



# Debates

WEEKLY HANSARD

Legislative Assembly for the ACT

**NINTH ASSEMBLY**

**23 AUGUST 2017**

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## **Wednesday, 23 August 2017**

**MADAM SPEAKER** (Ms Burch) took the chair at 10 am and asked members to stand in silence and pray or reflect on their responsibilities to the people of the Australian Capital Territory.

### **Leave of absence**

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

That leave of absence be granted to Mrs Dunne for 23 and 24 August 2017 for personal reasons.

### **Participatory budgeting**

**MS LE COUTEUR** (Murrumbidgee) (10.02): I move:

That this Assembly:

- (1) notes that successful participatory budgeting exercises have been established nationally and internationally, providing a wealth of well-studied and effective processes for the ACT to draw upon, including:
  - (a) in 2014, the City of Melbourne used participatory budgeting to create its first ever 10-Year Financial Plan, worth \$5 billion;
  - (b) in 2013-14, the City of Greater Geraldton conducted a successful Community Summit to prioritise 99 non-mandatory services worth over \$8.5 million within budget constraints of \$6 million; and
  - (c) since 1989, citizens of Porto Alegre in Brazil have decided how to spend hundreds of millions of dollars on capital projects through participatory budgeting, establishing a model process which has spread over two hundred Brazilian cities;
- (2) acknowledges that:
  - (a) the ACT's \$5.5 billion annual budget is unique within Australia, and unusual internationally, in combining both local and state government service delivery functions;
  - (b) the ACT Government has existing budget consultation processes, which include considering submissions from peak bodies and community stakeholders;
  - (c) the Parliamentary Agreement commits the Government to:
    - (i) "Strengthen community consultation processes, including through the use of deliberative democracy strategies, so that diverse views are taken into account in major project proposals"; and

- (ii) “Conduct a review in 2017 of the Budget process, to improve community input to Budget decision-making in future years”;
  - (d) new approaches to community consultation are needed in the ACT and the Government has made some progress on its Parliamentary Agreement commitments by funding a citizens’ jury pilot, community engagement training for Government staff and recruiting a participatory democracy expert; and
  - (e) Chief Minister Barr stated in *The Canberra Times* on 20 May 2017 “The silent majority was heard loud and clear in the 2016 election. It needs to be heard in between elections, too. I want more Canberrans to be able to play a role in shaping their city every day. ...Lack of consultation is not the problem, but the way we consult needs to change”;
- (3) asserts that as a well-studied community engagement method with proven effectiveness, participatory budgeting can:
- (a) better incorporate citizens’ needs and preferences into government deliberations, and improve transparency in resource allocation and service delivery;
  - (b) offer citizens at large an opportunity to learn about government operations, and to deliberate, debate and influence the allocation of public resources; and
  - (c) educate, engage and empower citizens and strengthen inclusive governance by giving marginalised groups more opportunities to have their voices heard and influence public decision making; and
- (4) calls on the ACT Government to:
- (a) as part of its Budget Review to “improve community input”, to conduct a participatory budgeting pilot for the 2018-19 ACT Budget which:
    - (i) commits the discretionary portion of the City Services budget, anticipated to be in the order of 20 percent of the total City Services budget, to allocation through a participatory budgeting process;
    - (ii) is designed by an advisory group with relevant expertise in deliberative democracy processes, including practitioners, academics and the community sector, to be convened by the Government;
    - (iii) is informed by the set of principles developed by ACTCOSS and CAPAD to ensure that deliberative mechanisms are trialled in a robust, respectful and informed way;
    - (iv) uses a randomly selected panel as a representative cross-section of the Canberra community and provides the panel with all relevant information; and

- (v) is subject to independent post-implementation analysis, which will be made public and used to inform the model for an expanded participatory budgeting process in the ACT; and
- (b) commit to using participatory budgeting processes to inform the priorities of the entire ACT Budget by the conclusion of 9th Assembly in 2020, applying lessons learned during the pilot.

My motion is about participatory budgeting. It is a deliberative democracy method that uses citizens to prioritise budget spending. It has been used successfully in Australia and overseas. I am moving this motion today because it is clear that we are living in a time when many people are dissatisfied with our democracy. They doubt their ability to influence government. For example, in the United Kingdom a referendum was recently held with the result being Brexit, despite the polls all making it clear that the majority did not support Brexit. It seems the majority knew that they were the majority; so they did not bother to vote.

I am also moving this motion because an ANU study in December 2016 showed that public trust, confidence and satisfaction with Australian democracy have dropped to record lows. Trust in politicians has dropped to the lowest level since it was first measured in 1967, with only 26 per cent of respondents expressing confidence in the government. Close to half the respondents were not satisfied with the state of democracy in Australia, which is the lowest level recorded since the 1970s.

Talking to people, the trend is clear. Canberrans often say to me that they do not have the information to understand why decisions are made and they do not know how or even if their feedback influences government decisions. They just do not know or understand what is going on. This is particularly true in the planning space. Many people have told me that they feel developers have too much power. They do not understand what is happening to Canberra and they certainly do not understand what has happened to their local neighbourhood or, if they do understand, they do not agree.

