an act of grace payment to Jack Hartigan?

MR BARR: No.

Canberra Hospital—bed availability

MRS DUNNE: My question is to the minister for health. I refer to a quote by the clinical director of the emergency department at the Canberra Hospital in the *Canberra Times* of 18 August 2017. He said:

In July ... there were 23 occurrences of patients locations being recorded as in the corridor ... The usual cause of patients being on trolleys in the corridor is when we're having trouble accessing in-patient beds for emergency department patients that require admission.

Minister, why is the emergency department having trouble accessing inpatient beds at the Canberra Hospital for people who need them?

MS FITZHARRIS: I thank Mrs Dunne for her question. As we discussed in this place, and over the course of the weekend, ACT Health began a community campaign reminding people of the very many options they have in our community to seek health care during working hours, after hours and on the weekend from a variety of different healthcare providers. It is certainly the case that every winter we do see additional pressure—

Mrs Dunne: Point of order on relevance.

MADAM SPEAKER: Please resume your seat. Mrs Dunne.

Mrs Dunne: My question was: why were patients having trouble accessing inpatient beds out of the emergency department, not: what sorts of information processes are in place to discourage people from going to emergency. It was about people already there.

MADAM SPEAKER: Thank you. Minister, in the time left, can you be relevant to the question?

MS FITZHARRIS: Thank you Madam Speaker. Particularly over the winter period there are occasions when it can be difficult to access an inpatient bed partly because of the very complex flow of patients throughout the hospital. As I indicated last week, we have enacted further changes within the emergency department and within the hospital.

One of those over the weekend was to open the discharge lounge. Health have reported to me that they have started to see some small improvements over the course of the weekend. But what I can reassure all members is that staff at Canberra Hospital, and particularly in the emergency department and throughout the wards, are working extremely hard.

Our doctors, our nurses, our wardspeople and all the staff that go to make up a functioning, complex hospital like the Canberra Hospital are working very hard over this period when we do see increases in presentations, people with chronic conditions experiencing flu-like symptoms, which can exacerbate their chronic conditions. We are working hard to make sure that people get the health care they need at Canberra Hospital.

MRS DUNNE: Minister, how many patients have been recorded as being located in corridors at the hospital so far this August?

MS FITZHARRIS: I believe I took a similar question on notice last week. A response to that is in train and will be provided through the normal course of Assembly business.

MS LEE: Minister, what is the capacity of the emergency department, and how many times a year did the modelling suggest that capacity at the new ED would be exceeded?

MS FITZHARRIS: I will take the specifics of the question on notice. It is a complex question, because the capacity in the emergency department of course depends on the presentations that come to the Canberra Hospital—or any emergency department—at any time of the day.

Visitors

MADAM SPEAKER: I acknowledge the presence in the gallery of Gold Creek Probus Club. Welcome to your Assembly.

Questions without notice

Planning—Federal Golf Club

MS LE COUTEUR: My question is to the Minister for Planning and Land Management and relates to residential development at golf clubs. Federal golf course community panel members have been told that no Territory Plan variation will be required to enable over 100 retirement homes to be built on the course, despite it being zoned for a golf course—zoned as recreational. Minister, can you confirm whether or not a Territory Plan variation is required to turn part of the course into a retirement village?

MR GENTLEMAN: I thank Ms Le Couteur for her question. Yes, I can confirm that a TPV would be necessary for this process. There are a number of steps for the Federal Golf Club should they wish to proceed after the community panels. They would need to apply for deconcessionalisation of the lease. This involves a social impact statement. If the deconcessionalisation is approved, a fee would be incurred as well. They would then request a National Capital Plan amendment for parts of the site to be returned to Canberra Nature Park and request a Territory Plan variation. That includes rezoning, of course, and there is a lengthy statutory process with that. So there would be quite a deal of community consultation after these community panels should they wish to proceed.

MS LE COUTEUR: Minister, will you commit to not progressing the Territory Plan variation if the federal golf course community panel's community representatives reject the proposal?

MR GENTLEMAN: The process is quite clear cut. As I have mentioned, there are a number of steps involved. I do not think it would be wise for the minister to intervene in those steps. So we will look to see the outcomes of these community consultations through the panel and then proceed from there.

MS CODY: Minister, can you outline the community panel process please?

MR GENTLEMAN: I thank Ms Cody for her question. We have started these community panels in a number of areas where a TPV was sought or a change was sought. It is a really good way of involving the community in the outcomes for decision-making.

During the community panels we receive quite a bit of information from proponents—from stakeholders—as we saw, for example, at the Woden roundtable community panel that was hosted by Mr Steel and Ms Cody. There was a very good outcome there and a lot of information was provided for decision-makers to look through and, therefore, be more educated in their decision-making process.

Government—tourism policy

MS CHEYNE: Chief Minister, how is the territory performing against its 2020 tourism targets?

MR BARR: I thank Ms Cheyne for the question and for her ongoing interest in Canberra's tourism industry. I remind members that our target for 2020 is to achieve \$2.5 billion in expenditure in the territory economy. I am pleased to report that the territory is on track to achieve that.

Tourism currently delivers just a fraction short of \$2.1 billion into our economy in both domestic and international overnight visitor expenditure. That is the money spent by visitors in the ACT economy. This represents 84 per cent of the \$2.5 billion target. The latest national visitor survey data, released in June, showed a 16.3 per cent annual increase in the domestic visitor spend, creating a new record for the ACT of \$1.57 billion expended in our economy by domestic visitors. Visitors increased to 2.5 million.

I am particularly pleased to see a strong area of growth in those who come to Canberra for a holiday. Overnight visitors are up by 50 per cent in that category. There was also very pleasing growth out of Victoria, particularly Melbourne, aligning with the growth of low-cost flights between the two cities, particularly now with Tigerair providing eight services a week between Canberra and Melbourne.

MS CHEYNE: Chief Minister, what recent announcements will assist in delivering additional tourists?

MR BARR: The expansion of airline services to Canberra airport is clearly a driver of increased tourism output, as well as investments in more hotels. Particularly, and perhaps not that well understood, the increase in international students studying in our city—with the prospect of a new university or an expanded university campus in the CBD—will have a big impact on the visitor economy.

Virgin and Tiger Airlines have both recently announced additional domestic services: Virgin connecting Canberra and Perth, and Tiger connecting Canberra and Melbourne and Brisbane. Tiger has grown substantially to now provide over 200,000 seats annually through Canberra Airport. We have also seen success recently with Pialligo Estate leading the way on international air freight exports through Canberra airport and Singapore Airlines.

It is worth noting that the additional university for Canberra, with up to 10,000 international students, will lead to a huge growth in what is coined the visiting friends and relatives segment of the tourism market. The ACT government will continue to support these initiatives and to market our city through the one good thing after another marketing platform.

MS LEE: Chief Minister, what work has been done or investment made by the ACT government to grow ecotourism to contribute to the Canberra tourist industry?

MR BARR: Ecotourism is an important, although not significant, part of the total territory tourism offering. Our national capital status, national institutions and the like drive more tourist visitation. But in recent times, investments in the Tidbinbilla nature

park, the Mulligans Flat initiatives that the government has supported—with further work to be undertaken there around establishing a visitors centre—things like the Jerrabomberra wetlands, and our promotion of the Namadgi National Park have all featured either in VisitCanberra or, indeed, Tourism Australia’s promotion of Canberra. It is a part of our overall tourism strategy.

More significant, clearly, will be the international student market and the visiting friends and relatives market. There are 14,392 international students enrolled in territory institutions. Research commissioned by Study Canberra in 2016 indicates that around 19 per cent of them spend their first night or nights in Canberra in a hotel. Eighty-one per cent of interstate students and 41 per cent of international students had friends and family visit them whilst they were studying in Canberra. So if you look at the numbers associated with the international student market, they are very significant, Canberra’s single biggest export earner. Environmental tourism is very significant. International student tourism is even more significant.

Canberra Hospital—risk assessment

MS LAWDER: My question is to the Minister for Health. Minister, on 17 August 2017, you advised that some panels of cladding at the Centenary Hospital for Women and Children were flammable and needed to be removed. On 1 August 2017, you tabled the ACT health infrastructure asset condition report by AECOM advising that there were four extreme risks and 143 high risks in the ACT health system as at the end of 2015, which does not include the cladding risk. Why did the ACT government allow extreme and high risks to develop, especially at the Canberra Hospital campus?

MS FITZHARRIS: I thank Ms Lawder for the question. As I have advised the Assembly on a number of occasions, the government undertook what all good governments do and did an asset condition report, which is the AECOM report that Ms Lawder refers to and which has been the subject of extensive discussion in this place. The government went on to act on the findings of that report. As with all condition reports, as with all assessments, a risk matrix is used. There are risks that are on an escalating risk rating. The extreme risks were identified, and those extreme risks are being addressed. Indeed, a number of them have been fully completed.

MS LAWDER: Minister, how long have there been high and extreme risks present at the Canberra Hospital campus?

MS FITZHARRIS: Those risks have been identified and are being addressed. They were identified in the AECOM report, which fully informed the government’s decision in last year’s budget to address those risks.

Ms Lawder: Point of order as to relevance, Madam Speaker.

MADAM SPEAKER: Point of order, Ms Lawder.

Ms Lawder: The question was: how long have these high and extreme risks been present: not when they were identified, but how long they have been present.

MADAM SPEAKER: Thank you. Do you have further information to provide on your answer?

Ms Fitzharris: No.

MRS DUNNE: Minister, what is the level of risk that you are prepared to tolerate while caring for patients in an ageing asset rather than replacing the asset?

MS FITZHARRIS: I have taken very sound advice from the ACT Health Directorate which has worked closely with a number of experts including engineers and subject matter experts to inform the decisions that the government has previously taken to invest in the upgrade of existing assets, irrespective of their age, at the Canberra Hospital.

I am very confident that the very capable and skilled staff, clinical and non-clinical, undertake their due diligence and their professional responsibility to the highest standard, to get the advice that they need to inform themselves and make recommendations to me and to the government about the priorities that we need to set. There is nothing more important to me as the health minister than to ensure the health and well being of Canberrans and to ensure that our services are high quality and that our facilities are high quality.

There will, of course, always be work to do, and it is incumbent on governments to undertake appropriate work and seek expert advice to make decisions to fund and deliver on those improvements, and that is exactly what we are doing.

ACTION bus service—flexibus

MS LEE: My question is to the Minister for Transport and City Services. Minister, the inner south Canberra flexible bus will collect from suburbs such as Deakin, Kingston and Red Hill and will drop passengers at Woden town centre, Cooleman Court and, when requested, the Canberra Hospital. Why does the bus not allow passengers to be dropped at the Manuka shopping precinct?

MS FITZHARRIS: I thank Ms Lee for the question. I was not aware that it does not allow passengers to do that but I do understand that this is a very important and valuable service. I will take the specific question on notice and provide a further answer to the Assembly.

MS LEE: Minister, will the government consider increasing the flexibility of this supposed flexible bus to allow passengers to board and be dropped off at the Manuka shopping precinct?

MS FITZHARRIS: Yes, Madam Speaker.

MR PARTON: Minister, how does the government support the residents of the inner south with public transport to access the inner south major shopping precinct, Manuka?

MS FITZHARRIS: I thank Mr Parton for the supplementary question. In a number of ways; I am aware that there have been some changes to bus routes in past years, but there is, of course, the flexible bus service, which I have just undertaken to further explore. We also look forward to the green rapid, starting in the next couple of months, which will further improve rapid bus services to residents of the inner south coming from Woden and through the inner south into the city.

Access Canberra—structural change

MR PETTERSSON: My question is to the Minister for Regulatory Services. Can the Minister update the Assembly on the planned structural changes within Access Canberra?

MR RAMSAY: I thank Mr Pettersson for his question. The government is committed to ensuring that we are continually assessing our service delivery models and amending our processes or structures wherever we see room for improvement in services for the ACT community.

One of these changes is a partial reconstruction within Access Canberra to better ensure work safety, enforcement of construction and trade standards, and protection of the environment in the ACT. In the incredibly liveable city we have that is continuously growing we must ensure that we keep pace with the expanding needs and expectations of the growing community.

Previously the Work Safety Commissioner, the Construction Occupations Registrar and the commissioner for the Environment Protection Authority were all positions vested in one person. We have been very ably served by the current commissioner in this position. He has done and continues to do excellent work in these positions. However, with the growth in volume and complexity of his workload it is time to spread the load to include other experts.

As part of this change, the current Work Safety Commissioner will remain in his position. I look forward to his ongoing continued excellent work and increased focus on ensuring that Canberrans get home safely. The change will see the Construction Occupations Registrar position being vested in an existing senior executive in Access Canberra. We will also be creating a new position within Access Canberra for a dedicated Environment Protection Authority Commissioner.

MR PETTERSSON: Can the minister outline how this change to Access Canberra's structure will help strengthen the government's commitment to getting workers home safely?

MR RAMSAY: I thank Mr Pettersson for his supplementary question. This change will ensure that Worksafe has the best possible senior executive support for its functions. The current Worksafe commissioner has a very broad remit across a number of functions in Access Canberra with his three current statutory roles. This change will boost the amount of time he has to dedicate to the important role of Work Safety Commissioner.

It shows the dedication that this government has to ensuring that workers get home safely. It is about ensuring that we have a dedicated senior executive within Access Canberra whose focus is on promoting and enforcing compliance with the territory's work health and safety laws. It is about ensuring that we have the appropriate levels of resources for an ever-growing city.

Investigations in the work health and safety area can be incredibly complex and sometimes lengthy. This change will allow this commissioner to spend more of his time providing advice and guidance to inspectors and ensuring that these investigations proceed efficiently and effectively.

It will also allow him more time to guide the development of education campaigns to improve compliance with work health and safety legislation. I look forward to continuing to work with the current Worksafe commissioner as he continues his hard and valued role in this refocused work.

MR STEEL: Minister, how will this change to Access Canberra's structure help to strengthen the government's commitment to protecting the environment?

MR RAMSAY: I thank Mr Steel for his supplementary question. This change presents an opportunity to increase the skills and knowledge of Access Canberra. We are in the final stages of organising to advertise for a new standalone environment protection authority commissioner; we expect to advertise within the next week or so. We have secured the help of a senior executive from the Victorian EPA to sit on the selection panel along with the current commissioner and other qualified members of Access Canberra to help find the right person with the right skills and the right technical expertise to fill this new position.

This new position will give Access Canberra the opportunity to add to the already extensive skills and knowledge that it has in its function as the environment protection authority. As I have mentioned previously, we have been very ably served by the current commissioner, but as the city grows in population, as its industries diversify and as technology advances, the volume of the work that the EPA is responsible for continues to grow.

It is for this reason that we are looking to supplement Access Canberra's already talented staff with a dedicated senior resource to help enforce the territory's environment protection legislation. They will supplement our knowledge in best practice in regulating and our technical knowledge in this area. I look forward to working with the future commissioner once they commence in the position.

Greyhound racing—government policy

MR PARTON: My question is directed to the Minister for Regulatory Services. Minister, back in March in the JACS committee I asked you how you had come to the conclusion that greyhound racing in the ACT was out of step with community values. Your written response seemed to be based on value judgement rather than any

empirical or quantitative measure. Last week and again this morning you again implied that ending the greyhound racing industry was in line with community values. Minister, could you explain how you have deduced that the entire community of the ACT believes that the greyhound racing industry is at odds with their values?

MR RAMSAY: I thank Mr Parton for the question which has been revisited a number of times over recent months. The question is in relation to how we have evaluated that. The clear understanding, which I have given before and I will give again, is that the position was taken to the election last year and it was clearly endorsed by the people of Canberra.

MR PARTON: Minister, what data have you collected other than an election victory to validate your assertion regarding the greyhound industry?

MR RAMSAY: In a democracy I believe there is no higher data.

MR MILLIGAN: Minister, if you have no convincing data, how can you make such statements when you have no basis for doing so?

MR RAMSAY: I reject the premise of the question. We have the data and we are working on the data. We are working to continue to implement the decision that has been made by the people of Canberra.

Government—community organisations support

MR STEEL: My question is to the Minister for Community Services and Social Inclusion. Minister, can you update the Assembly on what the government is doing to support community organisations to improve how they deliver services to the community.

MS STEPHEN-SMITH: I thank Mr Steel for his question. Of course, the government recognises the crucial support that community organisations provide to many Canberrans. We understand that the sector itself is diverse, encompassing large and small organisations; not for profits; social enterprises and community associations; those that receive government funding; and those that are entirely volunteer based.

In addition to our annual funding support and policy engagement, the community support and infrastructure grants program supports ACT community organisations to deliver programs and services for the benefit of members and the broader ACT community.

Successful projects in the 2016-17 round include \$10,000 for Legal Aid ACT towards developing an electronic ACT law handbook that will be available soon on the Australasian Legal Information Institute's website. The handbook will provide a free, comprehensive and accessible guide on common legal issues including family law, family violence orders, debt, tenancy, public housing and consumer law issues.

Another great example is \$7,000 to the ACT Disability, Aged and Carer Advocacy Service, ADACAS, to design and install an accessible kitchen that meets the needs of people with disability in their office. I am very pleased that community organisations have the opportunity to share in this funding to improve the lives of all Canberrans.

MR STEEL: Minister, how is the government assisting community organisations with their engagement through digital technology?

MS STEPHEN-SMITH: I thank Mr Steel for his supplementary question. This question is a great opportunity to highlight the importance of the participation (digital communities) grants program. This vital program supports ACT community organisations to establish and/or enhance their capacity to effectively engage their communities and clients through the use of digital technology.

I was pleased to announce the successful recipients of the 2016-17 grants earlier today. These include support for the Canberra Seniors Centre to purchase computers to enable twice-weekly computer library classes; for the Indigenous Reading Project's capacity-building project, which involves delivering an award-winning digital e-reading program for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children; and for Epilepsy ACT to purchase digital equipment for community awareness-building presentations and training on epilepsy.

I was also pleased to note that many of the applications came from Canberra's diverse multicultural community. Funding to groups such as Migrant and Refugee Settlement Services of the ACT and FINACT Inc. enables these key cultural and community institutions to better communicate with each other and the broader Canberra community.

MS CODY: Minister, is specific assistance available to multicultural organisations to promote and enhance engagement with the community?

MS STEPHEN-SMITH: I thank Ms Cody for her supplementary question. It gives me a great opportunity to talk about the participation multicultural grants program. The 2017-18 grants program is currently open for applications, providing community organisations with the opportunity to share in \$260,000 of funding. The aim of this important grants program is to support groups to undertake innovative projects that promote cultural diversity and social harmony, including through participating in the annual National Multicultural Festival.

Some great examples from last year's grants are support for the ACT Muslim women's organisation, towards the walk together, kite together event in support of the inclusion of migrants and refugees in Canberra and to bring Canberrans together from all walks of life to celebrate diversity; and also Celebration of African Australians Inc for the African showcase at the 2017 National Multicultural Festival and the 2016 African Australian awards. Both of these initiatives were embraced by the broader Canberra community and offered an opportunity for these organisations to raise their profile and their voice and share their history, language and culture with all.

Applications for this program close on 27 August. I encourage all members to raise awareness of these grants with their local communities.

Aboriginals and Torres Strait Islanders—rehabilitation facility

MR MILLIGAN: My question is to Minister for Health and Wellbeing. Minister, in the June 2017 quarterly consolidated financial report there is a capital injection of \$963,000 for the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander residential alcohol and other drugs rehab facility. What are the construction defects and non-compliance issues mentioned in this report?

MS FITZHARRIS: I thank Mr Milligan for the question. I will take it on notice.

MR MILLIGAN: Why were these matters—or matters you are unaware of now—not dealt with during the original construction of the site?

MS FITZHARRIS: I will take that on notice. It would not be unusual to have issues raised over the course of a construction project but I will take it on notice.

MRS DUNNE: Minister, how much additional money will be spent on the property before it is opened, and why have these defects not been covered by rectification provisions in the contract?

MS FITZHARRIS: I look forward to making an update very soon on operations and services getting underway at the bush healing farm. Certainly I am aware that the last piece of construction for that facility was not on the facility itself but on the access road to the facility.

Children and young people—foster care

MRS KIKKERT: My question is to the Minister for Disability, Children and Youth. According to its website, ACT Together is currently “urgently seeking” foster carers and the *Canberra Times* recently reported, “Barnardos ACT says at least 80 more foster carers are needed in Canberra.” Minister, what are you doing to address the shortage of foster carers in the ACT?

MS STEPHEN-SMITH: I thank Mrs Kikkert for her question. ACT Together does have the responsibility for recruiting new foster carers. As Mrs Kikkert has said, they are actively out there advertising for foster carers across the broad range of the community. They have set an ambitious target of recruiting 80 new foster carers this year.

I would encourage everyone to think about, and to talk to your communities about, the benefits of becoming a foster carer. The foster carers I have spoken to have certainly considered that to be a very important contribution that they have made to the community but also something that is very fulfilling for themselves.

ACT Together is taking a very proactive approach in advertising across all kinds of media and to families of all kinds—a rainbow of families if you like—across our community. We welcome all types of families to be foster carers in our diverse community.

MRS KIKKERT: Minister, how many children in the ACT are currently awaiting suitable foster carers and how is the government providing for their needs in the meantime?

MS STEPHEN-SMITH: I thank Mrs Kikkert for her supplementary question. There is a process of identifying: some foster carers go through training and await a suitable placement. Sometimes children are placed with carers on a short-term basis with existing foster carers until other carers are available. Sometimes children have to go into residential care if there is no immediate care placement available.

I will take the specifics of how many children are currently awaiting a permanent placement, although that terminology in itself may prove to be interesting in this context. I will take the detail of the question on notice.

MS LAWDER: Minister, what specific steps is the ACT government taking to satisfy the urgent and growing need for foster carers, and what has Barnardos told you about the reasons for the shortage of foster carers?

MS STEPHEN-SMITH: I thank Ms Lawder for her supplementary question. Recruitment of foster carers is an ongoing process and Barnardos is very actively out in the community recruiting foster carers and advertising in a wide range of media, holding forums and getting the community engaged in the conversation about the benefits of becoming a foster carer.

We have been very open; and we were in making the record commitment of almost \$44 million in the most recent budget in child protection and out of home care. We were very open and clear that in part that was a commitment to increased demand across the child protection system. That, in part, in turn, is a feature or a consequence of increased awareness about the impact of family violence on children and young people. As we increase awareness, we increase the recording of those concerns and we need to respond to that. This government has responded to that with a record investment of almost \$44 million in child protection and out of home care in this budget.