This community disillusionment is a compelling reason to discuss how we can give citizens a more meaningful say in government decision-making. Every day in the Assembly many of us talk about the need for better community consultation. The piece of legislation, the budget, that we anticipate passing tomorrow is arguably the most important piece of legislation we will pass all year. To use the government's own words, the budget "shows the government's social and political priorities and how the government intends to achieve these."

We have a wealth of existing legislation and common law that covers most of the issues of our communal life. We pass motions and legislation every sitting day. Most of them, in fact, have some implications for the budget as they will need resources, even if small, to implement them. But how do we know what should be in the budget?

Of course, the major items are debated each election but in the election you have to vote for a candidate or a party's whole package. You cannot say, "I will have the Greens on climate change, Labor on education, the Liberals on hospitals and the Sex Party on the Telstra Tower."

We vote for a package. I would hazard a guess that it is no-one's ideal. How do we know what the community's priorities are when they are not presented as part of a political package deal? Participatory budgeting is one way of finding out. We all know that real budgets involve choices, trade-offs, priorities and compromises. I acknowledge that the ACT government has existing budget consultation processes that include considering submissions from peak bodies and community stakeholders, but this is not enough.

These groups, of course, lobby for their causes, as they should. But unless we want the ACT's budget to grow from \$5 billion to \$10 billion we need to make decisions about priorities. We know that if we spend more money on roads, for instance, than we do on public transport, it will mean that more people have to drive to get around and cannot use public transport. Our buses will be overcrowded and infrequent. Household expenses go up because households are forced to run two cars. Congestion goes up and incidental exercise from walking to the bus goes down, which could be bad for our health. These are the sorts of trade-offs that the government has to make in the budget. Participatory democracy is a proven method to use so that the community can help decide priorities and resource allocation.

The Greens-Labor parliamentary agreement commits the government to improve community input as part of its budget review, which is why today I am calling for this commitment to take the shape of a participatory budget pilot. The Greens believe that stronger citizen participation in decision-making will lead to better outcomes for all Canberrans. We believe that a range of deliberative democracy processes must be used to facilitate engaging and inclusive conversations and, more importantly, influence government actions that shape the future of our city. The Greens are pleased that the government has committed to its first citizens jury trial as well as funding community engagement training for government staff and the recruitment of a participatory democracy expert.

I am pleased that the topic has been announced. It is third-party insurance. While this is not of major interest to all of us, I acknowledge it is an important and complicated issue. I am particularly pleased that in its announcement the government has committed to provide extensive information to the jury and to implementing the jury's preferred outcome. I understand that there will be more juries to be announced soon. There is certainly no shortage of possible subjects for citizens juries. Ones I would suggest could be public housing, playground provision or lowering the voting age.

Getting back to participatory budgeting, I note that our budget is in the order of \$5.5 billion. We are unique within Australia as we combine both local and state government level functions. Our government has to ensure on the one hand that our waste is collected, streets are clean and public recreation facilities exist while on the other hand providing health, education services and a judicial system.

There have been at least six recent participatory budgeting processes in Australia. They were in New South Wales, Victoria and Western Australia. All of these have focused on municipal services and expenditure. This is the sort of thing that is gaining

a foothold amongst progressive councils. That is why I am suggesting in my motion that the ACT starts on municipal services. Of course, in the ACT we call them city services.

I will briefly describe some of the participatory budgeting exercises that have already happened in Australia. In 2014 the City of Melbourne led a participatory budgeting process to determine how the city's annual budget in the order of \$650 million should be allocated over the next 10 years. The process was conducted over five months and cost \$185,000. It had two tranches: a broad engagement of the community through a variety of outreach and traditional engagement methods, including online budget allocations and workshops; and the random selection of a representative panel that was led through a deliberative process to determine the long-term financial plan for the city.

The outcome of that panel was 11 recommendations. Nine of these were incorporated into the financial plan and one was interpreted as a direction for the council to take on an advocacy role. One recommendation was not adopted because it expressed a desire to increase rates, whereas the newly introduced state government had just introduced a rate capping policy.

The City of Greater Geraldton has conducted two participatory budgeting processes in recent years. In 2013, the first process asked a deliberative community panel of 28 randomly selected citizens to determine priorities for the 10-year \$68 million capital works budget. After meeting for four days, the panel presented a list of 138 capital works projects prioritised by the community.

In 2014 the second process charged 37 citizens with recommending the desired range, level and priority of services for the council's \$70 million annual budget. The deliberative panel met on seven Saturdays over a six-week period and made recommendations about which services should be increased, decreased or refocused, and those that should remain the same.

The early adopter in this, of course, is Porto Alegre in Brazil. They have been doing this participatory budget thing since 1989. The citizens of Porto Alegre attend public meetings where they make proposals and vote to decide how municipal funding is allocated. The city has decided how to spend hundreds of millions of dollars on capital projects in this way.

Numerous studies have found that this approach is strongly correlated with reduced poverty, improved access to water and sanitation, increased affordable housing stock and reduced infant mortality rates. Typically, citizens' decisions have increased the proportion of spending allocated to low-income groups and public amenities. This has been so successful it has now spread to over 200 Brazilian cities.

These are only some examples. I understand that over 2,000 participatory budgeting exercises have been conducted worldwide. Participatory budgeting has been used to combat pork-barrelling and corruption as well as provide a way to manage finite budgets in the face of infinite community demands.

Given all this great background of successful exercises, I am calling on the government today, as part of the budget review, to commit to a participatory budget for the 2018-19 budget which commits the discretionary portion of the city services budget, which we anticipate is in the order of 20 per cent, to an allocation through a participatory budgetary process. We chose 20 per cent because it is enough to give participants real choices to make without having to spend a lot of time on things that actually turn out to be things that the citizens cannot, in the short term at any rate, influence.

It will deal with things like whether we should have new playgrounds. Should we put more money into maintenance of our existing playgrounds? Should we have more roads? Should we spend money on more roads or should we have a road diet for a while? Should we spend more money on footpaths, or more or less money on graffiti removal or rubbish collection? How much do we really care about graffiti? Would we prefer to put the graffiti allocation money into better footpaths?

Because our Australian examples have used city services, we thought this was the obvious place to start. I am calling on the government to ensure that the pilot, when it does happen, is designed by an advisory group with relevant expertise in deliberative democracy processes, including practitioners, academics and the community sector. The pilot should be convened by the government and informed by a set of principles developed by ACTCOSS and CAPAD to ensure that the deliberative mechanisms are trialled in a robust, respectful and informed way.

These two requirements are set because we need to make sure we start off with a well-designed process. The ACT has not done participatory budgeting before; so we need to learn from those who have. We need to ensure that the pilot, of course, uses a randomly selected but representative cross-section of the Canberra community and provides the panel with all relevant information.

It is essential for the usefulness and the legitimacy of the process that the panel be representative. It is essential that the panel be provided with relevant, accurate information so that it can do its job. That is vital. That is one of the weaknesses of much community consultation in the ACT, the lack of relevant and accurate information for the community to do its job.

I am also suggesting that it needs to be subject to independent post-implementation analysis, which will be made public and used to inform the model for an expanded participatory budgeting process in the ACT. That is because we need to see this as the first step, make sure that we learn from it and do better in the future.

I reiterate that I am calling on the government to commit to using a participatory budgeting process to inform the priorities of the entire ACT budget by the conclusion of the Ninth Assembly using the lessons learned during the pilot. I actually think this is a very modest aim. I am talking about informing the priorities of the entire budget. I am not talking about dictating.

The City of Melbourne and Porto Alegre have done it; so we can do it. Madam Speaker, I put forward this motion as a positive way to improve our budget process and with it our government for all of Canberra.

**MR BARR** (Kurrajong—Chief Minister, Treasurer, Minister for Economic Development and Minister for Tourism and Major Events) (10.16): I thank Ms Le Couteur for bringing this motion forward this morning. I move the amendment to the motion circulated in my name:

Omit paragraph (4), substitute:

“(4) notes that the Government will:

- (a) as part of its Budget Review to ‘improve community input’, conduct a participatory budgeting pilot no later than the 2019-20 Budget cycle, which:
  - (i) asks citizens to consider and make clear recommendations on how a discretionary portion of the City Services budget could be allocated to best reflect community priorities;
  - (ii) is designed by an advisory group with relevant expertise in deliberative democracy processes, including practitioners, academics and the community sector, to be convened by the Government;
  - (iii) is informed by the set of principles developed by ACTCOSS and CAPAD to ensure that deliberative mechanisms are trialled in a robust, respectful and informed way; and
  - (iv) uses a randomly selected citizen panel as a representative cross-section of the Canberra community and provides the panel with all relevant information;
- (b) commit to transparently considering and publicly responding to the pilot panel’s recommendations; and
- (c) commission and make public an independent post-implementation analysis of the pilot, identifying which components of the Budget and budget process would benefit from greater community input and possible models for future participatory budgeting processes in the ACT.”.

The government recently handed down a budget that will help deliver a better Canberra. It is one that delivers better schools, better health care where you need it, investment in community services, more investment in municipal services and support for the most vulnerable Canberrans.

As part of the process for developing the budget, the government established a dedicated consultation web page on the your say website which invited Canberrans to complete either a short or a detailed survey on their priorities and to provide a detailed submission outlining their views. This is something we have done in different forms for a number of years now, inviting the community to tell us what matters to them when it comes to how the territory’s budget is allocated.

There were 368 responses to the short survey. The top service area identified by respondents was sport and recreation facilities, followed by health and health infrastructure and education. I will confess that a somewhat surprising number one priority for the ACT community was the development of a new ice sports facility, with almost a quarter of all of the responses putting that first. This shows clearly the passion but, I would say, more importantly, the organisational skills of our ice sports community more than anything.

The government received 72 detailed submissions and 57 responses to the detailed survey. The detailed survey and submissions covered a range of issues including the arts and entertainment, community services, disability, education, public infrastructure and transport, sport—ice rinks, for example—sustainability as well as matters relating to the broader issue of the territory's finances.

Individual agencies reviewed these submissions as part of the process for developing proposals for the 2017-18 budget. Each minister delivered an individual briefing to cabinet on the feedback provided in their portfolio areas. This highlights that the government values community input in the budget process and has long sought to incorporate this by seeking public submissions.

One thing I am very conscious of, however, is the importance of hearing not just from organised stakeholder and community groups with a particular agenda to push. We know that there are hundreds of thousands of Canberrans who are affected by decisions we take in the budget process but who do not participate in traditional consultation processes. This can be because of time constraints or the nature of those processes.