Health—regional aeromedical services

MS CODY: My question is to the Minister for Police and Emergency Services. Could the Minister please update the Assembly on how the new Toll aeromedical service has performed since it began in April 2017?

MR GENTLEMAN: I thank Ms Cody for her question and her interest in safety for all Canberrans. I was very pleased to officially launch the new SouthCare Toll rescue

helicopter in July. I can today update the Assembly that, since the service began in April, it has conducted 154 individual missions. I am pleased that the ACT government's contribution of \$1.4 million per annum to this service continues to provide this important medical care to the ACT and southern New South Wales communities.

MS CODY: Could the minister please advise how the ACT government has recognised community support to the SouthCare trust in transitioning to this new service?

MR GENTLEMAN: The aeromedical service has received overwhelming support over 19 years from the entire community, including sponsors, volunteers, donors and supporters. As we welcome a new era for the service with the transition to the new arrangement with Toll, I would like again to acknowledge and say thank you to everyone who has contributed to the service over the years, particularly volunteers. I include Russ and Dana in this number.

On 19 July 2017 I hosted a number of members from the SouthCare trust fund board, the operating company and the Emergency Services Agency here at the Assembly, during which time the final payment of \$1.3 million was formally handed over from the trust fund to the operating company. I was pleased to unveil a plaque which will be installed at the trust fund facility in Hume, which recognises the selfless support of trust fund members over the past 19 years.

MS ORR: Could the minister provide additional information on how we cooperate with New South Wales in providing regional aeromedical services?

MR GENTLEMAN: I thank Ms Orr for her supplementary. The ACT and New South Wales governments have a long history of close collaboration on health and emergency services. The cross-border model between ACT and New South Wales on aeromedical retrieval and rescue operations has been operating well since the service was established in 1998.

I am pleased to inform the Assembly that the relationship with New South Wales via the operating company remains strong and we will continue to work together to ensure that the service continues to do so and do the best possible job for both ACT and New South Wales residents.

Energy—renewables

MS ORR: My question is to the Minister for Climate Change and Sustainability. Minister, how is the ACT government supporting our local entrepreneurs and innovative energy start-ups to ensure that the ACT remains at the forefront of the transition to carbon neutrality?

MR RATTENBURY: In the broad the ACT government, through its policy commitment to 100 per cent renewable electricity, has positioned the ACT as being a highly innovative jurisdiction when it comes to renewable energy and to encouraging

and promoting the development of that industry here in the ACT. That reputation is starting to spread. Industry is talking the ACT up. Various ministers, when they travel, are taking the opportunity to promote the ACT as being a centre of excellence when it comes to renewable energy.

Specifically, the ACT government has the renewable energy innovation fund, which was established as a result of the local investment commitments made during the large-scale feed-in tariff auction, where funds were set aside specifically to ensure that resources were available to promote new and upcoming companies here in the ACT and provide a source of funds. A series of grants are available under that program.

I was very pleased just last week to participate in an event over at the ACT's renewable energy hub, which distributed the latest round of grants under that project. There were about 10 grants given out under the two streams of funding. They went to a range of small ACT innovators who are taking bold steps to develop technology and to get their businesses underway.

Examples are some well-known companies such as Reposit Power and ITP Thermal here in the ACT, through to others that are less well known, such as an organisation called Solcast which is developing a world-leading service for forecasting power output at large solar farms. It is an excellent array of companies, which are doing innovative work here in the ACT. I am particularly pleased that they are using Canberra as their base.

MS ORR: Minister, can you detail some of the recipients of the recently announced renewable energy innovation fund direct grants and the new renewable stream of Innovation Connect, giving a bit more information on them?

MR RATTENBURY: As I mentioned, there are a couple of companies that perhaps many of us have heard of, but others that are new and emerging as well.

Beast Solutions are a Canberra energy consultancy. Out of the grant they received through the renewable energy innovation fund, they will develop a demonstration project at Ginninderry that will capture emissions from waste to generate renewable energy.

Ecospectral are a Canberra company whose BRIM system can reduce energy operating costs and emissions in buildings. They will develop and establish a pilot site with a view to global commercialisation for version 2 of their software and operating systems.

We saw PV Lab Australia, a Canberra-based company that will develop an online service, or app, to provide quality reports on the most commonly used solar panel brands and models, often in consumer installations. Their view is that with more players in the market, quality control issues are now a factor, and they are looking at providing solutions there.

In the innovation stream, there is also a group called Arcturus Dynamics. They will develop a hydrogen fuel cell power system designed to deliver greater energy density than currently available lithium ion battery technology.

So we see quite a diverse range of proposals here. As I said earlier, it is exciting to see that these companies are not only undertaking innovative projects but using Canberra as a base, drawing on the combination of the significant research taking place in our universities and now, through the provision of things like these grants and the renewable energy innovation hub, the amount of expertise that is growing here in the territory.

MS CHEYNE: Minister, how are the renewal energy innovation fund direct grants and the renewables stream of Innovation Connect aimed at ensuring that the ACT meets its commitment to achieving carbon neutrality by 2015?

MR RATTENBURY: The sorts of projects that are being worked on are really the next generation when it comes to carbon emission reduction projects. From some of the examples I have given today we can see that these are the sorts of technologies that in the future will help us move away from fossil fuel requirements into renewal energy sources. We will see greater efficiency when it comes to the use of electricity through a range of these projects.

I was particularly excited about one of the projects, which is designed to rapidly reduce the costs of concentrated thermal power. It is a technology that has been floating around for quite some years now but so far nobody has managed to take it to the commercialisation stage because of the cost profile. It is great to see a Canberra-based innovator who has what appears to be an excellent idea on how to move this forward.

What we will see is that these projects will have application not only here in the territory but they will also have global application. They will assist not only this community but communities right across the planet in reducing their emissions outputs. Additionally, I believe that if these companies are successful, and we are very optimistic about their chances, they will bring jobs and diversification to the ACT economy, which can only benefit this city and provide the clean green jobs of the future that we want to see here in Canberra.

Mr Barr: Madam Speaker, I ask that further questions be placed on the notice paper.

Leave of absence

Motion (by **Mrs Dunne**) agreed to:

That leave of absence be granted to Mr Hanson, Mrs Jones and Mr Wall for family illness reasons.

Papers

Mr Gentleman presented the following papers:

Subordinate legislation (including explanatory statements unless otherwise stated)

Legislation Act, pursuant to section 64—

Domestic Animals Act—Domestic Animals (Cat Containment) Declaration 2017 (No 1)—Disallowable Instrument DI2017-199 (LR, 10 August 2017).

Race and Sports Bookmaking Act—Race and Sports Bookmaking (Sports Bookmaking Events) Determination 2017 (No 1)—Disallowable Instrument DI2017-200 (LR, 10 August 2017).

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.

Education Directorate—Part 1.9.

Debate resumed.

MR PETTERSSON (Yerrabi) (3.18): The 2017-18 ACT budget is a budget for all Canberrans. With this in mind, our Labor government is investing in Canberra's schools. A well-funded education system is essential for children to succeed. Our budget prioritises education. This is vital to ensure that ACT students are equipped to meet the challenges and opportunities of the 21st century.

Canberrans fundamentally believe in the fair go but this value is under threat. The current trend in rising economic inequality is a direct attack on these values. Education is a vital component in combating inequality. Well-funded public schools are essential to ensuring that our education system is not two-tiered or socially stratified. A good education should not depend on your postcode or on your parents' bank balance.

An equitably funded school system is vital to ensuring that disadvantaged students do not face further obstacles in the classroom. The ACT government has long been leading the way in this area, with Canberra schools being some of the best funded schools in this country. This budget will continue to ensure that all Canberra students can continue to flourish and grow through education. We know that, for students to

thrive, schools need to be well funded. Labor will always properly fund our schools. It is in our DNA. Successive Labor governments have helped develop the quality education system our city now enjoys.

On top of the \$1.2 billion that is delivered to our schools by the ACT government each year, the 2017-18 budget will deliver an extra \$210 million of new investment into the education system. This includes \$90 million over the next four years for education infrastructure.

This investment is particularly welcome in my electorate of Yerrabi. The census confirmed with hard data the huge amount of growth we have seen in my electorate, with Gungahlin tracking as the second-fastest growing region in all Australia. Our government is ensuring that our community can meet this demand without compromising on the quality of services. As the population has grown, public school enrolments have grown along with them. In Canberra's north, public school enrolments have grown by roughly 50 per cent over the past five years. This further demonstrates the high regard for our public school system.

But this increase in demand needs to be met with an increase in supply, and to achieve this we will invest \$24 million into Gungahlin schools. This money will go directly towards expanding school capacity at Harrison, Gold Creek, Neville Bonner Primary School and Palmerston District Primary School. In addition to these expansions, the government is exploring options for a new school in east Gungahlin to continue to meet the needs of the growing population.

This is a government that understands that it is important for children and their families that they have a good local school that is close to home. We also understand that schools do not just educate children. They form integral parts of the community, with the infrastructure and assets being utilised by various community and sporting groups. That is why the 2017-18 budget will increase the scope of the proposed north Gungahlin School so that it includes a community oval, which is due to open in 2019. The government will be investing almost \$2 million in this asset, an acknowledgement that it is vital that we support our suburbs with community assets along with basic necessities.

As a local member for Yerrabi and someone who campaigned last year on the basis of Labor's commitment to quality local schools, it fills me with enormous pride to see this government delivering on that commitment. And it is not just my electorate seeing the benefits of increased investment in education. Our government is committed to ensuring that every child in every suburb has access to a quality public school.

Enrolments right across Canberra have increased, with roughly 60 per cent of Canberra students now attending a public school. We will be meeting this demand with an additional \$210 million investment in our education system. The government will also create 25 new scholarships for Canberra teachers to study STEM and languages. We will support teachers to further their own learning so that they can pass their own passion and expertise on to their students. This will help equip young people for the jobs of the future, ensuring that they can compete on a global scale.

These developments will ensure that Canberra remains a nation leader in quality education for our students. Our government believes that all students deserve access to education. We are focused on ensuring that students with complex needs are not left behind. In response to the recommendations of the schools for all report commissioned by the government into this issue, we will help schools develop long-term educational outcomes for these students.

The budget provides an extra \$21.5 million in funding to implement the recommendations of the report. This will be in the form of increased teacher training and specialist staff and support services and by ensuring that our school buildings and playgrounds provide an inclusive environment for all students. On top of this, the budget provides \$1.1 million for specialised transport so that students with disabilities can get to and from school.

Our government knows that great schools cannot exist without the hard work of our dedicated and passionate teachers. That is why we are adding to the more than 3,300 teachers that are currently in the ACT. As a Labor government, we will always value and support the contributions that teachers make to the city.

This budget is a budget for all Canberrans. Properly funding our education system is essential to the future prosperity of Canberra. We want to ensure that all Canberra students are supported through their education to achieve their goals. This budget funds education infrastructure as well as specialised training for teachers and support staff.

It responds to the challenges and opportunities that the growth in our community affords us. Only a Labor government is committed to investing in our city's education system. This budget does just that. It ensures that our schools will continue to be well resourced so that Canberra students have access to all the opportunities that they deserve.

MR MILLIGAN (Yerrabi) (3.24): It was disappointing not to see any new initiatives in the budget for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students which would address the severe deficits experienced in both NAPLAN results and NAPLAN attendance. In fact, the targets for Indigenous students remain the same and have remained the same for the past five years: on average 66 points behind that of their non-Indigenous peers. As I have said previously, this government is not interested in closing the gap on under-achievement for our Indigenous community but in fact maintaining the status quo.

I note with interest that the South Australian government announced an additional \$67.5 million in their budget to help lift literacy and numeracy results for public school students. The intervention funds are dedicated to students not achieving expected standards.

What could we achieve here in the ACT if the government would support programs with a funding boost such as this? Programs would thrive on such funding, programs

such as the Indigenous education centre being opened at Campbell high, but it would appear with no additional funds, a program which includes the employment of two early career Aboriginal educators. That program also includes developing cultural awareness in students throughout the school. This, we know, can make a difference in overcoming racism, which continues to play a major role in poor educational outcomes for Indigenous children.

But the program is more than that. Drawing on existing research, the program will target engagement and attendance as two key steps to improving the learning outcomes of Indigenous students, many of whom lack the equivalent of two years of learning. This is where the funding focus should be for this government: supporting programs that increase the engagement and attendance both at schools and at NAPLAN, and supporting programs which will impact directly on closing the gap between Indigenous and non-Indigenous children.

It is appalling that all the director-general could say, when asked why they lagged in NAPLAN results, was that it was a good question. Her further response, that there is not any research, is insulting to the many researchers who have spent the past 40 years both understanding the problem and working on solutions.

I refer the minister and her directorate to the 2016 paper produced by the Productivity Commission on Indigenous primary school achievement, which will provide them with an excellent overview of the research available, successes and failures across Australia, including the ACT. The report includes a detailed time line of the many state and territory reviews that have been conducted over the past 40 years. Yes, it is a complex area but there really is no excuse for the response, especially in light of the University of Canberra's Chris Sera's subsequent comments that the outcomes could be turned around quickly, that is, according to Dr Sera, if the education department decided to do what is necessary.

We therefore call on the government to consider funding for the initiatives to close the gap in educational outcomes between Indigenous and non-Indigenous students. We agree with the estimates committee's recommendations that the ACT government set clear targets on closing the gap in percentage points for each year of NAPLAN and the report on those targets.

Proposed expenditure agreed to.

Environment, Planning and Sustainable Development Directorate—Part 1.10.

MS LEE (Kurrajong) (3.28): I welcome the opportunity to speak on this area of appropriations. The portfolio of Environment, Planning and Sustainable Development is a large one by any measure, and it is a directorate of growth.

From an actual staffing level in 2015-16 of 307 full-time equivalents, it has grown to 690 for the 2017-18 year. The notes to budget paper E indicate that the increase is due to various transfers, starting with parks and conservation in July 2016, the Asbestos Response Taskforce in November 2016 and land policy and urban renewal functions from 1 July 2017.

This year's budget invests \$2.5 million in measures to tackle environmental issues and protect nature reserves in the ACT as well as \$3.5 million to support the local community in measures that help address the impact of climate change. Climate change and sustainability has a budget of nearly \$25 million, with \$1.9 million directed to implementing the various actions outlined in the climate change adaptation strategy.

I appreciate the efforts that directorate staff make to prepare for estimates. I acknowledge that this is my first time but, given the short time set aside for some line items, some as short as 25 minutes, lengthy opening statements which take up half or more than half of the allocated time do not allow the committee, or the shadow ministers, much time to ask questions that require well prepared, substantive answers. This was particularly evident during the environment and planning hearings. I support the recommendation in the select committee's report that ministers—and, by extension, officials—restrict their opening remarks to five minutes.

I am disappointed that the government has chosen to agree to this only in principle. Estimates can be a gruelling marathon, particularly for the public servants, but it is a parliamentary mechanism designed to offer opportunities for non-executive members, particularly shadow ministers, to seek information from ministers and officials about their directorates, and it seems unfair and unnecessary for an opening statement to occupy over 60 per cent of the allocated time for a witness.

In questioning the Commissioner for Sustainability and the Environment, I was a little surprised to learn that while there is a staff of five, nine complaints were received and the commission did not routinely promote or encourage topics for investigation. The commissioner stated that she had not been directed by the minister, as required under the legislation, to investigate matters related to the water management strategy for 2011-15.

I was also a little surprised to learn that the commissioner played no part in consultation on the eastern grey kangaroo controlled native species management plan earlier this year. When questioned, she said:

We were not asked for a submission in respect of the management plan and we did not provide one.

The common thread from the commissioner's answers seems to be a lack of leadership from the government to enable the commission to work to its fullest potential.

I was keen, and I am sure this is a topic close to the hearts of a lot of Canberrans, to understand the impact of the ACT's plastic bag ban on the environment and what consideration had been given to the fact that, despite the ban, plastic bags were still a common item in ACT supermarkets, albeit purchased at a cost to the consumer. Unfortunately, all these questions were taken on notice, which eliminated any opportunity to ask for more details.

The ACT prides itself on having a plastic bag ban, but there has been no assessment of the ban's impact since 2014, and then it was little more than a community survey, and no assessment of the biodegradability of the apparently reusable plastic bags that bear a cost to the consumer. Nor has there been any audit done on retail outlets to assess whether they are playing by the rules. If we are serious about reducing the environmental waste plastic bags create in the ACT, we need to make sure that the ban is having a real impact and is not just a tokenistic attempt to confirm the ACT's environmental credentials. To that end, it was disappointing to see that the government did not seem to have a long-term plan for review of how well the ban is working.

I am pleased that there is a recommendation in the committee report for the office of the commissioner to re-examine its role and functions to ensure best practice and effective use of resources for review of environment matters which are important to all Canberrans. I am also pleased that the government has accepted this recommendation, and I look forward to the minister providing an update to the Assembly on this review.

Going back to the kangaroo cull more generally, this year was the first under the new management plan. Officials advised that the cull number had been set at 2,600, and that while many people questioned why the carcasses were not used for meat, there had been little interest from the market. However, animal refuges, the RSPCA and the national zoo seem possible destinations that could utilise more than just the 12 to 15 that are used for fox baiting.

Representing an electorate that borders many nature reserves, I have been asked what strategies the government uses to maintain or reduce the number of kangaroos in areas like Black Mountain, Red Hill and Mount Ainslie. I have first-hand experience of confronting large mobs on Red Hill and I can tell you that it was not the friendliest of meetings. I am sure Minister Rattenbury will agree with me, having encountered a nasty one on a bike ride. I have written to the minister asking about the government's plans for managing kangaroo numbers in urban areas, and I look forward to his response.

The officials acknowledged that shooting was the most effective way to manage numbers but also proffered:

Presumably at some time in the future we could have a situation where we would just be using fertility control ...

Given that we cull fewer than 3,000 kangaroos a year, and the cost so far for so few to be vaccinated, it is questionable whether this is a realistic forecast. I am pleased that the government has accepted the committee recommendation to review the program.

While renewable energy was listed for examination, the discussions were somewhat restricted, given the relevant minister's absence. This is no criticism, of course, of Minister Gentleman, as he stepped up and did his best to answer all questions put to

him. However, the fact is that we do have a separate Minister for Climate Change and Sustainability, and I am sure that the Canberra public would have liked to have had answers directly from the minister in charge of this important issue relating to the environment.

There was much discussion about current contractual arrangements for wind and solar power and the costs that will ultimately be borne by ACT energy consumers. The costs become academic, as does the argument of whether the source is renewable or not if power is not available.

Recent public commentary on renewable energy targets would suggest that while the ACT is on track to meet its 2020 renewable energy goal, the longer term is not so assured. Officials confirmed that “There is no policy commitment beyond 2020.” And when you factor in transfer from gas to electricity across a number of energy uses, and projected population growth, the renewable target becomes harder to deliver without increased investment. This becomes more problematic when we hear reports that future investment may be in doubt because it is becoming increasingly uneconomical for the private sector. The framework is yet to be developed, and there is less than three years to get it sorted.

Earlier this year, in response to a motion brought by Minister Rattenbury, the Canberra Liberals supported the 2020 target but firmly put on the record our ongoing concern that the government stay vigilant on reliability and cost to consumers. Reliability becomes more than a concern when officials admit that load shedding is possible this summer. And in question time last Wednesday, 16 August, the minister once again acknowledged that “the prospect of that occurring again this summer is a real one”.

The budget commits significant moneys to water initiatives. The ACT healthy waterways program is a \$93.5 million joint initiative between the ACT and federal governments. The H2OK program, included in this initiative, has in the past few days announced grant recipients for innovative ways of stormwater management, which had not been decided at the time of estimates. While the grants are relatively small, I look forward to seeing what benefits they deliver and what take-up there is by other households and land users. I congratulate all the grant recipients.

The ACT water strategy, *ACT water strategy 2014-44: striking the balance*, sets out how the ACT government will manage the territory’s water resources over the next 30 years to meet our urban and environmental needs and regional responsibilities. It covers the full breadth of water management activities in the ACT, including catchment management, stormwater and flood management, water supply and services, water for the environment, recreational water use and public health. We heard from officials that in one of the targets, water use reduction, the ACT is ahead of schedule. It is important that Canberrans continue to respect our waterways and manage this important, finite resource responsibly.

In summary, the environment portfolio is, no doubt, an important one. It commands significant amounts of ACT and federal taxpayer dollars; the directorate employs significant numbers of people; we are lucky to be surrounded by great natural beauty; and Canberrans take their responsibility for our environment seriously.

The Canberra Liberals believe the estimates process is important. Not only does it give non-executive members—and, through the public hearings, the broader community—a unique opportunity to find out more about the government's work in various portfolio areas, but also, because it is an integral part of a transparent, accountable government, it allows scrutiny from the community that elected it to represent them.

I know that I was not alone in preparing and asking questions at the public hearings and following up with a significant number of questions on notice. I thank the officials for their hard work in preparing for, and their attendance at, the public hearings to answer a wide range of questions on this important portfolio area.

MR COE (Yerrabi—Leader of the Opposition) (3.38): The Canberra Liberals would again like to emphasise our commitment to integrity in urban planning and development. The Suburban Land Agency is one of the two new territory bodies that will replace the troubled LDA. While the City Renewal Authority is focused on renewal only in declared precincts, the SLA has power over every other planning aspect and development within the territory, both urban and greenfield residential areas.

The functions of the SLA include buying and selling leases, ensuring a mixture of public and private housing, increasing the supply of affordable and community housing, meeting housing targets, and carrying out the development of land. My colleague the deputy leader of the Liberals, Nicole Lawder, will be speaking further on particular planning aspects.

While the provision of additional funds for oversight is one small step in the right direction for the SLA, there are still serious concerns over the governance arrangements as they stand with the SLA and the City Renewal Authority. A key question remains: how will the initiative ensure stronger governance if the measures that were proposed by the Canberra Liberals a couple of months back were voted down by Labor and the Greens? After all, the CRA and the SLA are in effect the LDA in everything but name. Pretty much the same governance arrangements that were in place for the LDA are in place for the new organisations.

The Auditor-General found that the LDA board and management ignored the procurement framework set out in the notifiable instrument, the land acquisition policy framework, and instead relied upon their own internal interpretation. In effect, a notifiable instrument was an insufficient governance mechanism. I repeat: in effect, the notifiable instrument was an insufficient governance mechanism.