As I have stated earlier this year and on numerous occasions, I want more Canberrans to be able to participate in decisions that shape the future of the city. That is why we announced the ACT's first citizens jury yesterday. We will be asking a representative group of Canberrans to come together to deliberate on the CTP issue and make recommendations for reform.

We hope that there will be many lessons but also opportunities that will come out of the community engagement and participation exercise through this pilot project. We will seek to apply those learnings across government, looking at how the community can be more directly involved in determining priorities and weighing up competing options for budget spending in practical areas like city services. We will get this work underway once the first pilot citizens jury has completed its deliberations and we can assess how to best feed those community inputs into the wider government process.

As I have said before, the way the government consults the Canberra community needs to change. We will be putting in place a range of mechanisms to change that. It is already changing for the better and it will better reflect the views and goals of the entire Canberra community, not just the organised stakeholder groups.

We will be looking to further opportunities to improve consultation methods in the context of setting future budgets and, with this in mind, I commend my amendment to Ms Le Couteur's motion and indicate that, should the amendment be supported, the government will support Ms Le Couteur's motion.

**MR COE** (Yerrabi—Leader of the Opposition) (10.21): The Canberra Liberals welcome the opportunity to discuss in this place the need for better engagement with our community. In this technological age I believe there are better ways to engage with our community rather than simply using the only contentious notion that we really have at the moment, which is an electoral mandate, as the sole determinant for communities having a say about the direction of their city. Whilst the electoral mandate is very significant, it can be twisted in ways that are not necessarily reflective of the community.

There are many ways, I believe, of better engaging and communicating with citizens. As tools such as smart phones and internet access become more prevalent, the opportunities that these present, I think, are very exciting ways of better gauging community views and sentiments. One of the principles of participatory democracy is to ensure that not only the loudest or most dominant voices are heard but indeed all voices are heard, and we need to make sure that all people are heard and that we engage in ways that are genuinely relevant for all people in the community.

As Mr Barr touched on, at present it seems that we do have a system which lends itself to people being engaged if they have got time and they have got the confidence to do so. We need to find better ways of engaging with people who are either time poor or do not have the confidence to stand up, as some in our community are able to. Whether the principles of participatory democracy are followed or not, it is important that we remember that not every issue is going to be resolved through consensus. However, by respectfully reaching out and listening to people, everyone would be more informed and better placed to make decisions.

Here in the ACT a group of likeminded citizens are advocating for reform of how decisions are made in Canberra, and I commend those involved with the Canberra Alliance for Participatory Democracy for their advocacy in this space and for leading the argument for better participation.

Many people say to me, and I am sure to all members of this place, that they want to see more principles in politics. But often it is the same people who say they want to see us all work together as well. Whilst you can have both, disagreements are not a bad thing. If we are going to have principles, that means that we do not just follow a poll, we do not just go with what 55 per cent or 60 or 80 per cent of people think. It means actually standing up for what you believe in, which is of one of the conflicts of representative democracy. You have a personal view but then you are also representing a community and you are also representing a political party. This is one of the balancing acts that we in this place have to contend with.

But I think that it is important to note that, just as there are disagreements in the community, it is right and proper that there should be disagreements in this place. The challenge is, of course, how we actually conduct ourselves in this process. It is vital, I believe, for a good democracy to have an opposition and to have a good, functioning opposition that holds the government to account and ensures that the government does not become complacent. Whilst it may appear to be unsightly to some in the community when you have vigorous debates, just like a court has two sides and that battle will hopefully bring out the best outcome, that is, in effect, what we in this place are striving to achieve as well. By having a contest of ideas, hopefully the best idea will win out. But that is dependent upon people being open to actually engaging in that debate.

Further to this, whilst there are many frustrating features of Hare-Clark, one benefit is that we are meant to be a more representative chamber than if we had single-member electorates. As such, if we are going to be a representative chamber, then it is right and proper, I think, that there are disagreements in this place as well, just as there are disagreements in the community.

One hundred and three thousand people voted for the Labor Party, 89,000 people voted for the Liberal Party. Therefore it stands to reason that those people, those 89,000 people who voted for the Liberals, should have a strong voice in this place as well. That is what we are striving to do. It would not be fair and it would not be representative if we simply signed up to the government in all that they do. Having debates and disagreements is not a bad thing. The challenge is how we conduct ourselves in that process.

Today's motion is specifically about participation in the budget process or, more precisely, beyond the budget process. I believe it is about how money is spent. There is a slight distinction there. We have got to be careful that we do not talk just about the budget process. We should be talking about the outcomes, not just the process. The process is important but the process should not be made irrelevant unless it is followed through. Whilst that might be a little semantic or a little pedantic, I think it is an important distinction.

Whilst having panels and sample groups is one way forward, as highlighted in 4(a)(iv) in Ms Le Couteur's motion, I think there are other ways that we should also consider as well. When you have panels that are meant to be representative, it is fraught. We in effect have a 25-member panel in this place and it is fraught. We do the best we can, we try to be representative but there are always going to be people who disagree with what happens here. That is going to be exactly the same for any other panel. Whether it is called a citizens jury, whether it is called an opinion poll, whether it is called a participatory budgeting sample or panel, they are always going to be fraught.

Ultimately the information will get fed into decision-makers who will hopefully produce better decisions but there still have to be decision-makers who take on board what has happened and are therefore able to actually cast judgement.

To that end, I am also a little concerned about this process being controlled by the government as well. To have a panel that feeds straight into a department and then the money goes out from that department without ever coming to this place requires us to in effect approve an appropriation of 20 per cent of the city services budget and then to relinquish control of that. I do not think that is appropriate, I do not think that is prudent and I do not think that really is meeting our obligations in this place.

If we were to have a panel like this and it was going to be somewhat binding, I really think it would be better coming out of the Assembly rather than coming out of a particular government agency. The public servants in that agency have a responsibility to the government of the day and, to that end, I think there is potentially a conflict that could arise here. Therefore I think it would be much better if there were a panel that fed into this place or a subsidiary of this place, namely a Legislative Assembly committee. I think there is some more work that can be done that will better achieve what Ms Le Couteur is looking for.

The opposition is very much open to this concept. We are open to the idea of engaging the community in much better ways than is currently taking place. However I think the detail about how the panel is constituted and how those decisions are enacted are very important components that have not been addressed as yet. I do agree with the principle and I am certainly willing to commit the opposition to working with other members of this place to see if there can be a good way forward. Through a committee process we might be able to achieve something along the lines of what has been put forward.

The opposition will be supporting the amendment put forward by Mr Barr. Whether that means we are representative of the 182,000 voters in Canberra who would not want this motion to get up and would want the amendment to get up, who knows. We will use our judgement to cast our votes accordingly but we do think that there is a principle to uphold here. To that end we will be happy to support an amended motion.

**MS FITZHARRIS** (Yerrabi—Minister for Health and Wellbeing, Minister for Transport and City Services and Minister for Higher Education, Training and Research) (10.31): I thank Ms Le Couteur for bringing this motion forward. As the Chief Minister and the Leader of the Opposition have said, it builds on much discussion we have in this place on a daily basis.

In particular I want to comment on those elements that relate to the city services budget because, as we know, everyday Canberrans right across the city come into contact with the city services that are managed by the government and delivered very well by Transport Canberra and City Services. I would like to outline for members what many already know but remind them if they have forgotten.

TCCS undertakes a wide range of community engagement activities every day, gathering and evaluating feedback to provide better community services for our city. Some of these include responding daily, frequently, to inquiries from the public through Access Canberra, through ministerials or through direct TCCS contact points

on the phone, in person and online; frequent feedback to and from local and social media; carrying out numerous surveys, engagements, focus groups, reference groups, community pop-up stalls and workshops right across Canberra to inform current delivery and future planning for transport and city services; working on the ground with the community and community groups, responding to their needs, providing essential services that we all know about such as infrastructure maintenance, cleaning services, garbage collection, graffiti, tree management and much more.

As part of TCCS's commitment to improving services the directorate undertakes an annual community engagement survey. It assesses Canberrans' views on the services provided as well as their experience and satisfaction levels. These results inform continuous improvement priorities and are referenced in the annual report, contributing to its accountability indicators. TCCS also undertakes a separate quarterly satisfaction survey assessing the community's views on parks, sportsgrounds and open spaces. These results inform our planning, development and management of the urban environment to ensure it continues to support the contribution that recreation and active travel, in particular, make to the wellbeing of Canberrans.

Indeed, TCCS as a new directorate, just over a year old, has had a considerable focus on customer and community experience. They have recruited a dedicated customer experience branch which has been tasked with developing the understanding of customer needs and actively responding to them, working across the organisation to enhance current service delivery and shape future service design. TCCS also work very closely with colleagues across government, particularly Access Canberra, as well as our service providers to explore how we can use digital technology to open interactive channels for customers to engage with the directorate.

The directorate and staff are committed to making the customer experience as simple and effective as it can be and will continue to develop our services to that aim. As the government and the minister responsible, we recognise the importance of meaningful and representative engagement to inform the delivery of Canberra's city services. In this year's budget for city services there are, indeed, priorities from a customer perspective, with indicators and targets to continue to improve customer satisfaction.

One of the most significant items in this budget is the better suburbs initiative. The primary purpose of the better suburbs initiative is to sustainably improve the delivery of services to best meet community and stakeholder needs. I am very excited that in the next couple of weeks we will start a very significant consultation approach including targeted community surveys, community forums and workshops. This feedback will inform changes and improvements to our service delivery to make the services we provide more transparent, accessible and responsive.

We will also see, through this initiative, better road maintenance, safety in school zones, better playground and sporting facilities, weed control and graffiti management, along with many more citywide benefits. We will also continue the rollout of initiatives such as the green bins, a kerbside collection service for bulky waste and soon a container deposit scheme as well as continuing work with pet owners, investing in active travel and public transport.

All of this work I outline to show that we already do a lot but there is much that we can build on. I have asked TCCS to look at new ways that we can engage the community. Looking at examples from across the country, another initiative is the fund my neighbourhood initiative from the South Australian government which goes to grants but is also a really exciting platform that we could potentially use to better inform our service delivery.

I am certainly informed by the numerous petitions we have received this year. Obviously with a very active community and active MLAs we are seeing a lot of proposals come forward, particularly from active members of the Assembly. We really do need to manage this because, for every petition from 300 people wanting to improve a playground, for example, in their neighbourhood, there will be one from the suburb next door. As Mr Coe outlined well, consensus is not always possible.