As evidenced in the investigations by the Auditor-General, ignoring the procurement framework led to actions that seriously undermined the integrity of the government and came at great cost to the taxpayer. The contempt that some in the LDA had towards the framework led to the procurement issues surrounding the Glebe Park and West Basin issues, and it has also, seemingly, extended to the rural purchases currently under investigation by the Auditor-General.

By their own admission, the board and management felt comfortable disregarding a notifiable instrument. After that contempt, the only avenue left to ensure compliance in these two new authorities is to enshrine new governance arrangements in the framework of the legislation. These governance measures are fundamental to ensure integrity in acquisitions, and they also must set expectations for each authority.

The Canberra Liberals were the only party to put forward amendments to the City Renewal Authority and Suburban Land Agency Bill to enshrine in legislation the procurement frameworks for these two authorities. The Canberra Liberals were the only party to make a genuine attempt to address the issues that the Auditor-General found. The Canberra Liberals were the only party to endeavour to impart integrity into the new authorities with legislated governance arrangements.

Unfortunately, those opposite and those on the crossbench, or supposedly on the crossbench, disagreed. The new procurement framework is now entirely based on ministerial discretion. Canberrans can have no assurance whatsoever that there is integrity in land acquisitions in the ACT.

As Minister Berry admitted in her statement this morning, there is still no disallowable instrument setting out the thresholds or acquisition requirements. We are two months in—this legislation has been current for two months—and despite the issues that were highlighted by the Auditor-General, despite the fact that the Auditor-General had another live inquiry, there are still no thresholds or acquisition requirements.

The amendment requiring these directions was put forward by the Chief Minister as an alternative to the Canberra Liberals' amendment legislating the land acquisition framework. The requirement for these directions is not a surprise. The legislation was debated in early May. Why, then, has the government allowed the SLA and the CRA to operate for nearly two months without these directions?

Under the current administrative arrangements, there are two ministers associated with the SLA: the Minister for Housing and Suburban Development and the Minister for Urban Renewal. The Chief Minister is responsible for the CRA. However, under the arrangements, the Treasurer is responsible for directions relating to authorisation thresholds for land acquisitions for both the CRA and the SLA. We have ministerial responsibility for these authorities spanning four portfolios, yet no minister has thought it important enough to actually ensure that there are directions for land acquisitions.

The Auditor-General has undertaken two investigations specifically around acquisitions. The amendment put forward by the Chief Minister says:

The Minister must make directions relating to the acquisition of land by the authority or agency.

This is one of the most integral sections in the act.

The new authorities have been operating for almost two months. For almost two months there have been no guidelines whatsoever regarding any acquisitions. I hope the planning minister will be able to clarify for us today in his response whether the ACT government has made any acquisitions since 1 July. Given that there are no guidelines in place, because the Greens and Labor voted to take them out, there really are no safeguards in place whatsoever right now with regard to land acquisitions.

The Auditor-General exposed the widespread practice of officials conducting business verbally with little documentation to justify their decisions. The board admitted that they did not see the notifiable instrument, a legislative instrument, as binding. Currently, there is not even a legislative instrument for the board to ignore, let alone for the board to enforce.

Unfortunately, there is an entrenched cultural problem that cannot be fixed by a name change. Simply splitting the organisation is not enough. Therefore, we call on the minister today to clarify when exactly the new determination will be made and whether any acquisitions have been made since 1 July.

MR GENTLEMAN (Brindabella—Minister for Police and Emergency Services, Minister for the Environment and Heritage, Minister for Planning and Land Management and Minister for Urban Renewal) (3.46): I thank members for their input to date. Madam Speaker, thanks for the opportunity to outline some of the ways my planning and land management, urban renewal and environment and heritage portfolios will make the most of their budget allocation this year to help make the ACT a better place. As you will appreciate, the budget allocation covers a multitude of policies, plans and projects. Work ranges from the macro, such as managing Namadgi National Park and planning for our suburbs, to the micro, such as protecting threatened species and approving development for individual houses.

I will use this opportunity to highlight a few of the projects in my portfolio that help our city grow and develop and our environment to be protected and conserved. Our environment division helps protect and improve the integrity of our air, land, water and biodiversity. The division includes the conservation research, natural resource management and water sections, environmental protection policy and the ACT parks and conservation service.

As our climate changes the threat of bushfire looms ever greater. The budget provides just over \$3.1 million for three years to further improve our capacity to access and fight bushfires, particularly in remote areas, and improve our capacity to undertake

prescribed burns to reduce fuel loads. We will upgrade the existing fire trail network in the northern clear range and Naas Valley fire trails in Namadgi National Park so the heavy tankers and earthmoving machinery needed for fire suppression and hazard reduction have access. Fire control lines will be constructed to help us protect the Cotter catchment, Bendora water supply and dam infrastructure, bogs and fens—including the internationally listed Ginini Flats wetland complex—threatened species and significant heritage sites. Closer to the city's edge, the parks and conservation service undertakes extensive fire management activities. Techniques include grazing, slashing, prescribed burning, vegetation control and fire trail maintenance.

In the 2017-18 budget and program, the government will continue to protect native species and their habitat through environmental improvement work, and the budget provides for measures to tackle environmental issues and protect nature reserves in the ACT. The eradication of exotic pests and diseases and the protection of our native species through initiatives such as weed control are crucial to environmental protection.

To further guard against the spread of pests and diseases, the government is improving biosecurity controls at the Canberra international airport. This includes funding to develop enhanced capacity and capability to respond to the higher risk of exotic pests and disease incursions following the introduction of international flights in the ACT. This funding will boost the existing baseline funding for invasive weed control to \$2.1 million a year, allowing us to meet the goals of the ACT weed strategy 2009-19.

Our territory is steeped in Indigenous, European, natural and geological history. This heritage is protected by ACT heritage and the heritage council. The importance of acknowledging and protecting our heritage is showcased each year by the hugely successful Canberra and Region Heritage Festival, which attracted more than 20,000 people this year, and the Canberra Tracks program of self-drive tours of heritage sites. Through the better infrastructure fund the government has committed \$50,000 to upgrade and expand the Canberra Tracks app and signage in recognition of the track's popularity. In addition, \$86,000 has been allocated to develop a conservation management plan for the Aboriginal heritage places managed by the parks and conservation service.

More than \$350,000 is available for the annual heritage grants program which supports a wide range of community projects that protect our heritage places and objects. The grants are the primary source of funding for individuals and community organisations to record, conserve and celebrate the history and heritage of the ACT.

The planning and land management portfolio has a very wide remit, from developing planning policy at ACT-wide level to policy around land supply, urban renewal, civil infrastructure, affordable housing and building. It implements the Territory Plan and houses the office of the surveyor-general and land information, the asbestos response task force and the public housing renewal task force.

If we are to get the best outcomes from our metropolitan planning we need a better understanding of the shopping needs of our growing population, including the need for more choice and competition. We are therefore investing \$575,000 over four years in new retail modelling software and up-to-date surveys of floor space in our centres and shopping demand patterns. The initiative will help us integrate our shopping and employment centres into our modern transport network so they can better complement each other.

A quick glance around the ACT indicates how much the government is doing in urban renewal. While the new Suburban Land Agency and City Renewal Authority are taking the lead, the planning directorate has a significant role. The government is progressing the sale of the asset recycling initiative sites, with sale proceeds to be invested into the light rail. Importantly, these urban renewal projects will also contribute to a diversity of housing choice for Canberrans with existing urban areas. The Environment, Planning and Sustainable Development Directorate with support from the Suburban Land Agency is managing the release of the asset recycling initiative sites in Red Hill, Griffith, Narrabundah and Strathgordon. The Red Hill precinct is scheduled for release and settlement in 2017-18. The Stuart Flats in Griffith, Gowrie Court in Narrabundah and Strathgordon Court in Lyons are programmed for release and settlement in 2018-19.

Our colleagues in the Community Services Directorate are managing the relocation of public housing tenants. After an extensive consultation process with the community, the Red Hill estate development plan will deliver high quality urban renewal development and public realm, encouraging a diverse range of housing typologies, including single residential detached dwellings, single residential terrace dwellings, and apartments. It is intended that the specific controls identified in the planning control plan will be uplifted into the Red Hill precinct code through a technical amendment to the Territory Plan.

The asbestos response task force continues to provide a coordinated and compassionate response to the 1,023 home owners and their families directly affected by the Mr Fluffy legacy through the loose-fill asbestos insulation eradication scheme. I am pleased to say the goal to rid our suburbs of Mr Fluffy is progressing well, with the eradication scheme ahead of schedule and under budget. The estimated net cost of the scheme has decreased by \$59 million, from \$366 million to \$307 million, reflecting strong sales results and the efficiencies gained as the scheme has progressed, particularly savings through the demolition program.

Some 1,006 home owners participating in the scheme have accepted offers to sell their properties at a total cost of \$663 million to the government. Over 650 owners have received stamp duty concessions totalling \$15.9 million to help purchase another home or buy back their remediated block, and 990 assistance grants totalling \$11.4 million have been paid to help people relocate. Strong sales results are being achieved. Through 26 auctions that offered 408 blocks, 370 have sold with a value of approximately \$245 million. In the coming months the taskforce will continue its ongoing and regular engagement with former home owners and tenants, neighbours, and the wider Canberra community. It will also focus on properties classified as complex, including unit titled properties or those that share a wall.

I have some notes for Ms Berry's portfolio as well. The Suburban Land Agency commenced on 1 July 2017, and the appointed board will provide a statement of intent, once developed, to the Treasurer for tabling in the Legislative Assembly as soon as practicable in accordance with section 62(3)(b) of the Financial Management Act.

The SLA is responsible for delivering the ACT government's suburban development program, including urban renewal in established town centres and suburbs. The objects of the agency are to encourage and promote inclusive communities through the delivery of people-focused neighbourhoods. Importantly, this includes the delivery of suburban developments which support affordable housing, a safe and healthy population, social inclusion, housing choice, and environmental sustainability. Some 77 FTE were transferred from the LDA to the SLA. The functions transferred include executive, project delivery teams for urban projects and greenfields, valuations and estate management, sales and marketing, and finance support. Functions for governance, ministerial and cabinet coordination, human resources, due diligence and predevelopment assessments are now provided by the Environment, Planning and Sustainable Development Directorate.

The government function has been strengthened by centralising the function within EPSDD to provide a greater focus on oversight on the government framework for the SLA. The agency is expected to generate \$2.8 billion in land sales revenue over the four-year period from 2017-18 to 2020-21. The agency is expected to generate a return to government from dividends and income tax equivalent to \$1 billion over the four-year period from 2017-18 to 2020-21.

The ACT government's population and economy are growing strongly, and the government's indicative land release program is an important facilitator to enable sustainable growth. Our government is committed to keeping and building upon Canberra's strong liveability. 2017-18 to 2020-21 include land releases in three greenfield estates across Canberra. These estates include releases from Gungahlin to both sides of the Molonglo River and to the west of Belconnen.

Our overall residential land release target is 16,250 dwellings over the next four years. The ILRP also delivers opportunities for new development and renewal along the entire length of the light rail network, with commercial and mixed-use opportunities in Gungahlin town centre and a number of renewal precincts from Northbourne Avenue to the city.

Madam Speaker, the key initiatives I have talked about give a snapshot of the work being done in my planning, land management, urban renewal and environment and heritage portfolios. I am confident the budget allocation will contribute to making our city safer, more liveable and more attractive to residents and investors. Our environment will be better protected for the communities and species that inhabit it and the people who enjoy it the most.

MS LAWDER (Brindabella) (3.58): The big directorate is something that we could talk on for hours, so you will be pleased to know I will be trying to keep my comments relatively brief. We have spoken in this place many times about the fact that good governance requires good consultation with the community, and I have pointed out that the government has been lacking in this regard. The budget seems to have materialised through very little consultation. I will put a few specific examples of that.

Firstly, that the government came out and announced an increase of 300 per cent to the lease variation charge on units without consulting with the property industry and the building industry is an example of the contempt in which the government holds major stakeholders and the ratepayer in general. To blindside the Master Builders Association, the Property Council and the real estate sector, as well as the general population, shows that these changes as just an exorbitant tax grab, one that would not have been supported by industry.

The big new tax increase of the LVC proves that this ACT Labor government is all talk and no action. There is silence from them about how this will affect the property industry. Young people will be worse off because of the big new tax on new units. It will be a big new tax on first homebuyers, on downsizers and on those who want to age in their own home and perhaps have a dual occupancy on their block. We have the situation where many Canberrans are being locked out of the housing market as it is, and now the government has acted in this budget to increase the lease variation charge for each new unit by 300 per cent.

This change encourages people to build and retain. It does not encourage people to build and sell or build and move. It does not encourage more land being put to market. Instead it encourages the building of McMansions, to quote my Assembly colleague Ms Le Couteur.

The government did not consult with the community. This was quite clear on the community day in the estimates committee hearing. They did not bother speaking with those on the ground, those in the know, those who will see and understand how these changes will impact on the sector.

To illustrate the point, prior to this budget a dual occupancy built on schedule 1 land would have incurred a lease variation charge of \$7,500. In the last six years, this has seen 1,368 dwellings being developed. Meanwhile a dual occupancy built on schedule 2 land incurs a lease variation charge of around \$35,000, give or take. In the past five years, 244 dwellings have been built on schedule 2 land.

It is clear to see from this that increasing the LVC will make development far less viable. Despite this, the government decided to create a dual occupancy LVC of \$60,000 in this example. We have already seen the number of rushed development applications that were put in since the budget announcement from developers trying to beat the increase, because they knew that if they did not beat the increase their developments would no longer be financially viable.

Too often we see policy on the run like this. The government have had to backtrack on this change already, making conditional arrangements for the next six months and a review in 18 months. Had they done their job from the start, they would not have had to backtrack. Good policy happens when the government consults. We have said this over and over.

Another example, on a much smaller scale, is what I like to call fishing-gate: an item in the budget that I think the government hoped no one would ever notice. It was an announcement of the closure of the southern gate entrance to Googong Dam. After the announcement in the budget, which the government hoped no one would notice, they realised that such a change might affect the people of Canberra after all, and at the beginning of the month they backtracked once again. It was in the *Queanbeyan Age* of 3 August that the government had backed down on this particular issue.

This attempt at closure of one of the gates again showed a government that does not consult and does not take the time to understand how the changes it makes to the budget might not seem like much but will actually have an impact on people's lives. These examples prove that the government does not care and is out of touch with the average person.

There are a few specific recommendations from the estimates report that I am very keen for the government to take careful note of. For example, recommendation 89 is that the ACT government take steps to ensure that closed development applications are accessible online. In that way, people can see what is happening on their streets. A lot of people do not look at the development signs. They want to know what is going on once construction starts. Making these closed DAs available online after work has started, after the approval has been granted, gives people the opportunity to be informed at any stage. I think it was a good suggestion of one of my colleagues. I am afraid I do not recall who, but it was a good suggestion.

Mr Parton: Probably me.

MS LAWDER: I doubt that very much. But it was a good suggestion, and I am keen to see it implemented.

Recommendation 94 is that the ACT government continue to keep the Dickson community informed on the progress of consultation and planning for section 72, Dickson. I feel this is very important in the light of other controversial changes the government snuck through as a technical amendment to allow social housing on CFZ land. It is understandable that Dickson residents are concerned about how little the government may consult and communicate with them on the use of this community land.

Recommendations 91, 92, and 93: the government's decision to discontinue the indicators around master plans; there are still master plans that have not been finalised: the Woden master plan, at the time of the estimates report and the estimates hearings, and the draft, draft, draft Tharwa Village Plan. There are a few too many

drafts there. But there will be no more accountability indicators reported on in the future. The government wants to stop reporting on the completion and publication of master plans, despite the fact that, as at the start of this financial year, some had not been completed.

Finally, on heritage, in the past few months as shadow minister for heritage I have learned a lot about heritage sites in our city, from Indigenous sites to Federation homesteads, and more recently about heritage trains. The other thing I have noticed over the past few months is the lack of concern the government seems to demonstrate for Canberra's heritage and for the people who work in this space.

The government has made considerable changes to the Heritage Act without consultation. I know that because I consulted with many organisations in the space about proposed changes, and they said they had not been consulted. Remember the example that it has taken 15 years to finally make a heritage assessment on Oaks Estate and that the government has never communicated the reasons for such a lengthy delay.

So when I looked at the budget I was not surprised to see that the budget lacks any real accountability indicators in heritage areas—no indicators that provide any real clarity about the number of nominations received or assessed, or the time taken to assess them. I hope the government will listen to estimates committee recommendation number 95 to implement such indicators. Recommendation 95 said:

The committee recommends that the ACT government include more accountability indicators for heritage matters in future budgets, so as to provide a greater level of clarity about the number of nominations received, assessed, and the length of time taken to assess them.

I have enjoyed meeting many people who work in the heritage area over the past few months, from the National Trust to academics at our universities. We are fortunate to have so much talent in this area. It is a shame that one of the complaints I hear the most is that the government does not engage with them and give consideration to their views. The government feels that it has the knowledge and expertise in heritage, not those who work in the field and deal with heritage issues on the ground.

Hopefully this coming year is the opportunity for the government to turn this around. I hope the government will take on board estimates committee recommendation number 96, to engage with heritage stakeholders. (*Second speaking period taken.*) That recommendation says:

The committee recommends that the ACT government engage more with the ACT heritage stakeholders and give consideration to their input into heritage decisions.

To conclude, this is a budget that takes away certainty and ignores the wishes of the community. The budget will have a negative effect on many in our community: first homebuyers, downsizers, mountain bike riders, anglers, those who live near developments, those who are developing, those living near CFZ land, communities

still waiting for master plans to be completed, heritage stakeholders, and even people being relocated from public housing along the Northbourne Avenue corridor. I hesitate to mark them out separately because to me they are just members of our community and will be disadvantaged just as much as anyone else in our community. They are us, and we are them.

Each of these groups that have been negatively impacted would have been better off if the government had gone out and sought more advice from stakeholders. There is no need for so many groups to be negatively impacted. It is an example, here in the budget, of the arrogance of the government. I started today by saying that good governance requires good consultation with the community, and I do hope that this government will take that on board.

MS LE COUTEUR (Murrumbidgee) (4.10): As I said on Tuesday, the Greens welcome many budget wins for our policy agenda. My colleague Minister Rattenbury will talk about some of those that are in the areas he has portfolio responsibility for, so I will talk about other things.

I spoke about the Suburban Land Agency this morning after the ministerial statement, so I will not repeat my concerns. On the lease variation charge, I very much share the concerns of Ms Lawder. Some modelling was needed for this, and some consultation. There is a real possibility that it is not going to work in a way which is contrary to a more compact city, to what is described as “the missing middle”, but is going to work in a way that discourages infill. And it possibly will not even raise the amount of money the government thinks it will.

I spoke about that last week when we talked about the Treasury budget item, because while this possibly should have been considered under planning, it actually was considered under Treasury. In estimates we asked ACTPLA how they had been involved in the modelling for this. There was a very simple answer: they were not involved at all.

I also will not go through at length the relevant recommendations of the estimates report. In general, yes, the recommendations of the estimates report are very sound, and it would be great if the government adopted them all. I will go through just a couple of things which I would particularly like to highlight out of the huge range of work that EPSDD does.

First is the energy efficiency rating review. I am very pleased about this. Back in the Seventh Assembly, the first group that came to lobby me was a bunch of people who wanted to talk to me about EER schemes. This review is a parliamentary agreement item.

The energy efficiency rating scheme in Canberra has a lot of problems, one of which, as with so many other things, is enforcement issues. Energy efficiency ratings are done. We do not have much enforcement to see that they are done correctly, and we certainly have no enforcement to see that what is energy efficiency rated is what is actually built. We have heard many stories about insulation that was not installed and

double-glazed windows that in fact turned out not to be. One of the classic issues, I have always felt, is that the energy efficiency rating is done of the building in isolation, so the tree or the house to the north which is going to totally overshadow you is not in there. So we have some significant issues with how our EER system works.

We also have the significant issue of climatic change, which you have all heard me bang on about many times. Why it is relevant to this is that our energy efficiency ratings are rated against a certain climate. The climate that is being rated against is last century's climate; it is not the climate we have. The Bureau of Meteorology has done lots of work as to what is the most likely climate of the future. We can disagree about exactly how much it is going to change, and why it is changing, but I think it is clear to everybody that our climate is changing. It makes sense to build buildings for the expected future climate of Canberra, or even the climate of Canberra over this past decade, rather than the climate of Canberra for the past century.

The parliamentary agreement review is going to look specifically at rental properties, where we have significant issues with energy efficiency rating. This is particularly unfair. It tends to be the less well-off people who are renting, and they end up having huge energy bills because the houses and units they are living are cold and draughty.

Another issue is weeds. Weeds damage biodiversity and may well increase bushfire risk. The Greens are very pleased that an additional \$1.34 million has been allocated to weed control over two years. But this is over two years. This is short-term budget funding and it does not allow good ongoing management. We would like to see recurrent funding for weed control.

The other thing I want to bang on about, as I have done many times, is building quality and enforcement. This is something that there is a huge amount of community concern about: that we are not building properly and we are not enforcing what rules we have. The Greens welcome the three building reform budget initiatives, which I spoke about last week because, bizarrely, they were in revenue measures because we are increasing the building levy to fund them.

Building certification audits was a Greens election commitment. Certifiers will be audited once a year to ensure that they do the right thing. There will be more building audits, a better building inspection program, and the government intends to continue with regulatory system reform. These items both implement a parliamentary agreement item and the government's 2016 building reforms commitments. That is good.

But I was very disappointed with the government's response to estimates recommendation 22, that the ACT government review the priority of resourcing given to complaints about noncompliance with the approved DAs.

The government's response was:

Not Agreed.

In line with the Access Canberra Accountability Commitment and the supporting Building and Construction Services: Compliance Framework, Access Canberra has adopted a risk-based compliance approach to ensure that resources are targeted to where the risks of harm, unsafe practices or misconduct are the greatest, thereby strengthening capacity to take action where the community, workers and the environment are most at risk.

Access Canberra prioritises its actions based on a range of considerations, including the following:

- conduct that causes harm or risk to life, health or the environment;
- conduct that is systemic and is likely to have a detrimental effect on the community and/or the environment, and
- conduct that demonstrates a blatant disregard for the law.

On the basis of conversations about this not only in estimates but also in the annual reports, the impression I get is that Access Canberra is pretty much looking just at things that cause harm or risk to life and limb. I totally agree that that needs to be the number one priority. But I contend that non-adherence to DA conditions is systematic. I note that Ms Lawder is here also. Between the two of us, I am sure we could get a list together which would demonstrate that the word “systematic” is not unreasonable.