I think of the sometimes fraught assessment that TCCS needs to make about traffic calming measures. For the number of letters that I may receive demanding traffic calming measures on a particular street, I will likely receive, as Mr Rattenbury would know having been the city services minister, an equal number of letters saying, "Please get rid of these awful traffic calming measures."

There are a lot of issues that it is incumbent on the government to weigh up in terms of how we prioritise our investments. Ms Le Couteur asked whether we should invest in more playgrounds or more roads. We have to find the right balance in our investments and the right mechanisms for doing that. We already do a lot.

I really welcome this motion and the amendment, because this enables us to progress the work that we are already doing to do even more in how we engage the community and how the community also come to understand some of these trade-offs that the government needs to make—trade-offs between amenities, sustainability, safety and funding priorities—and that is why it is really exciting to see the first citizen jury in Canberra looking at the issue of CTP which does affect everyone across the territory.

I welcome this discussion and I look forward to TCCS continuing to deliver and take on board many of the suggestions made today.

**MS LE COUTEUR** (Murrumbidgee) (10.38): I will be very brief. I thank all three speakers for their support for the concept of participatory budgeting. The Greens will support Mr Barr's amendment. It probably reflects a greater understanding of the realities of budget cycles than I have. I think it is very good that all parties here clearly see that we need to improve how the citizens of Canberra are engaged with government and are prepared to support a positive way forward to hopefully a better budget process.

Amendment agreed to.

Original question, as amended, resolved in the affirmative.

## Legislative Assembly—sub judice convention

### Statement by Speaker

**MADAM SPEAKER:** Before I call the Clerk for item No 2, I wish to make some statements concerning the application of the sub judice continuing resolution of the Assembly. The sub judice convention, as described in the sixth edition of *House of Representatives practice* is:

... subject to the right of the House to legislate on any matter, matters awaiting adjudication in a court of law should not be brought forward in debate, motions or questions.

Continuing resolution 10 of the Assembly provides that the Assembly shall apply certain rules where sub judice matters arise.

I note that in Mr Wall's notice No 2, mention is made of "the multiple arms of the CFMEU that have been uncovered as a result of the Royal Commission" and "the number of special land deals struck between the ACT Government and CFMEU affiliated entities".

I am aware that there are matters before the court between the CFMEU and a member of this Assembly, so I ask that when you are addressing this motion, you avoid canvassing issues that may be affected by that case. It is also a timely reminder to committees: following discussions of matters that have been raised with me, committees are also covered by this continuing resolution.

## Trade unions—relationship with government

**MR WALL** (Brindabella) (10.41): I move:

That this Assembly:

(1) notes:

- (a) the unwavering political affiliation between ACT Labor and the Union movement;
- (b) the financial contribution made by various Unions in the ACT to the ACT Labor Party and individual Labor MLAs;
- (c) the influence UnionsACT have over ACT Government procurement for goods and services as prescribed by the Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) between the ACT Government and UnionsACT;
- (d) the influence that UnionsACT have over which organisations Labor MLAs can and can't meet with;
- (e) in 2016, the Royal Commission into Trade Union Governance and Corruption found evidence of union bullying, intimidation and exclusion on worksites across Australia and in the ACT;

- (f) the multiple funding arms of the CFMEU that have been uncovered as a result of the Royal Commission;
  - (g) the number of special land deals struck between the ACT Government and CFMEU affiliated entities; and
  - (h) the ACT Government's plans to enshrine the MOU between UnionsACT and the ACT government in legislation; and
- (2) calls on the ACT Government to:
- (a) cease any plans to legislate for any function relating to the procurement of goods and services that is currently performed by the MOU between UnionsACT and the ACT Government; and
  - (b) assure the community that all members of the ACT Labor/Greens Government are acting free from undue external influence in accordance with the Ministerial Code of Conduct and/or Members Code of Conduct.

I bring this motion to the Assembly today to once again highlight the relationship between the ACT Labor Party, the members of the ACT Labor government and the union movement in this town, a relationship that will always have the potential to create undue influence over the decision-making process of the current Labor-Greens coalition government. It is more than fair to say that the commitment that the two organisations have to each other is unwavering.

I have spoken on the issue of union influence, raised questions over union corruption and highlighted the influence the union movement has over this government on a number of occasions in this place. In fact, to some, I may sound like a broken record. However, I maintain that many Canberra business owners, workers and, most importantly, the taxpayers of the ACT continue to be concerned about this issue. The issue of the connection between the union movement and the ACT government is significant and, what is more, does not pass the pub test.

The most significant impact to the general public comes via the memorandum of understanding between UnionsACT and the ACT government on the procurement of goods and services. What this MOU does is effectively hand over decision-making power, should they choose to exercise it, to the union movement within the territory.

Senator Michaelia Cash, the federal employment minister, hit the nail on the head when she stated this back in 2016, when the MOU first saw the light of day:

I have to say in the ACT, it appears has now four levels of government. You have the legislature, the executive, the judiciary and then of course there are the unions. Labor want to put the unions at the very top of the structure. There is no doubt that, based on this document, the ACT government runs a closed shop. In the ACT, it is determined by the unions and at a cost to the taxpayer.

When the deal was uncovered in 2016, there were many in this town who cried foul. The Property Council raised concerns over the MOU and said:

We support tender practices that require tenderers to have the capacity to complete a project as safely as can be reasonably expected. This is good for our local economy, industry, and the community.