I also think that the conduct demonstrates blatant disregard for the law. Some of the things that I have seen photos of, you could not interpret in any way as being consistent with the DA as put in. It is simply blatant. It is systematic. If we are going to bother to have a planning system, and I do think we should continue to bother having a planning system, then we have to have some enforcement. We need to make, at the very least, an example of some of the more blatant problems. The whole system is becoming a bit of a joke. Builders know you can just build it and it will not really matter: you might get told off but that is the worst that is going to happen to you.

There are also gaps and concerns in relation to housing affordability. Mr Rattenbury’s budget reply speech identified that the government did not place sufficient emphasis on housing affordability. This, of course, is partly a planning issue.

Earlier this year I moved a motion about demonstration housing precincts. I think there is a real need for the government to take the lead on this and look at what we can build which will be more affordable and more environmentally sustainable. This is something that the Institute of Architects has called for. There has been the NEAT scheme, which got together a range of possible buildings to do this. I am very disappointed that the government has as yet not acted on this, and I call again on the government to act on this.

Trees is an area where we have not put enough focus and where more work is required from an EPSDD point of view. We need to make sure that our new housing developments have enough space for trees, whether they are on private land or on street verges. Both of these are being squashed, with an end result that there are fewer trees in our new areas.

We also need to ensure that, where there is new development, existing trees are retained wherever possible. We need to make sure that as infill happens we do not end up getting rid of all the trees in an area. We need the trees to be our lungs and to keep Canberra cool. (*Second speaking period taken.*)

In relation to rules that are not being adhered to that my constituents and others are concerned about, solar access is up there. They are concerned that when plans are submitted they are simply wrong. Incorrect information is given, and the certifier or ACTPLA do not notice it. Maybe the certifier in some instances does notice but figures it is not in their commercial interest to do anything about it. Regardless of that, I urge ACTPLA to review its processes internally, audit certifiers, review individual cases and revoke approvals.

We know that Canberra is a great place for building passive solar. In the winter in particular, we have good sunshine. We can keep our houses warm as long as we allow solar access. I am very concerned that the infill of Canberra is in some instances seriously reducing solar access and that the newer parts of Canberra are being built with very little regard to solar access. In fact, I went to a presentation from a developer recently and they told me how great it was because the building was facing east and west, which they told me with a straight face was the best orientation for solar access. So I think there is a huge need for education and enforcement of energy efficiency rules and solar access.

MS CHEYNE (Ginninderra) (4.22): We are the bush capital—loud and proud. Our access to nature and wildlife is one of our greatest assets, and the government is working hard to ensure that we make our bush areas safe and interesting places to visit, while protecting and supporting fragile natural ecosystems.

Every year over 4.5 million visitors come to Canberra to experience the bush capital. With such spectacular wildlife mere footsteps from the city, it is not surprising that tourism is one of the fastest growing industries in the territory. It accounts for 16,400 jobs and contributes over \$2 billion to our economy every year. In 2016 Labor promised to develop Canberra's ecotourism strategy to support more economic growth and create even more jobs. This included building a new visitor centre in Throsby.

This budget allocates \$162,000 for a grant to the woodland and wetlands trust for the design of a new Mulligans Flat ecotourism visitor centre. The centre will be a gateway to a mosaic of native flowers and a diverse array of birds and critters. The area hosts the recently reintroduced bettongs and quolls and the largest and most intact area of the critically endangered yellow box gum grassy woodland. I also commend the government for its continued efforts to protect the golden sun moth and natural temperate grassland in Belconnen by allocating \$112,000 to establish the status of Jarramlee nature reserve and Ginninderra Creek.

The government is also investing in more infrastructure projects within parks and conservation. In 2017-18 a total of \$629,000 will be allocated for repairing and increasing access to the Jerrabomberra wetlands education and community centre, Gibraltar Falls and Sheedys Creek playground. Infrastructure in these areas will be improved, as will access roads in rural and protected areas. We will receive new signage, and the second phase of the adaptive reuse of former ranger housing stock will be implemented.

Each of these initiatives will make our parks and wetlands even more interesting places to visit and ensure that visitors can continue to access the parks safely. I would also like to commend the government on its willingness to consult broadly with park user groups on issues regarding the management of, and access to, reserves, as recorded in its response to the estimates committee recommendation.

One of the greatest threats to our local wildlife and to our plant production and agriculture industries is the spread of exotic pests and disease. Eradicating pests and disease is much more cost effective than controlling them after they have been established. The government reduces the risk of pests and diseases coming to the ACT from other regions by contributing to a national cost-sharing arrangement.

This budget also allocates \$180,000 for contribution to the 10-year eradication programme for red imported fire ants in south-east Queensland. These ants cause severe environmental, economic and social damage. In the United States fire ants have caused 85 deaths by anaphylactic shock and annually cost the country an estimated \$7 billion. So you can see why it is important to contribute to that.

We must also be on guard against pests and diseases from overseas. As promised, the government has attracted more international airlines to Canberra International Airport. Within two years the airport expects to receive daily passenger flights and cargo-only aircraft. Each will contain 100 tonnes of freight. With this, there will be an inevitable increase in the risk of exotic pest and disease incursion. This risk threatens both the ACT and surrounding regions.

The government is proactively addressing this issue by allocating \$171,000 annually to provide a senior biosecurity officer to manage the heightened risks. The commonwealth Department of Agriculture and Water Resources, in recognition of the value of this initiative, will contribute an annual grant of \$9,500. This total funding will help us develop the expertise to appropriately address the increased biosecurity risk.

The risk of bushfires also threatens our wildlife areas and nearby homes. It has been a dry winter, and the government is working hard to ensure that we are ready for the upcoming bushfire season. We have already completed 95.9 per cent of ACT parks and conservation's bushfire operations plan for this financial year. We have removed fire fuels through initiatives such as prescribed burns and strategic grazing and have added new firefighting vehicles and remote, portable weather stations.

Several inquiries into bushfire response have stressed the importance of improving quick access to unplanned fires with the appropriate equipment. This budget allocates over \$3 million to improve our capacity for fire suppression and fire hazard reduction. The initiative will involve widening the existing fire trail network in the ACT, upgrading the Northern Clear Range and Naas Valley fire trails within strategic areas in the south of Namadgi national park and feasibility assessments and construction on the east-west strategic break fire trail and the Booth Range to Naas link fire trail within the Cotter Catchment. These projects will allow better access for heavy tankers and earthmoving machinery and form a better firebreak as a defence during prescribed burning.

With this budget, the ACT government continues to demonstrate its commitment to supporting sustainable economic growth while protecting our wide variety of wildlife and preserving Canberra's unique character as the bush capital.

MR PARTON (Brindabella) (4.27): This appropriation contains the funds for the public housing renewal program, as depicted in budget paper 3 and budget statement E. The budget papers tell us that this government's total investment in the public housing renewal program will be \$608 million, with \$295 million of capital spending earmarked for this purpose in the next four years.

The provision of 1,288 replacement dwellings for residents of older public housing, much of it on or around the Northbourne Avenue corridor, is, it must be said, a pretty impressive objective. This quantum far exceeds the size of a lot of country towns and it is no mean feat. The precincts being vacated are reasonably old and I have no doubt that residents have welcomed the prospect of more comfortable housing with better facilities and energy usage.

Whether they have welcomed an uplift from the centre of Canberra, where they are close to major employment centres, transport hubs, shopping complexes and community support organisations, is far less apparent at this stage. A large number of people who are used to having close access to our city's hub are being dispersed into locations and situations they will be quite unaccustomed to, and many other homeless people in the Northbourne precinct could very well be and, indeed, from the sounds that we are getting back from the ground, are being displaced.

The government has stated on many occasions that it was committed to a salt and pepper approach to the distribution of public housing. Successive ministers have defined the nature of this. For example, if we go back to 2014 Mr Rattenbury, in this context, said:

The approach now is to develop sites that tend to be more a dozen or perhaps 15 units together, and the experience is that they are much more effective. They provide a better living environment and, of course, as you have touched on—

continuing quoting from Mr Rattenbury—

they are more modern, they are more comfortable.

And we certainly agree with Mr Rattenbury on that position.

More recently, the minister has discussed the salt and pepper principle by saying:

Typically, new developments will range from 14 to 25 dwellings. This will be vital to ensuring we do not return to the days of high density multi-unit properties.

This certainly flies in the face of some information that we got at a briefing on this matter where there was a maximum figure of 50 discussed.

The minister has clearly reflected the government's views that public housing complexes should not be large-scale concentrations but, rather, the salt and pepper strategy which was aimed at community integration in much smaller numbers of units or houses. The ideal of Mr Rattenbury's 15 units has generally given way to developments twice this size, although they do tend to move in size from week to week in areas like Holder, Wright and Chapman, some of which, as I said, have been ratcheted back to about 20 units as a result of reactive consultation with local residents.

Many of these developments are occurring of course, as Ms Lawder mentioned, on community facility zoned land. The public and especially local communities in proximity to community facility zoned land had the impression that this zoning category could only be used for the traditionally understood meaning of community purposes. By way of example, the planning documents—and we have been through this on a number of occasions—referred to things like community activity centres, a community theatre, educational establishments and the like. Multi-unit housing, as we know, was prohibited along with serviced apartments, single-dwelling houses and activities of a commercial nature.

The siting of public housing developments has always been, it must be said, a bit of a headache, not just for this government but for most. But for this government it has been a headache. If you develop public housing on land zoned for residential purposes, then you forgo a profitable sale of that land. In order to resolve this dilemma, the government engineered a manoeuvre in the form of the technical amendment to the territory plan that Ms Lawder mentioned earlier. This amendment extended the definition of supportive housing to include “social housing” in the common terminology.

The amendment in question can be found at the 36th page of the 124 pages of endnotes to the Territory Plan, making it a daunting forensic exercise to actually find this adjustment. It is my understanding that the Planning and Development Act essentially confines technical amendments to those which clarify the language of the Territory Plan and not its substance. This stunt has made it much easier to pillage community facility zoned land for standard residential developments for public housing, but this was not considered a change of substance to the Territory Plan, merely a clarification of language.

Not unreasonably, a number of communities impacted by this change were far from impressed. They felt duped by the nature of the amendment, they felt ambushed, they felt deprived of their community land and they felt that they had been ignored. Both the minister and I, and my colleagues, have attended meetings with community groups very unhappy about how they had been ambushed and fobbed off. In the end, more than 2,200 community members petitioned this government to vent their concerns and frustrations.

Eventually, the government conceded that it had to listen and take the community more seriously, and some adjustments have occurred. It has been suggested to me that the original developments may well have been ambit claims. I would like to perhaps give more credit to the government but who knows.

The prospect of relocating 1,288 dwellings by the asset recycling deadline is, indeed, a daunting one but the carrot at the end of that stick is a massive revenue take previously estimated at \$448 million from the sale of public assets, mainly public housing, and of course this will be ploughed into the capital metro project and not the alleviation of public housing pressures. The asset recycling agreement deadline of 30 June 2019 means that the government has had to really get cracking on it to reap the incentive payments from this initiative.

It seems a bit ironic that the imperative for moving public housing residents out of the Northbourne corridor was not driven by any sense of compassion or altruism for the welfare of residents but rather to raise a quick quid for the tram. We were reminded by the Auditor-General that, for every dollar spent on the tram project, it would only return 49c of transport benefit and that the only way to rescue the cost-benefit equation for the light rail project was to conjure up some property value benefits to throw into that mix. And to make this happen, the residents of the Northbourne corridor had to go, and go in very large numbers. Only time will tell if the 49c in the dollar is improved on.

In conclusion, I cannot criticise giving our public housing residents better accommodation where they have been living in very old and inefficient structures, but likewise the government cannot ambush communities whose residents, when they first moved into their chosen suburbs, had a legitimate expectation of what would be done with their community land. It seems paradoxical that the government is spending \$608 million on public housing renewal when the number of public housing dwellings is dropping by almost 300 between 2016-17 and 2017-18. Surely something is out of whack.

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) (4.35): I welcome the opportunity to outline some of the ways my climate change and sustainability portfolio will continue to assist Canberrans to reduce their energy consumption, reduce their waste and build a sustainable and prosperous Canberra for future generations to enjoy.

This budget covers a multitude of policies, plans and projects, all of which will make Canberra a better place and go a long way towards improving the ambitious commitments to tackling climate change that will make Canberra a sustainable, modern city, as secured in the parliamentary agreement between the Greens and the Labor Party.

The ACT is leading the nation in climate change mitigation. Work is already progressing and we are tracking well to reach our target of 100 per cent renewable electricity by 2020. In addition we are also progressing our blueprint to achieve carbon neutrality by 2050, at the latest. This budget will allow us to continue progressing this work.

I would like to emphasise a few of the projects in my portfolio that are helping our city to grow and to sustain itself, both economically and environmentally. The ACT budget is investing \$845,000 over three years to support the government's commitment to achieve net zero emissions in the ACT by 2050, at the latest. This includes \$322,000 in the 2017-18 financial year.

This initiative involves undertaking detailed modelling and analysis to identify the opportunities for greenhouse gas emission reductions in the territory. This work will underpin the development of detailed strategies and actions across all sectors of the ACT economy, as we work towards this ambitious goal.

The development of the territory's upcoming climate change strategy will ensure that key sectors—namely, transport, commercial energy in buildings and waste—have detailed action plans in place which are supported by cost benefit analysis and economic modelling. These actions are to be developed through strong participatory democracy by best practice engagement with the community.

The opportunity to become a leading carbon neutral city will not be missed. On that point, there are two particular elements that I would like to stress. One is that we are using the phrase “by 2050 at the latest”. The ACT's existing policy has been to achieve carbon neutrality by 2050. One of the things I want to understand from this process is whether we can achieve that sooner. That is an important discussion that needs to take place, and I would like to think that, with improving technology, we could be more ambitious regarding that time frame. Certainly, an important part of this consultation is to understand what the time frame needs to be.

The second point I would particularly stress in this regard is the importance of community participation in this process. It will be vital that, as we seek to move through to our zero net emissions position, the community understands why we are doing that and how we are doing it, and has a sense of ownership of it, so that they have been involved in the discussion. One of the things I am striving to achieve is to have a strong mechanism for people to contribute to this process.

It is easy to reflect that this can be very complex, and it is, in some regards—the modelling around climate change transition and the transition to zero net emissions.

There is a technical side of that that is very complex, but I think the community has a lot to offer, in contributing ideas, in helping to shape expectations and in giving the government support in moving through to that point.

That element of community involvement in the development of the zero net emissions strategy is very important to me as well. It has been challenging to work out the best way to do that effectively. I have appreciated the input from a range of community organisations, and we are continuing to strategise the best and most effective way to do that.

The ACT government is, of course, committed to our target of having a carbon neutral government in a framework for that, in our own operations, by 2020. By doing that, the ACT government will ensure that it does its fair share of emissions reduction. To support the reduction in ACT government emissions, the carbon neutral government fund provides interest-free loans to ACT government agencies to support approved energy efficiency projects. Energy savings are used to repay the loan, replenishing the loan fund and making funds available for new projects.

Since 2010, 24 ACT government projects have been supported under the carbon neutral government fund, to a value of approximately \$13 million. Projects that have been supported include lighting, heating, ventilation and cooling upgrades, smart building management systems, and an off-grid solar photovoltaic system connected to battery storage. I look forward to continuing to work with my ministerial colleagues to identify and support new opportunities to reduce emissions from government agencies and ensure we have best practices in place.

In terms of the community, one of the other elements that this budget funds is investing \$550,000 over four years for a new ACT community zero emissions grants program. As the impacts of climate change become increasingly apparent, it is vital that the Canberra community works together to reduce our greenhouse gas emissions and ensure Canberra grows into a modern, livable and sustainable city.

To support the next steps towards zero net emissions, this program will deliver grants of up to \$25,000 each, with a total pool of \$150,000 available in 2017-18. The grants program will support individuals and community groups to run engagement programs and deliver on-ground projects to contribute towards meeting the ACT's net zero emissions target and help improve the sustainability of the wider community.

I hope that people do come forward and participate in this grants program. I am very keen to unleash the community enthusiasm that is out there, to let people bring their ideas forward. Often these grassroots projects can turn into something much bigger with some of this seed funding that government can put into it. I look forward to seeing the applications that come in through that process.

The budget is investing nearly \$2 million over three years to support the implementation of the ACT climate change adaptation strategy, including over \$750,000 in this financial year. The strategy is ambitious. It details 27 actions to be implemented across planning, water management, bushfire and drought preparedness,

and biodiversity conservation. The strategy has the primary goal of supporting the community and our city, as well as the natural environment, to become more resilient to the impacts from climate change, such as extreme heat and increasing severe weather events like storms.

Adaptation is about identification of risks and preparedness for those risks, to increase resilience to the shocks and stressors from climate change impacts. Taking adaptation actions now will have both direct and indirect savings for the community by improving overall resilience to extreme weather events or climate-induced natural disasters. The adaptation strategy also has a strong focus on building up the green infrastructure within our city, including smarter buildings, greater tree cover and more efficient use of our energy and water resources.

The ACT, as members well know, is leading the nation on our commitment towards a more sustainable future, particularly through our progress towards our goal of 100 per cent renewable electricity by 2020. I have recently provided a detailed update to the Assembly on the review of the most recent feed-in tariff auctions, particularly those under the next generation renewables auction. We are making considerable progress towards our renewable electricity target. We now have 32 per cent of our electricity coming from renewable sources and more coming online in the near future. All remaining renewable energy projects have reached financial close or commenced construction. Our percentage will increase to 100 per cent by 2020 as a result of signing these contracts and locking in these sources of renewable energy. As I touched on in question time today in response to a question from Ms Orr, this work has been supported by significant industry investment, which is positioning Canberra as a centre for renewable energy innovation, both nationally and internationally.

There is a range of initiatives occurring in that space, including the \$12 million industry-funded renewable energy innovation fund, which I spoke about in question time today. The renewables innovation hub, over in city west, is becoming an important focal point for the industry here in the ACT, and an important focal point for collaboration and innovation where people are bouncing off each other, sharing ideas and having a space where industry are coming together and grasping the opportunities that they might not otherwise have seen.

Finally, I note that through this budget we will continue to provide support through our successful Actsmart programs, including \$865,000 in funding this year. This commitment will allow for the continuation of programs that support increased recycling, waste reduction and the continuation of the wood heater replacement program. Last year, businesses who signed up to our Actsmart recycling program diverted more than 33,000 cubic metres of waste from landfill to recycling, which I think is a very significant achievement. To provide some perspective, this equates to over 137,000 domestic recycling bins. Local ACT schools accredited in the waste component of the Actsmart schools program reduced, on average, their waste to landfill by 21 per cent. The education that the students at these schools received will ensure that younger generations will be our sustainability champions of the future.

Under the ongoing support for the Actsmart program, funding has been extended to continue the curtain manufacture program for low income households. This program offers free curtains, including their installation, to low income families to increase the energy efficiency of their homes, reduce costs and provide a sense of security and dignity. The program will continue to be run through St Vincent de Paul's volunteer program.

As we continue to move into the digital era, the ACT government will continue to support the delivery of online tools to help the community to increase their sustainability. The focus in 2017-18 will be the upgrade of the plant selector tool and water right garden tool.

I noted some of the earlier comments in the debate, particularly from Ms Lee. I have taken a number of those comments on board. In particular, in terms of investigations by the Commissioner for Sustainability and the Environment, I can assure you this has been on my radar. I have a number of options that I am considering at the moment and I will shortly seek to discuss those with the commissioner to get the scope of those investigations right. I will be pleased to update the Assembly once I have made those directions.

In conclusion, the initiatives I have outlined today are just a small part of the work that is being done by the directorate in my climate change and sustainability portfolio and does continue to build upon what is a sustained period of commitment to these sorts of policies by the ACT government, which has positioned the ACT as a leader of action on climate change and investment in the sustainability of our city. I believe these budget commitments and the allocation in this year's budget will continue to ensure that the ACT is moving towards becoming a sustainable city of the future.

Proposed expenditure agreed to.

Health Directorate—Part 1.11.

MS LEE (Kurrajong) (4.48): I rise today to speak on behalf of Mrs Jones. Justice health is an area of public policy which is so important to get right. While this area of policy is for a relatively small number of people in our community—those involved in our justice system—it can have large impacts on the community.

We know only too well that this area of policy can be a matter of life and death. Unfortunately, there have recently been two deaths of inmates while in custody at the Alexander Maconochie Centre. Sadly, Steven Freeman died while in custody at the AMC. His matter is before the coroner, so I will not make comments about his specific situation. However, I will make some general observations.

Since Mr Freeman's death, the Minister for Corrections has implemented changes to the methadone program within the prison. The minister has claimed many times that corrections health is not standing still in this area, and that these changes are best practice. The trouble is that there are still many questions about what specific changes

have been made, how this impacts both inmates and staff, and whether these changes are the most efficient and effective for the AMC and the community as a whole. There are also questions about under what guidelines these changes were made, as the review into methadone prescribing in the ACT has still not been completed.

The ACT government has let down the community by failing to deliver its review into the ACT methadone prescribing guidelines. The review was meant to be completed in 2012 but was pushed back to 2014 when the national opioid dependency treatment guidelines were to be released. However, three years after the national guidelines were released, the review has still not been completed. This is further proof that the minister for health and the Minister for Corrections have lost interest in their portfolios, and do not believe that serving the people of Canberra with effective, efficient and honest government is a priority.

The ACT government should clarify if the delay into the methadone prescribing guidelines has in any way impacted on the health of those whom we are treating for opioid dependency, and in particular those we are treating for opioid dependency within our custodial system.

Sadly, there has also been the death of Mark O'Connor in the AMC. Once again I do not wish to make comments about this specific situation, but I will make a wider point. At the time of his death, Mr O'Connor was said to have had a mixture of methamphetamine and buprenorphine in his system, among other substances. Buprenorphine is used as part of opioid dependency treatment and, again, there are questions as to how effectively and efficiently our opioid dependency treatment is actually operating inside the AMC.

Mrs Jones and the Canberra Liberals also have concerns about illicit drugs in our prison. We have a Minister for Corrections who has essentially given up on the policing of illicit drugs in our prison, and who wishes to condone this behaviour by implementing a needle exchange program. This is not good enough. We understand that there will always be a market for illicit drugs within prisons, and that people are always finding ways to get drugs to their customers on the inside. But giving up and condoning this behaviour is not the answer. There must always be an attitude of zero tolerance towards illicit drug taking in our prisons. Mrs Jones believes that the minister and the ACT government needs to address this area more seriously.