However, referrals as stipulated in this MOU, mean that commercial-in-confidence tender details can be undermined.

We seek assurances from the Chief Minister that at no point in time were commercial terms revealed to UnionsACT for any procurement project.

This assurance will never, ever be provided on the public record, Madam Speaker. The master builders association have long campaigned against the deal and the infiltration by unions into the procurement process. They have said in relation to the MOU that at its heart, the MOU demands that unions be consulted as to who is awarded the tender; that consulting is defined as “more than a mere exchange of information”; and that for the consultation to be effective “the participants must be contributing to the decision making process not only in appearance but in fact”. This clearly goes well beyond the normal understanding of consultation and is effectively a veto handed to the unions by the ACT government.

The MOU remained a secret document. Its existence extended well before the public light was shone. The document remained secret despite the attention that the ACT branch of the CFMEU drew during the royal commission into trade unions, through the numerous allegations of bullying, standover tactics and blackmail that were reported to have occurred on a regular basis on Canberra building sites. It remains extremely alarming that companies seeking to work on government contracts were, and still are, required to provide the unions with personal information of employees such as names and addresses, should the unions ask for it.

The MBA have said: “The backroom deals come at great cost and zero value. The CFMEU does not provide construction services. The only unique service they provide in the ACT is protection: protection from their own thuggery and protection from competition for those who sign up.”

The Council of Small Business has called the MOU with unions a disgrace. Council of Small Business Australia suggested that innovation in this town was stifled by corruption, secret deals and misinformation. We know that a number of the large current government contracts have been awarded to companies outside of the ACT because of the existence of the MOU with unions and the unions’ ability to influence the business purchasing decisions of government.

The end result has been an increase in costs, costs on projects that ultimately end up costing the ACT taxpayer. That is, deals are being done with unions in this town to win work, forcing the ACT ratepayer to pay over the margin for work that is being done, compared to other jurisdictions. At the end of the day, it is ratepayers who are burdened with the extra cost of the lacklustre performance and integrity of many of those members opposite and the government that they choose to run.

I reiterate my calls to this government to cease their plans to enshrine any aspect of the MOU in legislation. This is a step too far and a move that will never be supported by the Canberra Liberals. Any attempt to legislate unions' right of veto, unions' ability to run the procurement process in this town, will not be supported by those in the opposition.

As I have said in this place numerous times previously, you need to follow the money. Unions in the ACT, specifically the CFMEU and the CFMEU-owned Tradies clubs, are the major financial contributors to members of this government. Those opposite embrace their individual connections to the union movement. After all, most of them would not be in this place were it not for the backing—financial, political or in-kind support—offered to them by the union movement.

We know that in the world of the ALP preselection process, the support of the unions is crucial to success. Union members are the powerbrokers behind the Labor Party. We only need to have a look at recent history and remember the fate of Mr Corbell, a long-serving minister in the Labor government, and what happened to him when he no longer had the support of the union, particularly the CFMEU.

A number of those opposite openly acknowledge and applaud the likes of the CFMEU and the TWU for their support in their campaigns, and owe their election to this place in part to those organisations. Not once do any of them denounce the bullying tactics, the thuggery that has been perpetrated by some union officials, both locally and nationally. One of the most abhorrent examples recently was the public comments of John Setka from the Victorian CFMEU, arguing to out the names, addresses and details of public employees of the Fair Work Commission to intimidate people from doing the jobs that they are employed to do.

I myself have been a subject of these kinds of bullying and harassment tactics that have become a hallmark employed by unions both nationally and, particularly, here in the ACT. I remind members of the robocall that was placed into my electorate to spread complete misinformation to some 20,000 phone numbers in the electorate of Brindabella. That sought to completely miscommunicate comments and my views. But never let the truth get in the way of a good story, Madam Speaker. The unions will tell their story, run their campaigns and continue to seek to influence, perturb and intimidate elected officials in this town simply for asking questions through the scrutiny function which we are elected to do.

It is also worth noting that the bullying tactics of the CFMEU continue to follow Mr Hanson to this day. The Canberra Liberals have shined a light on the dodgy land deal done between the ACT government, led by Mr Barr, and the CFMEU-aligned Tradies club. This deal is exactly the kind of deal that simply does not wash with the general public. Again, the pub test is failed here.

It goes like this, Madam Speaker. In December 2014, the government pays \$3.9 million to purchase the CFMEU headquarters. The CFMEU then continue to be housed in this building, paying absolute peppercorn rent. To top things off, another

Dickson site is secretly transferred to the Tradies group, a site that is ripe for development potential. All the while, the government is unable to state the business case or the purpose for this land acquisition. Despite being forced to provide information on these deals through a motion brought to this place by Mr Coe, supported by the Greens, questions remain. Why were there only three days between the exchange of contracts and the settlement? Why this site? Who is responsible? What was the land purchased for?

Madam Speaker, let us also not forget the motivator for this motion, which is a letter that I understand was sent by UnionsACT to Labor members of this place just a couple of weeks ago after two members thought to do the right thing by their community and attend an awards night that celebrates the ACT's construction industry, hosted by the master builders association. That letter sought to demand that members of the government, backbench or frontbench, disclose any intention they have to meet or engage with the master builders association to their union masters before or immediately after engaging with the community organisation. That in itself is a restriction on the freedoms that the community place on us to do our jobs effectively and free from external influence or persuasion. That simply undermines the democratic process which we are part of.