Mrs Jones and the entire Canberra Liberals call on the ACT government to address these issues in our justice health system as a matter of priority.

MR MILLIGAN (Yerrabi) (4.52): I want to address briefly a couple of issues of importance to the Indigenous community in this directorate. The first concerns the growing numbers of the Indigenous community suffering from tobacco, alcohol and drug addiction. Because of the move away from an Indigenous rehabilitation service at the Ngunnawal bush healing farm, despite claims from this government that it was never intended, the Indigenous peoples of Canberra are once again left without a culturally appropriate drug and alcohol rehabilitation centre. This community is in dire need of such a centre. Currently, patients travel to Wagga or to Nowra, each a minimum six-hour return journey by car for family to visit.

Because of the decision by this government not to run a therapeutic drug and alcohol rehab centre at the Tidbinbilla site, despite spending more than \$12 million on the building, the Indigenous community is left with a large need. Current spaces in non-Indigenous care are limited; yet this is a key health issue for the community, linked to various medical and mental health conditions, and leading to increasing numbers of social problems, including incarceration.

Recent data showed that as many as 31 per cent of Indigenous Australians aged 15 years and over reportedly used drugs and other substances in the past 12 months. And these numbers are on the rise, according to the latest ROGS data.

Why does this government fail to recognise this need, or support the community through funding a culturally appropriate facility here in the ACT that could meet this urgent need? If not a purpose built facility, at least provide with better funding and facilities those organisations that work in the Indigenous community to provide support and intervention for alcohol, drug and tobacco addictions here in the ACT.

We note with approval that the government has budgeted for a new health centre for Winnunga, although delivery is not until 2020. We call on the government to speed up the funding arrangements for the new centre so that it can be opened sooner rather than later, to meet the growing and ongoing needs of the community.

MRS DUNNE (Ginninderra) (4.54): I take this opportunity to comment on part 1.11 of the appropriation bill in relation to health. This is the first budget for Ms Fitzharris as the Minister for Health and Mr Rattenbury as the Minister for Mental Health, and it is fair to say that both Ms Fitzharris and Mr Rattenbury have inherited a lot of problems.

These problems include the following: the health data is in chaos; health facilities, especially the Canberra Hospital, are in a poor state of repair; there is flammable cladding on the Centenary Hospital for Women and Children; there are long overdue reports on a number of important issues; there are significant problems with mental health; there are problems with Indigenous health, which Mr Milligan has touched on; there are problems with the NDIS, which you, Madam Assistant Speaker Lee, have already spoken about; there are significant problems with care at the AMC, which you have also spoken about, Madam Assistant Speaker, on behalf of Mrs Jones. It is also interesting to note that we are suffering from probably the worst flu season for a number of years, as evidenced by the depleted benches on the opposition side as members look after their sick children. It has been a tough time.

The biggest problem with ACT Health is its culture of secrecy and spin. This is a legacy of 15 years of Labor government. In their time as ministers, Ms Fitzharris and Mr Rattenbury have done little to fix the problems in ACT Health. Indeed, in some cases the problems have got worse. The culture of spin and secrecy has got worse. In a meeting on 5 December 2016, I offered to work with Ms Fitzharris in a constructive and collaborative way to help fix issues in ACT Health if she advised me of problem areas. At the time, I got the distinct impression that Ms Fitzharris liked that idea, but it

has not translated into action. She was tight-lipped on the data problem. She has been tight-lipped on the switchboard problem and the associated fires. I would have been happy to work with her on these two issues, but instead she chose the route of spin and secrecy.

Last year Mr Hanson raised concerns about the integrity of ACT health data. His initial concerns were about the integrity of Canberra Hospital emergency department data. As the Health Directorate looked further into the issues, it became clear that the problem extended further, including elective surgery and mental health. At one stage, the ACT Auditor-General was considering qualifying the health department's financial report because of the poor state of the health data. The Auditor-General was concerned that the lack of integrity of the health data would have an impact on the integrity of the directorate's financial statements. The poor state of ACT Health's data meant that it missed the deadline to submit data to the Institute of Health and Welfare in October 2016. As a result, some of the ACT's data was excluded from the Productivity Commission's report on government services.

Minister Fitzharris and Minister Rattenbury knew of these problems in November 2016. When both ministers received their advance copies of the Productivity Commission's report into government services in mid-January, it was clear that the missing data had not been submitted on time. Yet neither minister was prepared to tell the Assembly or the community until the ROGS report came out on 1 February. The Labor Party culture of spin and secrecy remained alive and well. Both the previous ministers, Ms Gallagher and Mr Corbell, made claims that the emergency department waiting times at the Canberra Hospital were improving. Both Ms Gallagher and Mr Corbell were subsequently proven wrong. On 1 August Minister Fitzharris made the following statement in the Assembly:

We have significantly upgraded the Canberra Hospital emergency department, which I note is one of the 10 busiest emergency departments in the whole country. Despite this, we are seeing our ... waiting times coming down.

I find this claim difficult to believe. This year Australia is recorded as having one of the worst flu seasons, as I have already touched upon. As at 15 August, there were 70,000 recorded cases across Australia, with 30,000 cases in July alone. It has laid low many workplaces and many schools. I know that one school in Canberra yesterday recorded 150 absences due to flu. We are hearing of reports of code yellow incidents this month at the Canberra Hospital due to the hospital not being able to cope with demand. We have constituents telling us of people on trolleys waiting to be admitted and of there being standing room only in the emergency department.

I have received complaints from constituents who left the hospital because they had taken sick relatives to the hospital who were immunocompromised and took the prudential decision that they were better off sick at home, rather than being in the emergency department waiting areas where there was no capacity to isolate people who were immunocompromised from the other people in the hospital waiting area. As a result, they ended up making the prudential judgement that they were better off at home rather than seeking medical treatment in the hospital's emergency department.

When we eventually see the quarterly reports for September, which will be some time in the never-never—we do not know when—I doubt whether we will see improved waiting times in the emergency department. This is more Labor spin. It is a claim without substance.

On 5 April there was a fire at the Canberra Hospital caused by a 45-year-old, poorly maintained electrical switchboard. I stated at the time:

A decade and a half of neglect and under-investment has resulted in the closure of much of the Canberra Hospital, putting Canberrans in danger.

At the time, I sought a copy of the AECOM report on health maintenance. The government has fought tooth and nail to stop me and the Canberra community obtaining a copy of the report. When I did receive a copy of the report it confirmed my claims of a decade and a half of neglect and was another example of the spin and secrecy of Ms Fitzharris and this government.

Last Thursday we discovered that the Centenary Hospital for Women and Children has flammable cladding on part of its exterior. When questioned on ABC Radio, the Minister for Health said:

I don't know the time frame right now—

that is, in relation to when the cladding will come off—

but I can tell you it's likely to be a couple of months.

We have subsequently heard from the minister in this place that it would probably take a couple of months for them to decide what to do and that we might see progress on this before the end of this calendar year. If I were the health minister, I would be ordering that the flammable cladding be taken off and replacement cladding put on as soon as possible. There may have to be some interim patch-up job, but, given the state of the hospital, given the reports about cladding and given the instructions in the building code, I believe it is negligent for the government not to do this. Yet again we saw a health minister who was not across her brief.

The implementation of the 2012 government commitment on bariatric surgery is now three years overdue. It was to be implemented in 2014, but it was delayed due to a series of difficulties, including “difficulty accessing a provider and appropriately credentialed workforce to undertake the work and the purchase of equipment and resources necessary to support bariatric surgery at Canberra Hospital”. One of Ms Fitzharris's first jobs as Assistant Minister for Health was to implement this commitment. We have patients self-funding operations costing between \$15,000 and \$20,000 because Ms Fitzharris cannot deliver on this government's commitments.

On 29 July the ACT conference passed a motion calling on the Labor caucus to consider pill testing for the Spilt Milk festival on 25 November. I doubt that this will

happen, for several reasons. First, an interdepartmental committee will consider the issue, and we all know how long it takes interdepartmental committees to get anything done. We have no guidelines, and the relevant area of ACT Health has reports that are years overdue. The relevant area will be working on finalising the opioid guidelines until the middle of next month and will have six weeks to develop these guidelines. The *Canberra Times* reported on 31 July that the committee which oversees the drug and alcohol strategy has not met this year and should have input into developing such guidelines.

There is serious doubt as to whether the government can or should be implementing pill testing. (*Second speaking period taken.*) I put a series of 19 questions on notice in the estimates process about the pill testing scheme. The minister's answer was:

The ACT Government has publically committed to exploring pill testing options further. ACT Health has been tasked with leading this process.

It seems to me that the minister and her directorate have not even thought about a single one of the issues I raised in questions. And the Spilt Milk festival—aptly named for the potential consequences of the pill testing facility—is only three months away. Another answer given in that question on notice was:

There is a small chance that a component of a pill will not be detected using mobile analytical pill testing equipment.

But I want to refer to an article in the *Sydney Morning Herald* of 20 January by Mr Andrew Leibie, credited in the article as a member of the International Association of Forensic Toxicologists. Mr Leibie states:

It sounds fine in theory, but there is one major flaw—pill testing kits currently relied upon to deliver the results are limited by scientific realities. In fact, the proposed colourimetric on-site pill test kits provide results that are little more accurate than “best guesses”.

Let me repeat that, Madam Assistant Speaker: they are little more accurate than a best guess. Mr Leibie continues:

Proper analysis of pills requires highly sophisticated laboratory equipment and can take days of work by trained scientists.

That is probably why no government has any plans to implement pill testing at music festivals.

Let me give Ms Fitzharris some free advice. She has a get-out clause. The Spilt Milk festival is at Commonwealth Park, which is on commonwealth land. Pill testing will need commonwealth government approval, and I doubt that they will give it. Ms Fitzharris can feel free to blame the commonwealth whilst being silently thankful that she did not have to deliver on pill testing. It will be a similar ploy to the actions of the Chief Minister over the Australia forum earlier this year.

We had significant problems in estimates for health this year. Mr Rattenbury was away from estimates on personal business for the entire hearings. He advised the committee in April and offered the option of being represented during the hearing or appearing several weeks late. Because of the timing and the need to complete the report, ready for tabling in the Assembly, the committee quite rightly decided that he should be represented by another minister. It would be good if ministers could ensure that they keep at least two weeks of June free for estimates. The Chief Minister thought so too, when he said in the estimates hearing on 20 June:

I would hope Minister Rattenbury will reflect upon the level of concern this has caused and make alternative arrangements in the future. That would be my hope.

It is also my hope. There will be times when ministers have to travel during the estimates period for official business, and that is fine. However, ministers should not be away on personal business unless it cannot be avoided; for example, because of personal illness or the death of a family member. If a member is absent, it puts increased pressure on ministerial colleagues and departmental staff, who have to take on an increased workload.

In the end, Minister Rattenbury was represented by Minister Fitzharris in the mental health portfolio. Unfortunately, Minister Fitzharris herself fell ill the night before, and there were only two hours available for estimates hearings in relation to the whole of the health portfolio. This means that the estimates committee spent only two hours looking at a total appropriation of \$1.6 billion, \$800 million an hour.

I had hoped to raise with the Minister for Health issues of delays in a discussion paper on the structure of the office of mental health. It was due in April. At estimates we were told it would be released when the minister returned from leave. It still has not been released. Let us hope that we do not have to wait five years for that. Another important issue in mental health is the future of Brian Hennessy house. There are question marks over the future of Brian Hennessy house. Despite the inclusion of half a million dollars in this year's budget for a spruce-up, there remains no certainty as to its future. I would hope that in future both the Minister for Health and the Minister for Mental Health will be available to avoid a repetition of the situation we saw this year.

I decided in our office that we would place the questions that were left over on notice. Imagine my surprise when I discovered that Ms Fitzharris had written to Mr Wall to advise that she was deciding on an arbitrary basis which questions she would and would not be answering. It was only due to the insistence of the chair of the committee, Mr Wall, that we received all but one of the answers we asked for from the Minister for Health. The question the minister has not answered was one she took on notice, question No 172, about the time the minister first became aware the electrical switchboard was rated as a high or extreme risk. Her inconsistency over this matter has been breathtaking. It is another example of this government's penchant for secrecy and spin.

Providing answers to questions from a member of this place should always be a high priority for a government agency. It does not fall under “other duties as directed” at the bottom of a public servant’s duty statement. If the government wants to extend the time to return answers to questions on notice, there are processes that can be followed. However, the government should be aware that lengthening the time to answer questions would also delay the estimates committee report and the time taken to consider the Appropriation Bill.

In late July we discovered that several reviews were overdue. In one case, an updated version of the ACT opioid treatment guidelines was five years late, while an updated version of the alcohol and other drug strategy is three years overdue. The government has committed to complete this review by the end of this month. I wait with anticipation. You could perhaps excuse this in a new minister struggling to come to terms with a portfolio. However, Ms Fitzharris has had responsibility in the health area since February last year. It is apparent that she is still on her L-plates. Minister Fitzharris appears to be out of her depth in the health portfolio. This was illustrated by this exchange in estimates hearings on 27 June:

THE CHAIR: Are there any other electrical switchboards, panels or circuitry that are rated as extreme or high risk currently at Canberra Hospital?

Ms Fitzharris: Not to my knowledge, but I will hand over to the directorate officials.

A health directorate official then answered:

In relation to your question, building 12 is another area where there is an electrical main switchboard replacement program. That is scheduled to be addressed between now and February 2019.

Ms Fitzharris was unable to answer a question accurately, despite concerns over the state of the hospital switchboard having been raised publicly since 5 April, nearly three months before. This is a sign of the capacity of this minister to adequately administer the health department.

MR PETTERSSON (Yerrabi) (5.12): This budget yet again proves why the public trust Labor to fund their healthcare system properly. That trust did not come overnight; it is a result of a commitment to health care that spans decades. This budget has succeeded in both securing world-class facilities for Canberrans and making sure that our healthcare system is and will be sustainable into the future. This is not an achievement to be overlooked. The rising cost of health care and Australia’s rapidly ageing population provide immense challenges that all territory and state governments need to face. Our Labor government is ready to face these challenges head on.

This plan will help to deliver long-term infrastructure for Canberra Hospital, including investing \$236 million to construct the surgical procedures, interventional radiology and emergency centre, which will increase the number of operating theatres from 13 to 20. This centre will also see a larger intensive care unit, with 48 beds in the

intensive care unit; 24 beds in the coronary care unit; more inpatient wards, with 64 beds for overnight care; and more elective day surgical spaces. The centre will also separate the emergency and elective surgery theatres, meaning reductions in rescheduling and delays as well as having the added benefit of creating local jobs for the construction workers of Canberra.

Our 10-year plan will also commit \$14 million over five years to deliver a new nurse-led walk-in centre in my own district of Yerrabi. I was very pleased to join the minister, Meegan Fitzharris, for the announcement. During the campaign last year I spoke to thousands of people about that nurse-led walk-in centre. Ever since I have been elected, people have come up to me at street stalls, and they raise it at the doorsteps. This is a policy that the community is incredibly excited about, and it is great to see it being delivered.

Labor governments understand that healthcare funding does not just mean counting hospital beds or surgery rooms. This government realises that the best and most effective way of dealing with health problems is through preventative care measures. Not only does it improve people's overall wellbeing but it is also good for the budget bottom line. Promoting healthy behaviours is much cheaper than dealing with serious illnesses. That is why I am so pleased to see that this budget has delivered a new Canberra-wide preventative care strategy. This strategy commits over \$700,000 towards whooping cough as well as \$136,000 to expand the hospital in the home program.

The benefits of our plan do not stop there. The government is also committing \$36 million to employ more graduate nurses and nurse navigators, as well as \$2.7 million towards establishing a new University of Canberra clinical school for nursing, midwifery and allied health. The benefits to our community from a health perspective are well known, but just as important are the learning opportunities to be provided to students at the University of Canberra. Higher education has been a standout for the territory, making up 30 per cent of our total exports. Not only is this investment great for our higher education industry but it also means that we will be attracting, training and hopefully retaining these health professionals in the ACT.

The budget also includes \$16.1 million to ensure that the University of Canberra public hospital stays on track to be open to the public in 2018. With the growth we are seeing in the northern suburbs of Canberra, particularly in Gungahlin, it is vital that we continue to invest in health infrastructure up north. That is why I am also pleased to see the government investing \$3.3 million to undertake a scoping study into the health service and infrastructure requirements for outpatient and hospital-based care in Canberra's north.

In this budget the Labor government has invested in Canberra's youth. Mental health issues disproportionately affect young people, with almost 14 per cent of those aged four to 17 having a mental health condition and suicide being the biggest killer of people aged 14 to 24. The government is investing \$1.8 million to address suicide prevention, working with organisations such as the Black Dog Institute and the way back program to make sure that we prevent these horrendous tragedies from happening.

The government is also providing \$13.8 million towards the Dhulwa mental health unit to make sure those with complex mental health issues are properly treated and looked after. Dhulwa is a vital piece of health infrastructure that our community needs. The facility provides the opportunity for people to further develop their skills and interests and prioritises rehabilitation.

This budget is a budget that looks to the future. It is a budget that sets out a long-term goal for a world-class, comprehensive and sustainable healthcare system in the ACT. It is a budget that again proves Labor's commitment to properly and effectively funding our public health service.

MS FITZHARRIS (Yerrabi—Minister for Health and Wellbeing, Minister for Transport and City Services and Minister for Higher Education, Training and Research) (5.17): As Minister for Health and Wellbeing I am very proud of the quality of care we are providing to the community throughout our health system. This budget invests right across the health sector, from better health infrastructure in our hospitals, better health care in our suburbs and better preventative health measures right across the territory to keep Canberrans healthy and well. With the overwhelmingly positive feedback we receive from patients and their families every day, I have confidence that Canberrans believe this investment is essential, too.

Making sure that these approaches to care are right has been possible through the hard work of our doctors, nurses, allied health and other professionals who deliver high quality health care every day across Canberra and the high number of other professionals who support their efforts. We are able to do this because we have a clear plan, whether it is planning for the health needs and delivering the health services needed for our growing and changing community or planning better ways to help Canberrans stay out of hospital and to become healthier and more active. Our plan is on track and we start delivering through the 2017-18 budget.

Our 10-year health plan includes revitalising our health facilities, building and expanding hospitals and extending access to high quality health care where it is needed in the acute, community or prevention setting. The ACT government's plan for health care includes the significant work we have been undertaking to plan for territory-wide health services. This work will ensure that we support the various methods of healthcare service delivery used to meet the needs of our community. We are making sure that members of our community with more complex healthcare needs receive the coordinated care and support necessary for more accessible care to deliver better health outcomes. This strategic work is well underway, and I am very grateful for the support and many ongoing discussions I have had with the community and stakeholders about this.

I welcome this opportunity to outline our key budget and strategic initiatives. They clearly demonstrate that the ACT Labor government is serious about developing a patient-centred healthcare system that delivers today, tomorrow and well into the next decade. Most importantly, these plans mean we need to invest in our health workforce. Making sure that we have the frontline staff and community-based health expertise through our highly professional health workforce has been a feature of this budget.

So that members may have a sense of the demands and needs of our community and the context of our current position in our growing city, I will outline what our health service has provided to Canberrans in the last year, in 2016-17: over 143,000 people presented to our two emergency departments; we conducted over 12,500 elective surgeries and saw about 36,500 people at our two nurse-led walk-in centres; and our hospital in the home program at Canberra Hospital provided almost 10,000 bed days of care for patients. This wonderful program enables patients to be released from hospital earlier and get home so that they can recover more quickly. Earlier this year I had the opportunity to meet with a patient who had experienced the health care that hospital in the home provides and it was humbling and terrific to see firsthand the positive impact the service has made on this man and his family.

We have high quality care evident across our system, including in the new dedicated paediatrics stream of the Canberra Hospital emergency department. From the nearly 20,000 presentations to this paediatric streaming service we have received a lot of positive feedback on the significant difference it has made to young families. We have also seen the highest number of emergency department presentations on record—a six per cent increase when compared to 2015-16. Responding to this growth and improving our services is a priority. I am pleased to say that our emergency departments continue to perform well. We have also continued to achieve high levels of elective surgery and have reduced the number of people waiting longer than clinically recommended. Through our reforms I am pleased to say we have also focused on reducing the waiting lists for medical imaging and have produced further improvements in this area.

With this in mind, it is a great pleasure to talk through the significance of this year's budget, providing \$1.6 billion to the health portfolio across the Health Directorate and the ACT Local Hospital Network. This budget represents an increase on the published 2016-17 budget and includes recurrent new initiatives funding of \$108 million over four years, including \$15.7 million for the commissioning of the very exciting new University of Canberra public hospital. This state-of-the-art facility will bring together rehabilitation care from across Canberra into one specialised, coordinated care centre. I am very pleased that this new funding in the budget will make sure that UCPH will be ready to deliver care in 2018. I note that this coming Saturday, in association with the University of Canberra open day, there will be public tours of UCPH.

We are also conscious of making sure that our investments are well spent. Some \$36 million of the above \$108 million over four years will be funded from efficiencies generated through the ongoing reform program, which I am very pleased to say are being reinvested into our health system. In addition to the additional appropriation, this budget provides \$334 million over four years in capital funding, which will allow the ACT to expand its healthcare facilities across the territory to cater for our growth.

We are investing \$236 million to plan, design and commence construction of the new surgical procedures and interventional radiology and emergency centre in Garran, within the Canberra Hospital precinct. This incredible new facility will boost the number of operating theatres from 13 to 20, providing more capacity and allowing for

concurrent management of elective and emergency surgeries. As we are seeing patients present with more complex conditions that need more support, we have a clear need for this new facility to be designed to cater for those members of our community that need coordinated, specialised acute and emergency care designed in a way that will help them to get back home into their community as quickly as possible and as well as possible.

Through this budget the ACT government will also deliver on our commitment to provide better health care for women, youth and children in our community. We are investing almost \$70 million to expand the Centenary Hospital for Women and Children. This expansion will help us to meet the growing needs of the community and the consistent demand for maternity services as our city and region matures. All of these investments build on the strong record of achievement this government has recorded in the provision of high quality health services for women and children.

I am also very pleased that this funding to expand the centenary hospital will see more birthing beds and staff to care for women during their pregnancy, birth and into the postnatal period. I am delighted that we are also delivering additional paediatric high dependency unit beds, a new paediatric intensive care treatment space and an adolescent gynaecology service, an important complement to the expansion of the hospital.

I am very grateful for the many open and sharing conversations patients, parents and young people in our community have had with me and Minister Rattenbury over the past year on issues regarding mental health and young people. It is with great pride that the government has committed to delivering an adolescent mental health unit at the Centenary hospital.

This budget recognises that north Canberra includes some of the fastest growing parts of our country. It also includes a population that is ageing. Members heard me speak earlier about ensuring that we have the health services we need to provide care for our growing population. So this budget investment includes working to understand better the current and future service and health infrastructure needs in Canberra's north. We have allocated \$3.8 million to undertake a scoping study into the requirements for outpatient and hospital-based care on the north side of Canberra.

We are also delivering on our commitment to ensure that Canberrans have access to better health services where and when they need them. We are building on the very successful walk-in centres in Tuggeranong and Belconnen. Delivering on the government's election commitment to provide an alternative for people needing access to health care for less serious conditions, walk-in centres are planned for Gungahlin, the inner north and the Weston Creek region.

Through this year's budget we are investing \$14 million over five years both to build and deliver the Gungahlin walk-in centre, develop the design of the Weston Creek region walk-in centre and undertake planning for the inner north walk-in centre, aligned with the work that we have already underway on the new city health centre.

Construction of the Gungahlin facility will start in 2018 and is expected to be completed and opened later that year. It will be connected to the existing community health centre located in the heart of the town centre.

I have had a number of discussions with local GPs and a range of stakeholders about the Gungahlin walk-in centre. Health is hosting, in consultation with the Capital Health Network, consultations and information sharing with the Gungahlin healthcare stakeholder community later this month. In addition to consultation, comprehensive planning, site investigation and analysis have been undertaken to ensure that the new centres will meet, and continue to meet, the needs of the ACT community.

Building on our highly skilled and extensive health workforce in this budget, we are investing \$36 million over the next four years to support our nursing workforce. We are seeing nurse navigators being increasingly deployed around Australia to help patients with complex conditions gain better access to the health services needed to improve their health and their everyday lives. Drawing on this best practice, the government will be investing in strengthening our health outreach services through 12 nurse navigators to ensure that patients get the right care at the right time right across our health system.

We are also increasing funding to provide better training and new opportunities for existing staff. I am thrilled that we will be able to expand the number of nursing positions across Canberra over the next four years, including employing more graduate nurses each year, increasing our maternal and child health nursing positions and employing more school nurses. We know that securing and encouraging our future health workforce is important, so in this budget we are also funding nursing and midwifery training and education scholarships.

I am also very pleased, guided by the ACT Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander agreement, that we will be continuing our work to ensure that our Indigenous communities continue to receive better health care and achieve better health outcomes. We are investing in more culturally specific services for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Canberrans. Through this budget we will continue to work with our community leaders to build healthier, stronger families by investing in culturally appropriate support and care.

We are very proud to be investing in a new health facility for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Canberrans, in partnership with the Winnunga Nimmityjah Aboriginal Health Service. This new facility will enable Winnunga to provide a wider range of health services by late 2019 that are culturally appropriate as well as providing a safe location for their holistic approach to health care. I look forward to continuing conversations with Winnunga about the development of this exciting new facility.

As well as delivering the adolescent mental health unit through this budget, I look forward to Minister Rattenbury outlining other priorities in the mental health area. We also know the importance of providing local health services for Canberrans in their community when they need them. In this budget, we are pleased to enable the

expansion of bulk-billing services. We know that, although bulk-billing rates have been improving, there is more we can do both to encourage bulk-billing and to improve access to affordable GP services.

We know that we cannot rely on the commonwealth government to improve bulk-billing. That is why we have included new grants to incentivise more bulk-billing services across Canberra, particularly in the Tuggeranong and Molonglo regions, which will include also allied health service delivery. This budget will expand our highly successful mobile dental service, with an investment of \$3.2 million to purchase and operate two additional mobile dental vans. Last year we promised we would invest in more health services right across Canberra and we are delivering on these commitments.

Members will also note the many announcements in this budget relating to the government developing new models of care that are better for patients. They are models that will enable patients to be discharged from hospital earlier, free up acute care beds and help patients receive care where they can recover more quickly, particularly in their own homes. With the incredibly positive community response to the hospital in the home program, we have included in this budget undertaking the necessary planning work for a significant expansion of this important service.

We will continue to deliver acute care services and the necessary infrastructure to support these. I have on many occasions explained to the Assembly what this government is doing to invest in our hospital facilities right cross the territory. It is investment that will ensure that our health staff can continue to provide and deliver safe, high quality services. That is why we continue to fund key infrastructure projects to upgrade the Canberra Hospital campus.

With the \$95 million from last year's budget, there has been substantial progress to improve ACT Health assets in the past 12 months. The upgrade and maintain ACT Health assets program contained a range of important upgrades, while the replacement of critical infrastructure is well underway. For the Canberra Hospital campus, this includes essential upgrades to lifts, heating, ventilation and electrical systems as well as hydraulics and electrical systems, among others.

We also know that patient admissions to hospital can be disruptive, particularly for older members of our community and for members of our community who are diagnosed with serious illness, particularly cancer. Their lives are completely changed. I am very proud that we have continued to invest in this budget by providing \$17.3 million for significant upgrades to the acute aged care and cancer wards at the Canberra Hospital to provide better patient care and comfort.

As I mentioned, in order to deliver on the initiatives in the budget there are some important strategic pieces of work underway. We have a plan for the health services we need now, over coming years and for the next 10 years. To ensure that this high quality care continues to be available where and when it is needed, ACT Health is in the process of planning clinical services as part of a new territory-wide health services framework. This work is essential. It is about providing a pathway over the next

decade to strengthen the delivery of ACT health services, connecting primary and community-based care through to hospital-based services. This work will transform how patients receive person and family-centred care in our system.

I am very excited about what this will mean for the care, health and wellbeing of Canberrans. The development phase will also include feedback opportunities and engagement opportunities with the community, stakeholders, patients and staff. Just last month I opened a forum with senior ACT Health staff and health professionals focused on the progress of this important framework.

A key element also of the territory-wide health services planning is an integrated and coordinated service model that keeps people healthy and well. I am pleased that “wellbeing” has been added to my portfolio title to underscore the efforts of everyone in our health system to keep people as healthy and as well as they can be. This is supported in this budget through an additional \$4 million for preventative health initiatives and the development of a preventative health strategy.

We want to ensure that we provide as many opportunities as possible to prevent Canberrans from developing chronic health conditions and encourage people to live healthy lives while managing these conditions. We know that so many chronic diseases can be prevented—most notably diabetes and heart disease. We also know the major risk factors associated with these diseases, notably obesity, lack of physical activity, smoking and alcohol use. So our preventative health work will develop initiatives to further tackle these.

Improving healthcare quality is also a key strategic priority for ACT Health. We are developing a new quality strategy, focusing on safe and effective health care and reducing unnecessary waste and harm. We are currently developing the quality strategy and will use this opportunity to engage both staff and consumers to understand what quality, safe and person-centred care means to staff, consumers and families. Over the next few months there will be a number of opportunities for staff and patients to participate in and assist with providing information to shape the development of the quality strategy.

Finally, as the Assembly is aware, and as I have regularly informed my colleagues, work is continuing on the important system-wide data review over the course of the next financial year. I look forward to providing a further quarterly update to members in our next sitting period.

We are very proud of the many achievements of ACT Health over the past year and remain committed to improving health services to care for our community. I want to emphasise that this government will always make the health of our community one of our top priorities. It is certainly evident through the commitments made in this year’s budget.

We understand that Canberrans want to know that good quality health care will be available when they need it, whether it is for a routine check-up, a sudden broken bone, a much-anticipated birth or a chronic illness. We are committed to providing

health care that meets the needs of all Canberrans, making sure that high quality care is available and accessible when and where they need it, whether that is in hospital, in the community health centres, in the home or through preventative measures to help keep Canberrans healthy and active. We will continue to work with our highly skilled clinical workforce, our private and community sector providers, organisations and, most importantly, patients and their families to deliver the best healthcare system for our community.

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) (5.34): The ACT government recognises the seriousness of mental illness in our community and the need to provide coordinated and accessible services to people who need help. I am particularly pleased to rise today in this first budget where the ACT has a dedicated portfolio of mental health. This is certainly something that is very welcome. It has been welcomed by the community and has provided an opportunity to bring a greater focus on mental health, through the addition of the ministerial portfolio, than has been the case previously.

Certainly the ACT government has a strong record of investment in the provision of mental health services and already delivers and funds a range of initiatives to address the mental health needs of Canberrans. But I am pleased to say that, as part of the government's election commitments and key items that form part of the parliamentary agreement, we are further strengthening the delivery and coordination of mental health services for those in our community who need them most.

This is demonstrated by the more than \$23.8 million in new mental health initiatives contained in this year's budget, which builds upon the record investments that have been made in this space in recent years. A part of this expenditure includes \$2.9 million for the establishment of the new office of mental health, with work to progress the establishment of the new office underway, reflecting a key commitment of the parliamentary agreement.

As I have previously outlined, the office of mental health will be empowered to provide independent reports and advice to the community and government on what is working and what is not working in the delivery of mental health services. The new office will also have a role in improving and coordinating the range of existing support services provided by both the government and the community sector to ensure that nobody is falling through the gaps. I am very keen on that last part of it particularly, to improve that coordination and provide that focus, because we know that, for people who need to access mental health services, it is often at a point when they feel most vulnerable in their life and it is essential we have a well-coordinated system that is easy to navigate. We have excellent service provision in many areas at the moment, but I think we can take further steps to improve that patient experience and the navigability of the system.

As part of this year's budget there is also a focus on providing better youth mental health programs, with \$3 million allocated. We know that working with young people and their families at the earliest possible opportunity can make a significant difference

to their overall mental health. This means working with children and young people not only at early signs of concern but in the early stages of their lives to support their mental health and wellbeing. I am pleased to say that in this budget, in line with parliamentary agreement items and Labor's election commitments, we will fund the expansion of counselling services for children, improve hospital-based services for young people and provide more support to community providers to deliver early intervention programs.

The Child Adolescent and Mental Health Service, or CAMHS, consultation liaison service provides assessment and referrals to appropriate mental health services. CAMHS clinicians also work closely with families and carers to provide information and advice to support adolescents admitted to hospital. This expansion means that these important services will now be available to young people, their families and carers on weekends, as well as the previous service provided during the week.

We are expanding the CAMHS primary school intervention program, providing enhanced case management and coordination of support services for primary school children aged five to 12 years. This expansion will provide counselling services to more primary school aged children who are showing early signs of common mental health concerns such as depression, anxiety and body image issues. The budget includes \$400,000 to support the headspace program to provide mental health services to young people aged between 18 and 25 years who are experiencing a mild to moderate mental health condition.

It is also a government commitment to address the important challenge of suicide prevention wherever possible. Each attempted or completed suicide in this city takes a toll on our community, rippling through families, workplaces and groups of friends. There is no single answer to combating suicide but each step forward in improving services, each conversation had with someone in distress, is a step closer to potentially saving a life. We are investing more in reducing the incidence of suicide in our community by working with partners, including through the Black Dog Institute and the way back program.

With this budget the government is also investing to increasing targeted mental health services, with more support for pregnant women and new mothers and also older Canberrans. There are a range of initiatives in this budget that seek to provide a targeted service to specific demographics of need. It is about recognising that the focus of those services can be different on each occasion and is designed to respond to the specific circumstances, be it older Canberrans, people with perinatal mental health concerns and similar areas, to ensure that the focus is there.

I will speak briefly to justice health today. I will also come back to some comments that have been made in the speeches from those in the opposition today, because justice health is a key area of service delivery for those in our justice system. Justice health service is a program within mental health, justice health and alcohol and drug services and is responsible for the provision of health care to people within correctional facilities in the territory. Providing better health care is a crucial part of the government's commitment to overcoming disadvantage.

Particularly mindful of the significant number of Indigenous detainees in the AMC, I am very conscious of the opportunity to intervene in people's health while they are in custody and provide opportunities to improve health as part of an overall emphasis on rehabilitation. Recently I was pleased to announce that the government has partnered with the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community provider Winnunga Nimmityjah Aboriginal Health Service to develop a family-focused response to address the over-representation of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people in our justice system.

Again, it comes back to the similar point I just made about the focus of mental health services. We need to make sure that we have got the right services focused on the right people. I think, particularly in this case, partnering with Winnunga is a positive opportunity to ensure that we are delivering our services in a way that is most effective for the client group. Using the expertise of Winnunga and the underlying resources of government, I think we can produce the best possible outcome.

I would also like to speak to the investment in Dhulwa. The budget delivers almost \$14 million to expand services to include seven new rehabilitation beds at the Dhulwa mental health unit. Dhulwa makes no differentiation in admitted patients on the basis of their status within the criminal justice system, apart from observing any necessary requirements imposed by legislation or security needs. I would also like to reflect on the fact that that is a new facility. It has been designed to fit into a particular part of the spectrum of mental health services in the ACT.

It has been a welcome addition to the mental health capability in the territory and I think the addition of this funding is designed to open up more beds at Dhulwa as part of the staged rollout of that facility. We need to be very careful in monitoring that facility as it comes on stream, to ensure that it is working well, that it is providing the patient outcomes that we need, that staff are operating in a safe environment—all those sorts of considerations that the ACT takes on in a service that it has not provided previously. We need to monitor that very closely.

I would like to turn to some of the comments made by Ms Lee, on behalf of Mrs Jones, when it comes to justice health services in particular. Whilst the delivery was different today, coming from Ms Lee, there was no difference in the exaggeration and hyperbole that we normally hear from Mrs Jones on some of these matters, on what are complex and difficult issues.

There was an observation about changes to methadone delivery at the AMC. I was surprised by the observations that were made today. To the best of my knowledge, Mrs Jones has not asked for a briefing, but what I can assure colleagues across the chamber is that if anybody would like to have a detailed discussion about the changes to methadone delivery at the AMC I am more than happy for the justice health team to sit down and go through it in some detail. There are a number of quite specific points and, rather than go through them all today, I would like to offer that opportunity for members to avail themselves of all the detail and to be able to ask questions. I am very happy to provide that opportunity.

There was some discussion about the availability of illicit drugs in the AMC. Again there was the, I think, frankly ridiculous assertion that I have given up on drugs coming into the AMC and am not trying to deal with that. I did welcome today the most honest observation that I have heard from the Liberal Party in the entire time I have held the corrections portfolio, which was the acknowledgement that there is a market for illicit drugs in the AMC. Until this point all I have ever heard is a sort of a wish and a hope that we could build a drug-free jail. Of course, this has never occurred anywhere on the planet. Far from giving up, I continue to strive to run a three-pronged policy at the AMC: supply reduction, demand reduction and harm minimisation.

This is the best practice that you can undertake, and we will continue to strive to achieve that not only to cut off the supply of drugs coming into the AMC through the range of protection methods that I have spoken about in this place before but also to actually work with people to help them break their drug addictions and provide programs that give that very practical support.

I will be very clear about the fact that a needle and syringe program is a harm minimisation strategy. There are a range of harm minimisation strategies. I think the fact that you are capable of pursuing three elements of a strategy at once is not, as the Liberal Party describes it, a case of giving up. It is a case of actually trying to be sophisticated and work with the best policy advice that you can. And the best policy advice is that you need to have a three-pronged strategy. I do welcome the acknowledgement, for the first time that I can recall, that people will try to smuggle drugs into the AMC, as they do at every other jail in the country.

I also noted the comments today by Mrs Dunne about pill testing and I was interested in her comments in that space as well. She made it clear that she is not a fan of pill testing—and that perhaps does not surprise me—but what is interesting, I would like to let the chamber know, is that just yesterday I received information about a new policy position and new information that has come out of the UK. I will pull it up on my computer here. It is information that the Royal Society for Public Health in the UK has now released. It is a position statement supporting pill testing services, declaring they should be standardised across all UK festivals, nightlife venues and drug treatment services. This is as a result of drug-related deaths in England and Wales, and we are now seeing overseas further support for these sorts of initiatives, in recognition of the fact that this is a strong harm minimisation strategy.

I think that this is a positive development. The RSPH supports pill testing on a number of grounds, including the fact that the annual number of drug-related deaths in England and Wales has doubled in the past 20 years, including deaths from stimulant drugs used recreationally in clubs or festivals. That is a significant policy development and one, I think, which reflects the fact that when you actually sit down and talk about this rationally, rather than from some ideological or fear-driven space, there are actually good policy reasons for doing this. This is something that I would invite Mrs Dunne to reflect on.

I think it is important that we should be having an evidence-driven discussion about this policy. The evidence shows that, when people have the opportunity to avail themselves of these services, a significant number of users discard their drugs and leave with a greater understanding of how to reduce the risk of serious harm to themselves and their peers. That is what this is about. It is not about condoning drug taking; it is not about encouraging drug taking or all the other silly comments we have heard in this debate. It is actually about taking a serious, considered and evidence-based approach to ensure that young people do not die or have serious health consequences from the sort of experimentation that young people do.

Let me turn to comments that Mrs Dunne made about the estimates process. I am pleased that Mrs Dunne brought this up today because it gives me an opportunity to respond to the constant chipping away the Liberal Party is doing about the fact that I was not available to appear in estimates on the day that they requested. For the record, let me be very clear that I wrote to Mr Wall on 22 March this year and indicated to him at that time that I would be travelling during the period that the hearings were scheduled and that I would like to canvass with him some options to ensure that the committee was best able to examine the areas for which I had ministerial responsibility. I had two suggestions, and I was open to others he might have had. One of the suggestions was that I appear before the committee immediately on my return from overseas. That would have been Monday, 10 July.

Mrs Dunne just made the comment this was several weeks late. As it happens, estimates was scheduled to run till Friday, 30 June, although my advice is that they undertook a recall day on 3 July. So my availability was a mere four to five working days after the estimates committee in fact finished their work. You would think that, with around 3½ months notice, given that I wrote to Mr Wall on 22 March, we might have been able to accommodate something here.

I indicated to Mr Wall, in my letter to him, my enthusiasm to attend on a date that was mutually agreeable. This place has a pretty strong history of being flexible to accommodate individuals' various diary requirements and the like. We seek to be a parent-friendly Assembly; we seek to accommodate people's travel desires to attend conferences overseas, as Mrs Dunne, I believe, is doing later this week. We seek to accommodate various needs that people have, in recognition that being a flexible workplace is a modern thing, a thing that we should all aspire to.

I do note the churlish comments that the Liberal Party continue with on this matter, but I think it is worth reflecting on the fact that, with 3½ months warning, we were not able to find a suitable accommodation that would have required about four working days difference for my availability. So I ask members to simply reflect on their contribution to this discussion and perhaps just be a little more accommodating, and reflect on the fact that Mr Wall never officially wrote back to me, despite the fact that I wrote to him in March about this matter. If this is where they want to put their focus arising from the estimates process, I think it really reflects very poorly on the members of the opposition.

In Canberra a significant proportion of the community will experience or know someone who will experience mental illness at some time throughout their lives. We can all play a role in reducing the stigma around mental illness by encouraging those around us to seek help when they need it. There is no shame in asking for help when we need it. This is something I want to be very clear about. It is a message that I think has started to become understood in our community. I am encouraged by the breakdown of stigma around mental health, but there is also no doubt that we have some distance to go.

The ACT government recognises the impact that mental illness can have on people in our community. That is why we have created a dedicated ministerial portfolio for mental health and are in the process of establishing an office of mental health and developing new strategies for suicide reduction. I believe that the investments I have outlined today that are contained in this budget are part of the ACT government's commitment to looking after the mental health and wellbeing of Canberrans. I believe that these investments will make a difference and I look forward to continuing to work with clinicians, the staff of ACT Health, those who work in the community sector and those in the community who are living with a mental health condition to continue to improve our services here in the territory so that we can provide the best possible environment for people to deal with their mental health concerns.

Proposed expenditure agreed to.

Housing ACT—Part 1.12.

MR GENTLEMAN (Brindabella—Minister for Police and Emergency Services, Minister for the Environment and Heritage, Minister for Planning and Land Management and Minister for Urban Renewal) (5.55): The government continues to deliver on the biggest program of renewal of our city's public housing since self-government. The 2017-18 ACT budget includes new commitments of more than \$31 million in 2017-18 and more than \$25 million over the years to 2019-20 to continue the public housing renewal program.

Coupled with forward estimates from previous years, there is a commitment of more than \$200 million in 2017-18 and more than \$90 million over the years 2019-20. It builds on the allocations in the 2015-16 and 2016-17 budgets for the public housing renewal program. Overall this brings our total investment in this program to more than \$600 million. This significant contribution is a clear signal of the importance this government has placed on delivering the renewal of public housing.

The 2017-18 budget includes continued funding for the public housing renewal task force. This ensures dedicated resources are provided for the public housing renewal program and the improvement of the public housing portfolio. The funding approved in the 2017-18 budget supports the redevelopment and replacement of Gowrie Court in Narrabundah, allowing us to continue to provide new and better public housing properties in locations throughout Canberra. The amount also covers additional design and development costs for some replacement public housing sites in Taylor and the

Gungahlin town centre. These four sites may allow the sale of part of the land, able to accommodate around 33 homes, for other residential use. This will help us to deliver improved design outcomes on these sites and will further support us in delivering our goal of spreading public housing more evenly throughout the city and integrating public housing into the community.

We are providing new public housing in suburbs close to Northbourne Avenue, whilst also delivering public housing in other areas, from Gungahlin through to Tuggeranong. By developing a mix of public housing types in a range of locations, we are supporting tenants with different needs and from all walks of life. I have heard stories from tenants who have moved home as part of this program, and for many it makes a major difference to their lives to be able to live in a home that they can be proud of. For some tenants, it is great that they can stay in an area that they know, while other tenants have been pleased to move on to an area that is closer to their family or their workplace.

The energy efficiency ratings and modern amenities of the new homes being delivered through this program can really make a difference to tenants by reducing heating and cooling costs. The spread of replacement public housing across our city also supports us in delivering lower density public housing. We are providing a mix of freestanding homes, small groups of townhouses and units, and compact homes. These are significantly smaller than the existing multi-unit concentrations of hundreds of public housing dwellings in single complexes, helping us to reduce concentrations of disadvantage.

The 2017-18 budget also provides funding to support tenants as they relocate. We are continuing to work with all tenants to provide them with the support they need during the relocation process. Public housing remains critically important in the ACT and this program will help us to continue to improve outcomes for those most vulnerable members of our community who have housing and support needs which are unable to be met by the private rental market. The renewal program reflects our values. The importance of this program to government demonstrates our commitment to promoting the inclusive nature of our city. This government will continue to provide public housing that better meets the needs of tenants now and into the future.

MS LE COUTEUR (Murrumbidgee) (5.59): I am very pleased to see that the ACT government is committed to providing both public and social housing on an ongoing basis, and I am very pleased at the major investment that has been made in the public housing renewal program. However, I do not believe that we are keeping up with the supply of such housing to the extent that the community would expect.

To begin with, we have 1,764 people on the public housing waiting list. While I recognise and support the fact that housing is allocated on the basis of need and that those with high and complex needs are prioritised, that does leave a significant number of people on the list for a very significant amount of time. The average wait for those on the standard list is 885 days. That is nearly 2½ years. I know of people who have waited in the order of five, six or seven years for public housing.

At 6 pm, in accordance with standing order 34, the debate was interrupted. The motion for the adjournment of the Assembly having been put and negatived, the debate was resumed.

MS LE COUTEUR: The question remains: where are these people residing while they are waiting? We can very safely assume they are living in housing stress, struggling to meet rental payments and power bills, living in cars, in unsafe shares. There are many options, and very few of them are good. I am sure I am not alone in expressing concern about the overall number of public housing properties reducing over time. Firstly, there is a projected shortfall of just over 100 properties in meeting the 2016-17 target. Secondly, the target for 2017-18 reduces this number by another 185 public housing properties.

While I recognise that the focus has rightly been on the public housing renewal program, I am concerned that we are not forward-looking enough to ensure that there is enough stock for future years. I can see from the budget papers that there is an expected increase of approximately 50 community housing properties, but that will not be sufficient to meet demand. The ACT population has grown by 11.2 per cent over the past five years and is currently at 406,403, according to the 2016 census. There has been an increase of 24,000 people in Gungahlin alone since 2011, and we can expect this trend to continue. Our population is projected to increase by between 4,000 and 5,000 per year. That, if nothing else, we learned out of the last election.

With six new suburbs under development, we must ensure that the rate of public housing is simultaneously increased along with the rate of non-public housing. By my calculations, our current rate of public housing sits at 7.7 per cent. If we want to maintain this percentage, or go to eight per cent or even to the dizzy heights of 10 per cent, which was the aspirational goal in the first Greens-Labor parliamentary agreement in the Seventh Assembly, we need a rolling program whereby the number of properties increases each year by, I calculate, 350 per annum at least. This would assist with a catch-up to appropriate levels and should be our minimum aim. There are currently over 154,000 dwellings in the ACT, and eight per cent would be 12,320 properties. That is why I support the important recommendation made by the estimates committee that the government should have an ongoing program of public housing renewal so that the proportion of public housing does not fall.

Another observation I would make is that, while a lot of the discussion about the location of the public housing renewal program has been unedifying, the positive thing that came out of it was the universal agreement, pretty much, that we do need public housing in this city. We value it and we need more of it.

Moving on to other things, I am very pleased to see the commitment of \$525,000 to strengthen specialist homelessness services. It is an item in the parliamentary agreement and is an issue that I and the Greens feel strongly about. Whilst I note that the initiatives under this item include funds for the early morning centre, as specified in the parliamentary agreement, part of that is also for the housing and homelessness summit. I am really glad to see that this will happen, I believe, in October. I am glad

that it includes affordable housing because, as we know, at least 30 per cent of our population is living in housing stress and we must come up with innovative, responsive ideas.

We must listen to the community to enable them to have a say in how we can ensure that everyone has a roof over their head that is safe and that they can afford. I draw attention to the recommendation of the Select Committee on Estimates to recognise the significant gaps in the current homelessness system, particularly for older women, and the limited support available to them. I hope that this will be the focus of some of the discussion at the summit in October.

I am pleased that there has been a commitment to investing in professional development and training for the specialist homelessness sector and developing a system-wide, trauma-informed approach to homelessness support services, because this workforce deals with the reality of disadvantage face to face on a daily basis and they need to be adequately equipped to undertake that work.

I am pleased to see other parliamentary agreement items, such as funds for Common Ground and new accommodation facilities for older Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders. However, I do need to emphasise that the amounts that have been put in this budget will not, of course, be enough. There need to be significant capital funds in the following budget to allow actual construction of these facilities.

I note that the government will undertake planning to inform the future design of accommodation and support requirements for clients with high and complex needs. While this is a much-needed initiative, I urge the government to engage in more and constructive discussions with the Uniting Church in Curtin. We know that they are keen to develop a MyHome model on their land in Curtin. The MyHome model is a tried and true model. It is working effectively in Queanbeyan, and we should be appreciative of the expertise that already lies in this area. We should be very appreciative of the goodwill shown by the Uniting Church in Curtin, who I understand are prepared to, in effect, gift the land to this project. My understanding is that they need money for the town planning studies to progress to the next stage.

In closing, I reiterate that we all need a safe, affordable, secure home of some sort. It has to be one of the goals of the ACT government and all Canberrans that everyone in Canberra—in fact, ideally, everyone in the world—has such a home.

MR PARTON (Brindabella) (6.06): I concur with a lot of the things Ms Le Couteur said right throughout her speech but particularly towards the back end—that is, the basic human right of having a roof over one's head is what we are talking about so often in this particular portfolio. This appropriation is a very important element of the 2017-18 budget, with the \$46 million contribution towards a total Housing ACT cash revenue figure of almost \$145 million. This total will cover most of the \$150.5 million in planned expenditures by Housing ACT, but obviously not all of it. In addition, there is a capital injection of \$5 million per annum from the national affordable housing agreement funding.

We recently completed an exhaustive estimates committee examination of the budget, and I was most pleased to participate in this process. Although I concede that I am a novice to the estimates process, the hearings and evidence provided much food for thought and enabled me to contribute to the recommendations made by the committee. I was further delighted to see that the government responded with an in-principle agreement to a few of these. The government's response was encouraging. With the wellbeing and future of many thousands of people at stake in this area, I will continue to advocate for improved transparency and accountability.

There is no doubt about the challenges confronting the government in this area. Of course, they are challenges that are confronted by all governments in this country. According to Homelessness Australia, more than 1,750 people are experiencing homelessness in the ACT, with over half these being 35 years of age or less. While this figure is a few years old now, it illustrates the magnitude of the problem. Despite record low interest rates, we have significant affordability pressures on houses and units supplied by the market. We also have rent levels out of reach or in the rental stress zone for many thousands of Canberrans.

On the positive side, we have housing stock of around 11,600 dwellings estimated for 2017-18 that are managed under the Housing ACT appropriation. But, according to the published waiting list, those in need of priority housing will have to wait a bit more than a year for a housing solution and those applicants classified as being in high need for public housing will have to wait just on two years. These two categories account for about 850 applicants, so we cannot understate the gravity of this situation.

In this regard the statement of purpose set by the government for Housing ACT is instructive. The housing appropriations in this bill serve a number of purposes; namely, to provide social housing that is affordable, meets the needs and circumstances of low income and disadvantaged people, prevents people from becoming homeless, provides stable and secure long-term accommodation and assists vulnerable families to improve their social inclusion through secure and long-term sustainable housing and, in doing so, builds foundation skills, capacity and resilience.

In some respects the ACT does fairly well and punches above its weight, with a high proportion of public housing per capita, but I think this disguises some pretty deep concerns. Compared with the rest of Australia we have the second highest level of unmet need for short-term, emergency and transitional accommodation and also for medium and long-term housing accommodation. We have a high rate of repeat periods of homelessness, despite the resources that are ploughed into the social housing sector.

The level of housing stress in Canberra is reflected in the concerns of various advocacy groups. For example, a recent examination by Anglicare indicates that Canberra and Queanbeyan families face the worst rental affordability rates in the country, with only 2.3 per cent of rental properties within the affordability threshold. This compares with four per cent in Sydney and more than 40 per cent in some other metro areas. They also observed that 2017 reflected no improvement on previous years.

Anglicare has referred to this collapse in affordable rentals as catastrophic and cause for major concern. Indeed, this government continues its journey to come to grips with the problem, as exemplified by its recent issue of a community conversation paper. The minister is commended for doing this as a lead-in to her housing and homelessness summit in October. The government has obviously become more conscious of the need for genuine community consultation, and we applaud that. The challenges presented by housing stress and homelessness are not a recent discovery for this government. The time line in the community consultation paper shows various reflections on the problem going back as far as 2007, starting with the affordable housing action plan.

The conversation paper focuses on an area of deep concern—that is, the two lowest income quintiles in the Canberra community. These two cover about 60,000 households which must survive on less than \$100,000 per annum, with the lowest quintile surviving on \$55,000 per annum or less. Of course, if household members are dependent on social welfare, such as the disability support pension, the age pension or Newstart, then the situation can be far worse. Households in these quintiles are either well below the rental and mortgage affordability thresholds or just on the borderline. People in these quintiles are in significant peril.

This budget imposes record levels of residential rates, land taxes and government charges. When combined with the skyrocketing cost of electricity and gas and the raft of other government charges, it makes it hard yards for many living in Canberra. And this is not helped by an overheated property market, with the current residential vacancy rate running at a little over one per cent. According to one housing analyst, median house prices are currently around \$635,000 and units at \$442,000. Others have cited median house prices of \$700,000. Of course, these are median values; a few would be well under these figures and many others would be a fair bit higher. Depending on where a household might sit within the lower income quintiles, purchasing a unit might be within the reach of the second lowest quintile, but less so a standalone house. And the lowest quintile would have no hope at all. Home ownership is supposed to be the great Australian dream, but that is not the case here in the ACT.

In order to address housing supply the government says it plans to release 16,250 dwelling sites over the budget and forward estimates. This is somewhat lower than previous budget cycles, where more than 17,000 dwelling sites were to be released, and we must not forget that the 2017-18 budget land release figure contains more than 3,000 sites for sale under the asset recycling initiative. While these sites will supply the commercial market, the sales proceeds go towards the light rail project, so the receipts do not directly address resource shortcomings for social housing.

With the sorts of land supply volumes made available in the budget at play, you would not think we had an affordable housing or homelessness problem, but it is quite obvious that we do. A previous Chief Minister has suggested the problem might be in the land release program itself. The ACT is unique in this space as we have a monopoly over land supply and can therefore choose how we meet demand and how we allow the community to choose between residential units or standalone housing.

The maintenance request for tender will be put to the market later this year, and this will be a very important process. No doubt the government will have a real good look at contract performance and service delivery requirements, but it should also have a good look at its own shortcomings and come forward with reforms in its own backyard, where the contract will be managed from. I must say, in no way am I critical of the 250-odd public servants that run Housing ACT functions; I am sure they are working to the maximum within the resources that they have. It is up to the government to look at its management and ask itself what is needed to get on top of the problem.

In conclusion, I wish the minister all the best for the forthcoming housing summit. I sincerely hope that this forum produces genuine and practical solutions and not simply another plan that looks good on a website. We hope that the government will undertake an effective re-tender of the total facilities management services that creates an outcome based on learning from past shortcomings. More importantly, I hope the tenants and Housing ACT staff are consulted in shaping this outcome.

MR MILLIGAN (Yerrabi) (6.15): The lack of Indigenous-specific or appropriate housing is of grave concern. The government is a signatory to the national affordable housing agreement, which agreed as an outcome that Indigenous people would have the same housing opportunities as other Australians and that they would be provided with safe and culturally appropriate housing. The agreement also establishes that it is the role of the territory to take responsibility for leadership in the matter of Indigenous housing policy. Despite this agreement, the Indigenous community does not have its own or culturally appropriate public housing administered or supported by Indigenous organisations. What Indigenous public housing there once was has been absorbed into the general pool, administered by non-Indigenous organisations. These matters not only contravene the national affordable housing agreement but fail to meet the needs of the Indigenous community.

Moreover, it is appalling that more than 50 per cent of Indigenous tenants are still waiting to be relocated as part of the urban housing renewal program. In fact, not one of the 1,288 new dwellings being delivered as part of the public housing renewal program will be specific or culturally appropriate for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders—not one—even though the directorate tells us that almost 8.7 per cent of all public housing is tenanted by Indigenous occupants.

No doubt the minister considers it appropriate to ignore the plight of Indigenous Canberrans. The lack of an appropriate indigenous housing policy confirms this. We therefore call on the government to develop an appropriate Indigenous housing policy and, as part of the policy, to set a specific budget for Indigenous public housing as a percentage of public housing stock and report on the number of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people inhabiting those houses.

But this issue is secondary only to the lack of available aged-care housing in the territory—five houses. The territory has five culturally appropriate Indigenous aged-care houses. At the last election there was a promise of a further \$4.4 million

dollars in funding, but this was not included in the budget. On close questioning during estimates it was admitted that, of the \$350,000 tagged as Indigenous aged-care housing, only \$150,000 would be spent on an Indigenous aged-care feasibility study. The remainder went to other non-Indigenous though no doubt well-deserving community projects.

This government loves its feasibility studies, even though in Indigenous aged-care housing only five houses already exist. Perhaps this is a stalling exercise. Everyone in Australia deserves quality aged care, yet this government has constantly shown a lack of respect for the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples in this matter. We call on the government to back up its election promises and to commit to the development of culturally appropriate aged-care housing for the Indigenous elderly, to do so without further delay and to report such within the budget and not group this with other non-Indigenous initiatives, giving a false impression to the community.

Proposed expenditure agreed to.

Icon Water—Part 1.13.

MS LE COUTEUR (Murrumbidgee) (6.19): I rise to talk particularly about the role of the shareholder ministers of Icon Water. I asked a question of Mr Barr in this respect on 1 August:

How and when will the ACT government in its role as the 50 per cent owner of ActewAGL give approval to the project proceeding to statutory approvals?

The project was the waste energy project in which Icon Water is allegedly a 50 per cent participant. Mr Barr said:

As Ms Le Couteur would know, the government does not actively intervene in the decisions of the joint venture. We have representation in relation to the joint venture through board members from Icon Water. Board members from Icon Water act in accordance with the Territory-owned Corporations Act. Mr Gentleman and I are shareholders. It is important to distinguish between shareholders and board members.

The day afterwards, on 2 August, the government moved an amendment to Mr Coe's motion that:

... in order to ensure effective commercial management of Icon Water, its shareholder Ministers provide approval only on a narrow range of significant decisions such as board appointments and major purchases or divestments ...

I am concerned that these responses are simply contradictory. If the government is to make an investment in this proposed waste to energy plant, surely this comes under the classification of a major purchase or divestment? I call upon the shareholder ministers, Mr Barr and Mr Gentleman, to clarify what involvement the shareholders will have in Icon's decision and when they will make their views known. As Mr Barr said, in order to ensure effective commercial management, the shareholder ministers

provide approval for major purchases or divestments. Surely this investment would qualify as this. Is the situation that the shareholders have already been consulted but Mr Barr did not put that in his answer? If they have not been consulted, I would like to know why and when they will be consulted.

Another issue is that presumably the shareholder ministers have some knowledge of the waste feasibility study. If that is the case, should the community be concerned that, given the shareholders' seeming approval of the waste to energy project that Icon Water is investing in, high-temperature incineration is the government's preferred option for waste in the ACT?

Another concern I have here is that the lines between government and private enterprise seem to be blurred. By countenancing work on this project, they seem to be signalling that a commercial arm of the government will get in first on the commercial opportunity to do waste to energy projects with the waste of the ACT. It seems to me that the government is neither fish nor fowl. It is not a clear government undertaking. I make it clear that I do not have any problems with the ACT government dealing with waste. We currently have a government-run waste system, and I do not have any intrinsic problems with that. I am not arguing against that. What I am saying is that it appears to be a commercial undertaking on which the ACT government appears to be taking up the running. We need to be clear—what is it? Is it government or non-government?

I asked another interesting question on 16 August, hoping to get a bit more clarity about what was going on with this. I said Mr Barr had told the Assembly that shareholder ministers provide approval for Icon Water's major purchases. I then asked:

When will you be approving or rejecting Icon Water becoming a 25 per cent owner of the waste to energy plant?

Mr Barr said there was a formal process that needs to be gone through. So I asked:

Assuming that there is a formal process, is that formal process going to include consulting the community on whether to approve or reject this?

Mr Barr answered:

Yes, there are elements of community consultation as part of the process.

My supplementary question to this is: is this community consultation the normal statutory consultation done for DAs or is there a new process that the shareholder ministers are taking on so that the community can advise the shareholder ministers on how to exercise their responsibilities as shareholders, to ensure that investments are made in the best interests of the Canberra community? There are significant questions about what Icon Water is doing with this potential investment. I call upon the ACT government to tell the ACT community and the Legislative Assembly what it is actually doing.

MR COE (Yerrabi—Leader of the Opposition) (6.25): Icon Water has two primary purposes: the delivery of water, sewerage and associated services; and to manage the territory's investment in ActewAGL. In budget statements B, Icon Water lists its four objectives, the first one being "to operate at least as efficiently as any comparable business". Unfortunately, we have seen one very clear example of Icon Water failing to meet this objective in the signing of the shared services agreement with ActewAGL. Canberrans have been continually hit with rate rises and hikes in water and electricity prices by successive Labor-Greens governments. Icon Water billed Canberrans an estimated \$303 million in 2016-17. The value of the two shared services agreements today accounts for close to nine per cent of what they bring in, yet the Labor-Greens government and Icon Water continue to claim that these agreements do not have any effect on the cost of services.

That is, 10 per cent of their revenue goes straight out to ActewAGL by way of these two shared services agreements. If any other business—which Icon Water supposedly is—were to let 10 per cent of their revenue go, surely that would be of interest to the shareholders? Surely if there were a decision that affected 10 per cent of their revenue, it would draw the attention of the shareholders and they would ask questions? Unfortunately, that did not happen.

When water prices are set in the territory, the ICRC takes into account the operating costs of Icon Water. This information is evaluated in conjunction with other factors, but at its core the operating costs are a significant contributor to the prices they set for water. When Icon Water is compared to other similarly sized entities, it is clear that the value of these two agreements has been significant. The artificial inflation of the cost of services has considerably impacted Icon Water's operating costs, which in turn hits the hip pocket of Canberrans. With even more unknown increases built into these shared services agreements with ActewAGL, there is no doubt that the percentage of revenue going towards the contracts is likely to rise and Canberrans' bills will also increase.

When I asked whether Shared Services, the government and in particular the Treasury had been approached to market test or evaluate the value for money that the taxpayer receives out of this agreement, the Chief Minister responded, "Not that I am aware of, no." When I asked, "Does \$27 million seem excessive to you for shared services?" the Chief Minister stated, "I have no reason to see why that is an issue." He saw no reason why paying \$27 million for shared services is an issue.

The fact that the Chief Minister does not have any issue with this dodgy procurement or the value for money the territory gets is a clear indication of the apathy that this government has with regard to serious financial matters, in particular the management of Icon Water. It is the same apathy which led to the LDA running wild. This lack of oversight is, in a way, what Ms Le Couteur was talking about with regard to the responsibility of the shareholders.

Perhaps if there were more interest shown by the Chief Minister or by the other shareholder we might not have a situation whereby Icon Water management feel it is

appropriate to sign a \$27 million contract which some would say is actually worth something like \$3 million or \$4 million, overpriced perhaps to the tune of \$22 million. It is demonstrably clear that the value of the agreements has an effect on the cost of services. When they have outgoings of \$27 million, that is of course included in what they tell the ICRC. In effect, Canberrans' bills include in the vicinity of \$150 to \$200 to subsidise this particular shared services agreement.

Icon Water admitted that the motivation behind the agreement was to preserve positions at ActewAGL. Therefore, effectively the taxpayer is paying to bolster a private company. And while Icon Water have a 50 per cent stake in ActewAGL, by going into this agreement they are, in effect, subsidising the other owner. By pouring all this money into ActewAGL, a joint venture, they are indirectly benefiting the other members of this joint venture.

Over recent months Icon Water has shown itself to be reluctant to demonstrate exactly where its money goes. Whilst they insist that they are not beholden to the ACT government in a meaningful way, they have received taxpayer-funded loans totalling in the vicinity of \$1.6 billion. Icon Water has received a taxpayer-funded loan of this magnitude yet continues to claim that it has limited obligations to submit to public scrutiny.

Icon Water's borrowing has been the subject of debate in previous estimates and in previous debates here in the Assembly. Non-current interest-bearing liabilities are budgeted at \$1.66 billion for 2017-18 and are expected to rise to \$1.83 billion by 2021. This is a real liability that the territory is on the hook for. Whilst the Chief Minister may claim that Icon is a separate entity, it is guaranteed by the taxpayer. It is, I believe, a company limited by guarantee—or, if not, it is another less common variety of company. In effect, the ACT taxpayer is underwriting this particular loan.

Icon Water holds 10 per cent of the territory's physical assets. It is expected that there will need to be ongoing capital upgrades, particularly with new suburb development and population growth. Icon Water's debt and assets are included in the audited financial accounts signed off by the Treasurer, the Under Treasurer and the Auditor-General. Therefore, it is a bit of a stretch to say that you should not be including Icon Water's financial position when you are talking about the financial position of the territory.

Icon Water and the government cannot deny that the decisions and actions of Icon Water dramatically affect the territory in a significant way. The decisions by Icon Water impact on the cost of water in the territory, and the decisions by Icon Water affect the price of Canberrans' water and sewerage bills. Given that Icon Water is the sole provider of water and sewerage services for the territory and given that the only two shareholders are both ministers in this government, I think it is untenable for the government to continue to claim that they are not accountable and are not responsible for the decisions of Icon Water. Given that they own 100 per cent of the shares and given that they appoint all the directors, I think it is clear that there is a role for the shareholders to exercise their wishes, just as shareholders of any other company can do.

This does not mean impacting the fiduciary duties of the board members. But shareholders have the right, and indeed are obligated, to ensure that the board is operating in an appropriate manner. The signing of this \$27 million contract, perhaps inflated by \$22 or \$23 million, is an indication that to date either the board or the shareholders have not been exercising due governance over the organisation.

MR BARR (Kurrajong—Chief Minister, Treasurer, Minister for Economic Development and Minister for Tourism and Major Events) (6.35): I thank both Ms Le Couteur and Mr Coe for their contributions, interesting as they were in conflating levels of shareholder activity and active engagement in the day-to-day running of territory-owned corporations. Perhaps they came to the debate from slightly different perspectives, but it was an interesting conflation of issues nevertheless.

I do agree with the Leader of the Opposition that Icon Water is indeed a territory-owned, unlisted public company which undertakes two primary activities: the delivery of water, sewerage and associated services; and managing energy investments. It is important to note that as an independent corporation Icon Water is subject to the Corporations Act 2001, commonwealth legislation, as well as additional accountability requirements under the territory's own Territory-owned Corporations Act 1990.

Icon Water's main objectives are, as previous speakers have indicated, operating at least as efficiently as any other comparable business; maximising the sustainable return to the territory; and focusing on its social, environmental and economic responsibilities. Icon Water Limited will pursue these strategic objectives relating to its customers, its people, its asset management and its financial management.

It is always going to be the case in politics that where there is any government or territory-owned corporation there will be a strong desire from those in the political combat day to day to want to draw shareholder ministers into either chief executive officer responsibilities or board responsibilities. The Corporations Act and the Territory-owned Corporations Act set out some very clear legal and practical distinctions between the roles of shareholder ministers, governing boards and executive staff within organisations. Over the course of this debate, if literally interpreted, the two previous speakers would require shareholder ministers to act as chief executive and board at various points.

Mr Coe: Captain-coach.

MR BARR: Indeed, the old captain-coach analogy. I do not think that that is the best way to run territory-owned corporations, but I do acknowledge the extreme difficulty with partial privatisations such as we are in. Ms Le Couteur made references to various proportions of shareholdings that Minister Gentleman and I may or may not have, and made big assumptions about the level of respective partners' potential investments in new ventures. Their assumption is equal partnership, it would seem, judging by what she has said. That may or may not be the case in every new investment that ActewAGL will make.

I think the commentary that, through Icon Water then through ActewAGL and to a third commercial entity, the reach of Icon's shareholder ministers goes over the top of boards, chief executives, joint venture boards and then new venture boards overstates the capacity and in fact the right and proper role of shareholder ministers in the context of Icon Water. In many regards it would be a simpler and smoother process if entities were either 100 per cent government owned or 100 per cent privately owned. That would remove the ambiguity that we see in this sort of debate. However, Madam Speaker, in its wisdom, the Assembly of the late 1990s and the Carnell government at that time sought a political compromise that involved this situation we have now, where we are a joint venture partner with a number of other entities.

On the other side of the equation, in the context of the issues that we have been debating here, on the distribution side and the retail side we have different partners: in retail, AGL; in distribution, China State Grid and Singapore Power, who hold shareholdings in the ACT electricity distribution network. So these things are much more complex than the simplified statements we have heard from those who have contributed in the debate to date.

Mr Coe continues to make assertions about shared services contracts and the value thereof that are hotly contested by the board and management of Icon Water. I do not think he would want to make the assertions that were made in this place outside of this place, because they border on the defamatory. You have just accused the Icon Water board, going back over a period of time—not the current board but previous boards—of effectively entering into some sort of corrupt contractual arrangement. That is what you have effectively alleged.

Mr Coe: No, I am saying it is bad value for money.

MR BARR: On what basis do you say that, when all of the—

Mr Coe: Look at how much each of your agencies pays.

MADAM SPEAKER: Mr Coe, you were heard in peace.

MR BARR: But the point has been made ad nauseam through all of the hearings that we are talking about different things. You are not comparing the same services. That point has been made ad nauseam. Do not take my word for that; take the word of the ICRC, who we as an Assembly commissioned to independently assess every single element of Icon Water's expenditure. It is all regulated. It all has to be approved by an independent regulator. So the conspiracy now grows larger and you are suggesting that the regulator is somehow in on allowing expenditure that is not efficient.

Mr Coe: That is exactly right.

MR BARR: That is the conspiracy now, is it? That is what you are alleging: that the regulator is also in on this alleged conspiracy? That is where we have got to in the fantasy world of the Leader of the Opposition. The issues that he has raised are, as I say, hotly contested. They are not facts; they are allegations made by Alistair Coe and they have just that standard: allegations made by Alistair Coe.

Mr Coe: Publish the contracts.

MADAM SPEAKER: Mr Coe—

MR BARR: Allegations made by Alistair Coe: that is all they are. They are hotly contested. In any event, all expenditure of Icon Water has to be independently assessed by the ICRC, as their capital and operational expenditure is regulated. Those facts are facts. They are not open to Alistair Coe's alternative opinions, his alternative facts, his world of conspiracy theories. They are not open to that.

Mr Coe: So we are getting good value for money, are we? Twenty-seven million bucks is a bargain?

MR BARR: All of Icon Water's expenditure is independently assessed by the ICRC. If you wish to pursue issues of concern in relation to that, which you are welcome to do, you may also wish to raise with the ICRC why they have approved all of these arrangements going back to the year 2000. And let's not forget where all of this started. It was the Carnell Liberal government that put this relationship in place. That is where it started. So all the conspiracy theories, all the wild accusations, start with his own former colleagues.

Mr Coe: No, it started with the dodgy contract in 2012.

MR BARR: They all start with his own former colleagues.

Mr Coe: But you never overreach, do you, Andrew?

MR BARR: He can try to shout over the top of me, Madam Speaker—

MADAM SPEAKER: Mr Coe, you were heard in peace.

MR BARR: He can continue his interjections but the fact remains that these arrangements were put in place by the Carnell Liberal government, full stop. That is a fact. All of these arrangements in relation to what was the ACT Electricity and Water Corporation and is now Icon Water and its relationships with the joint venture partner AGL, through ActewAGL, were formed in the late 90s and early 2000s as a result of a complex set of discussions and arrangements at that time, which predates everyone in this place.

Nevertheless, the fact remains, as I have repeated on about 12 occasions in this speech and will repeat again, all of Icon Water's expenditure is independently assessed. But Mr Coe is suggesting that the ICRC have, on the scale that he is talking about, massively overlooked something. That is the allegation: massively. If you were to believe the figures that Mr Coe, the world-renowned expert in shared service arrangements for utility companies—

Mr Coe: I am an authority now?

MR BARR: You have got no basis to be an authority on any of these questions, other than being the self-appointed world expert.

Mr Coe: Were you being sarcastic? That is a shame.

MR BARR: Indeed, yes, it was a bit of sarcasm, Mr Coe, on a Tuesday evening.

MADAM SPEAKER: Mr Coe, Mr Barr, the banter across the chamber can end.

MR BARR: Thank you, Madam Speaker. We will liven these things up every now and then.

Mr Coe: A bit unbecoming of the Chief Minister.

MR BARR: It is a bit unbecoming of the Leader of the Opposition too, I would have thought, but you set the standards for your own behaviour, Mr Coe. You have interjected throughout my speech.

Mr Coe: Alas, you are responding, though.

MR BARR: Yes, I should not engage too much with you, but it is too much fun on a Tuesday evening.

MADAM SPEAKER: I agree with that sentiment, Mr Barr.

MR BARR: Thank you, Madam Speaker. To conclude on this point, the issues that Mr Coe has raised are simply assertions and do not reflect the very strongly held view of the Icon Water board and executive and have been independently assessed by the ICRC.

In relation to the issues Ms Le Couteur has raised around shareholder engagement in these matters, there is a clear distinction between the planning process associated with the approval or otherwise of a specific development application and investments that may or may not be made two steps removed from Icon Water. Again, what Ms Le Couteur is asking of shareholder ministers is a level of intervention above and beyond what would have been exercised by any shareholder ministers in the history of these organisations. I suspect that that would be the case.

The question we all need to ask is to what extent we in this place are seeking to dictate to commercial entities that are quite a degree removed from the Icon Water shareholdings what projects they may or may not even consider, in the context of this debate. These are questions that are perfectly legitimate for public debate, but we need to think very carefully about whether this place is going to determine every single commercial investment decision that is made two or three steps removed from Icon Water.

If it were a wholly Icon Water initiative or even a wholly ActewAGL initiative then there would be in the case of Icon absolute interest and in the case of ActewAGL considerable interest. But once it goes beyond that it does start to get into the realm of intervention from shareholders that is, frankly, above and beyond what is reasonable in the context of commercial entities undertaking business due diligence and making decisions on their commercial interests that are well beyond the remit of Icon Water.

Nevertheless, politics is politics. Everyone wants to have their nose in everyone else's business. That will always be the way. It is what it is. I commend the Icon Water appropriation to the Assembly.

Proposed expenditure agreed to.

Independent Competition and Regulatory Commission—Part 1.14.

MR COE (Yerrabi—Leader of the Opposition) (6.49): The ICRC have responsibility for a wide range of regulatory and utility administrative matters. They provide an important service to the territory, regulating and advising the government on pricing and other matters for monopoly, near-monopoly and ministerially declared regulated industries. The ICRC further assists the government by offering advice on competitive neutrality complaints and government-regulated activities, and arbitrating infrastructure access disputes.

The determination and regulation of water prices is one of the most talked about functions of the ICRC in the Assembly, as we have just touched on. I wish to draw attention to one of the key objectives of the ICRC: when making a price direction in a regulated industry it is an objective to promote the efficient investment in, and efficient operation and use of regulated services for, the long-term interests of consumers in relation to price, quality, safety, reliability and security of the service.

With the rising cost of water and sewerage in the ACT, this objective has never been more important. It is interesting that the Chief Minister should challenge me to take this up with the ICRC. I will happily respond to his suggestion and seek a meeting with the Senior Commissioner, Mr Dimasi, to pass on my findings with regard to this investigation during estimates. If it were not for the estimates process we never would have found out about this new \$300 million shared services contract. It would have just been a mystery. If it is a mystery to the public at large, I wonder if it has been in part a mystery to the ICRC as well, whether Icon Water have provided all the information about these shared services agreements.

To that end, I will make sure that the ICRC is fully across the details as they are public at this stage, noting that the government refuses to make public this \$300 million contract. The government, which is all about openness, could, through the shareholders, make it known, at the AGM or at any other meeting of shareholders, that it is their intention that the board and the company should act in a far more transparent way. A demonstration of that would be, where possible—noting that parts might need to be redacted for commercial-in-confidence reasons—publishing a fair chunk of these two service agreements.

Doing that would allow the public at large, and water ratepayers, to scrutinise how 10 per cent of the revenue is spent. Also, it might draw the issue to the attention of the Senior Commissioner and the other staff of the ICRC so that they might be able to determine whether Icon Water is appropriately expending this \$27 million and, if not, whether that money should be collected through water tariffs.

The Canberra Liberals recognise the considerable complexities of the legislation and regulations surrounding water supply and prices. We also acknowledge the difficulties in having semi-privatised organisations such as ActewAGL, especially when the ownership is somewhat indirect, through Icon Water. You just need a simple glance at ActewAGL's organisational chart, which resembles the old noodle nation. I think it is a good example of the complexity that the Chief Minister touched on.

We know the financial pressure that has been put on residents across Canberra by increasing water tariffs. To that end, absolutely anything that can be done to reasonably bring down or to decelerate the rate of water tariff increases is worth pursuing.

MR BARR (Kurrajong—Chief Minister, Treasurer, Minister for Economic Development and Minister for Tourism and Major Events) (6.54): I will very quickly close the debate. The ICRC is a statutory body established by an act of this place, a 1997 act. Three main objectives outlined in section 7 of the act are:

- (a) to promote effective competition in the interests of consumers;
- (b) to facilitate an appropriate balance between efficiency and environmental and social considerations;
- (c) to ensure non-discriminatory access to monopoly and near monopoly infrastructure.

The commission's functions, as outlined in section 8, include setting prices for regulated services, including regulated water and sewerage services, and retail electricity prices for small electricity customers; licensing utility services; regulating access to infrastructure for regulated services; investigating and reporting on competitive neutrality complaints; and a range of other regulatory and administrative matters.

I can advise the Assembly that during 2017-18 the major piece of work that the commission will undertake is a pricing investigation to determine the prices that will apply from 1 July 2018 for regulated water and sewerage services provided to the community by Icon Water. I commend this area of expenditure to the Assembly.

Very quickly, in response to the Leader of the Opposition's comments, I refer him to the government response to the estimates committee report, which I think would go to address most of the issues that he raised, including the welcome acknowledgement of elements of commercial in confidence that would relate to the documents that he seeks.

Proposed expenditure agreed to.

Justice and Community Safety Directorate—1.15.

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

Adjournment

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

That the Assembly do now adjourn.

Keep Australia Beautiful Week

MS LEE (Kurrajong) (6.57): Yesterday was the start of Keep Australia Beautiful Week for 2017. Keep Australia Beautiful Week is an annual campaign that started in 2008, run by the Keep Australia Beautiful network, and aims to encourage Australians to take responsibility for their litter. Starting yesterday, and until this Sunday, 27 August, Australians across the country will be taking a pledge to make a difference to our communities by picking up one piece of litter each day of this week. I acknowledge that Ms Cheyne said that she is going to be taking the pledge, so thank you for that.

As shadow minister for the environment I have had the privilege of visiting some of the most beautiful landscapes and nature parks that Canberra has to offer. Our reputation as a clean, beautiful bush capital city is due in no small part to the amazing work by our rangers and volunteers who take so much pride in our natural resources. Our fierce protection of our natural landscape should extend to our urban areas. Our city and town centres, our local playgrounds and our suburbs should be the responsibility of each of us to keep clean. The cost of litter clean-up can be a huge drain on the public pocket. It is crucial that we engage in initiatives that encourage us to take personal responsibility for the cleanliness of our community.

In addition to the dollar cost, there is, of course, the environmental cost of the growing waste that we create, which, if not dealt with through an effective and sustainable solution, will continue to be a problem for our future generations. Over the weekend I attended the launch and tour of the new recycling plant in Hume. Seeing the enormous effort that goes into sorting, recycling and otherwise disposing of our waste brought home just how mindful we need to be about taking responsibility for what we produce and how we can thoughtfully dispose of our waste.

I am proud to inform members in the Assembly that Canberra's very own Renee Gracie will be an ambassador for this year's campaign. At just 18 years old, Renee became the first female to compete in the Porsche Canberra cup. I commend Renee for her promotion of the anti-litter message to help keep our highways and roads litter free.

Madam Speaker, it is with great pleasure that I am able to report that all members of my office have taken the pledge and will be doing their part to contribute to this campaign this year. I encourage all members to actively get behind this fantastic initiative and similarly take the pledge. The Canberra Liberals firmly believe in the notion of personal responsibility. It is campaigns like this that demonstrate just how powerful this value can be. It is not a huge commitment. It is as simple as taking a pledge. The pledge is to pick up one piece of litter a day. We can all work together towards keeping Canberra beautiful and, by doing just that, keeping Australia beautiful.

GG's Flowers Australian Beard Day

MS CHEYNE (Ginninderra) (7.00): GG's Flowers is a family-run florist delivering the most stunning bouquets and hugs around Canberra. Anyone walking past Ms Lee's office or my office would have seen some of their beautiful arrangements of orchids and lilies. I am happy to say that I stole the idea off Ms Lee.

GG's Flowers was inspired by the youngest of the family, Gayana, a student at Lyneham High School. A few years ago, her family realised that, despite Gayana's eagerness and friendly personality, sadly, she had limited employment opportunities due to having Down syndrome. Not satisfied with being resigned to this unfortunate situation, the family created GG's Flowers. The business started in their bathroom but now employs 10 people with special needs. These employees are involved in taking orders, arranging flowers and delivering them with a bright smile and a big hug for all clients.

This year, Nip from GG's Flowers won at the ACT Australia Post Regional Pitchfest for the best business model. The business's focus on social sustainability over profit helped Nip stand out against her four worthy opponents. She secured both the expert panel and community choice awards, winning \$6,500 in prize money. While this amount will surely help GG's Flowers continue to grow, Nip has found the mentorship and exposure that she received through the pitchfest to be even more beneficial. Nip competed against eight other regional winners at the national gala event held in Wagga last Friday. There was some stiff competition and, while GG's did not walk away with the national win, the company's success at the ACT event shone a light on the importance of socially sustainable businesses in our community. Social sustainability is a crucial limb of sustainable development. It involves making sure that a community is equitable, diverse, connected and democratic, and provides a good quality of life for all its members.

Canberra businesses like GG's Flowers, Isaac Delivers and Krofne Donuts demonstrate the determination and entrepreneurial spirit of Canberrans who have special needs, and of their support networks, allowing them to better engage with the Canberra community and maintain strong friendships. Nip hopes to use her winnings from the pitchfest to continue to develop GG's Flowers' model, to lower the unemployment rate among Canberrans with special needs and change the way that Canberrans think about inclusion. I hope the Assembly will join me in congratulating Nip and GG's Flowers on their achievements at the Regional Pitchfest.

I will take another minute or two to mark that this past Sunday was Australian Beard Day. The family-friendly ACT event was held at King O'Malley's by Canbeards, the Beard and Moustache Club of Canberra. It doubled as a fundraiser for White Ribbon. Winners of a range of beard categories were judged by members of The Beards—the band, for those of us who do not know. I was delighted to see that the main prize, for best Canberra beard, was won by Matt Leonard, a Belconnen local, the president of Canbeards. I want to offer my congratulations to Matt, Canbeards and King O'Malley's on a great Sunday afternoon event.

Smart Seeds

MR COE (Yerrabi—Leader of the Opposition) (7.03): I rise to speak in support of a program called Smart Seeds, an annual program for young professionals to experience the real policy and logistical challenges faced by decision-makers across the public and private sectors. The program is backed by GHD Advisory. Smart Seeds is a program run in cities around the world and across Australia, but in 2017 the program ran for young professionals for the first time here in Canberra. It was a privilege to be invited to be a part of the program in Canberra, albeit in a small way, and to meet and interact with a group of up-and-coming leaders in the government and private sectors who, as part of the program, were challenged to develop concepts in the urban renewal space.

The Canberra program started back in April this year, with young professionals from numerous government and commercial organisations. The first event for participants was a challenge workshop which defined the problems that would be tackled by the young professionals in the program. That was followed by a launch workshop where the young people started working on their problems. There was then an ideation workshop which was aimed at refining the young professionals' thinking around idea creation and problem solving. The final two events were a pitch workshop, where the young professionals refined their ideas, and a showcase in late June, where guests and judges listened to each group pitch their ideas. Whilst those were the defined program components, a considerable amount of work happened between each of these events.

There were five teams of young professionals, who all developed their own concepts and pitches. Regions Reimagined, made up of Kerri-Ann Smith, Joyce Xu, Chloe Reeves and Sara Wilson, pitched an idea to move 200 families from Sydney to Goulburn while offering networking opportunities and employment, either with their current employers or with local businesses. The participants would move into newly constructed affordable family homes, while a business hub would be developed in the regional centre.

The second group was called Helping Hand, made up of Alex Hardy, Neil Jones, Daniel Cirovski, Rebecca Cox and Ark Du. It pitched the idea for a "Helping hand" software app to help young professionals connect and grow their ideas and their network of advisers within an organisation. A third group was Solvathon, made up of Daniel Jackson, Rowena Sturn, Wade Liu, Alex Bardell, Chris Haughton and Galani Dube, who pitched a competition to foster collaborative solutions to infrastructure problems in cities and in other communities.

The fourth group, Free the People, made up of Sureka Withanage, Daniel Grebowski, Laarni Balila, Genevieve Kenyon-Slade and Sammy Jung, had developed a program to encourage sustainable infrastructure. The fifth group, Action 2U, was made up of Mark Treloar, Brenda Fernando, Kate Urquhart, Chiraag Shah, Ruky Wang and Grant Erbacher, who pitched a hub-and-spoke rapid action bus network, supported by mobile technology to allow users to communicate and to commute efficiently. It was the group Action 2U that won the day with the judges award, while Helping Hand took out the people's choice award.

Smart Seeds is a terrific program giving young professionals the chance to think about the infrastructure solutions of the future. I would like to thank in particular Ken Snell from GHD, who was the driving force behind the program here in Canberra. I would also like to thank Lindsay McAllister, who was one of the managers of the program. There were also the judges that participated: Michael McGoogan, Josh Polette, Catherine Townsend and Judith Zielke. I would like to thank them for the experience and advice which they gave. The participating organisations here in the ACT were the Australian Federal Police, Construction Control, the department of infrastructure, Donald Cant Watts Corke, GHD, King & Wood Mallesons, KPMG and Veolia. I look forward to the continued success of the Smart Seeds program in the future, and I urge ACT government agencies to also participate next year.

Question resolved in the affirmative.

The Assembly adjourned at 7.08 pm.

Schedule of amendments

Schedule 1

Lands Acquisition Amendment Bill 2017

Amendments moved by the Minister for Planning and Land Management

1

Proposed new clause 13A

Page 7, line 9—

insert

13A General power of Supreme Court to adjust rights Section 106 (1) (a)

substitute

- (a) determine the person or persons who, at any relevant time, held an interest or interests in particular land in relation to which—
 - (i) a claim for compensation has been or may be made under this Act; or
 - (ii) an offer of compensation has been made under section 61A (2) (Executive may make offer of compensation where no claim is made); and

2

Clause 14

Proposed new section 201

Page 7, line 17—

omit proposed new section 201, substitute

201 Compulsory acquisition before commencement day

- (1) This section applies if—
 - (a) the Executive is satisfied that an interest in land (other than a mortgage interest) has been acquired by compulsory process (the *acquisition*) from a person before the commencement day; and
 - (b) the person has not made a claim for compensation under section 56.
- (2) The Executive must, within 14 days after the commencement day, give a written notice to the person and any other person whom the Executive believes on reasonable grounds after diligent inquiry, to be a person affected by the acquisition.

Note For how documents may be given, see the Legislation Act, pt 19.5.

- (3) A notice under subsection (2) must—
 - (a) include—
 - (i) a copy of the declaration under section 33 in relation to the acquisition; and
 - (ii) a compensation claim form approved under section 118 for section 56; and
 - (b) state that—
 - (i) the person appears to be entitled to compensation in relation to the acquisition; and

- (ii) if the person does not make a claim for compensation within 3 years after the date of the notice, the Executive may make an offer of compensation to the person under section 61A (2); and
 - (iii) if the Executive makes an offer of compensation to the person under section 61A (2), the person is not entitled to make a claim for compensation under section 56 in relation to the acquisition; and
 - (c) set out any other information in relation to the operation of the Act as the Executive considers appropriate.
- (4) If the person does not make a claim for compensation within 3 years after the date of the notice under subsection (2), section 61A applies as if a reference to the date of acquisition mentioned in section 61A (1) (b) and (3) (b) were a reference to the date of the notice.
- (5) In this section:
- person affected by the acquisition* means a person affected by the declaration under section 33 in relation to the acquisition, within the meaning of section 33 (7).
-