In light of the unequivocal links to the union movement and a number of questionable decisions that are directly linked to the union movement, I and my colleagues in the Canberra Liberals believe that it is incumbent on this government and the Chief Minister, Mr Barr, to ensure that there are open and transparent processes in place when dealing with third-party organisations. There must be transparency and robust policies in place to ensure that undue influence does not reign supreme. In the interests of fairness, I commend my motion to the Assembly.

**MR BARR** (Kurrajong—Chief Minister, Treasurer, Minister for Economic Development and Minister for Tourism and Major Events) (10.52): I move:

Omit all words after “That this Assembly”, substitute:

“(1) notes:

- (a) the Australian Labor Party is Australia's oldest political party, and that its history is intertwined with the history of Australia's democracy and labour movement;
- (b) Labor's commitment to fairness at work;
- (c) the importance of public information sharing and feedback from stakeholders and the community as part of the overall evaluation process on government tenders; and
- (d) the need to ensure ACT Government procurement activity includes fair consideration of the rights of workers, in addition to ensuring providers:
  - (i) are accountable to the public;
  - (ii) promote quality; and

- (iii) promote local employment; and
- (2) further notes that the Government:
  - (a) remains committed to these principles of protecting the health and safety of Canberra workers, and ensuring government procurement is conducted in an accountable manner; and
  - (b) will bring forward legislation to establish a Local Jobs Code within 12 months, which will ensure procurement decisions deliver better outcomes for Canberra workers by requiring employers to adopt the highest ethical, safety and labour standards.”.

As ACT Labor leader, I am very proud of the union movement’s long and established links with the Labor Party. We are Australia’s oldest political party. The clue to our fundamental beliefs in the value of fairness in the workplace and our commitment to workers is in the name of the party, the Labor Party, as opposed to those opposite, whose name completely belies their outlook on public policy in this country. You are not liberal; you are conservative, and you should change your name to reflect that. Cory Bernardi got it right.

But, Madam Speaker, I digress. The established links between the union movement and the Labor Party have been a feature of the history of the Labor Party going back over more than a century. Those links have made Australia one of the best and safest places to work in the world. The ACT government is committed to fairness within the workplace for all workers, and will continue to promote this throughout government policy.

The government, through infrastructure, finance and capital works, takes into account information from many stakeholders when assessing tenders. This is good governance. Consultation with unions makes up a small component of this. Consultation with industry representative bodies makes up a larger component of this.

The current MOU does not give UnionsACT any power of veto over procurement decisions. It simply does not. The government is committed to all procurement activity, including fair consideration of the rights of workers, in addition to ensuring that providers are accountable to the public, promote quality and promote local employment.

The government remains committed to these principles. We will legislate a local jobs code which will deliver better outcomes for Canberra’s workers by encouraging employers to adopt the highest ethical and labour standards. We are committed to protecting the health and safety of Canberra’s workers through new initiatives in this year’s budget, in Access Canberra and WorkSafe ACT, including additional WorkSafe ACT inspectors and changes to the role of the Work Safety Commissioner.

The amendment I move today ensures that the government remains committed to the principles of protecting health and safety and that government procurement is

conducted in an accountable manner. It commits us to bringing forward legislation to establish our local jobs code within 12 months, which will ensure that procurement decisions deliver better outcomes for Canberra workers by requiring employers to adopt the highest ethical safety and labour standards. Surely even those union-hating union-bashers opposite would not be opposed to the highest possible ethical, safety and labour standards being required for ACT government procurement. I commend my amendment to the Assembly.

**MR RATTENBURY (10.55):** I welcome the opportunity yet again to speak on the matter of the MOU between the ACT government and UnionsACT. The Greens will not be supporting the motion in its original form, as I believe it is simply a political attack on unions and the union movement. But we will be supporting the amendment brought forward by the Chief Minister.

While, as a member of the Assembly and a minister within the government, I did not play a role in the negotiation and drafting of the MOU between the government and UnionsACT, the Greens do support strong protections for workers and worker safety. It is a sad reality that ACT workplaces are not immune from incidents of unsafe workplace practices, or instances of worker exploitation, and we must continue to act where we can to stamp out such problems in the Canberra community.

We have spoken many times in this place about the content and the purpose of the MOU with UnionsACT. As has been reiterated many times, the effect of the MOU is to provide the ACT government with an opportunity to consult with a peak body representing workers in the territory. The MOU provides the mechanism for the government to receive information on the industrial relations and safety track record of potential service providers.

The drafting of the motion by Mr Wall makes it clear that this is simply an attack on the union movement; at the same time we consider those attacks to be spurious and overstated. This attempt to de-legitimise the MOU between the ACT government and UnionsACT on the basis of assertions about the behaviours of individuals and individual unions, I believe, starts to venture into the realms of conspiracy theories.

I find it very insightful that the Canberra Liberals seek to raise the issue of political donations through this motion. Line No 2 of Mr Wall's motion references the financial contributions from unions to the ACT Labor Party. If Mr Wall is seeking to suggest that the ACT Labor Party is unduly influenced by donations from the union movement, he may be attempting to argue that there should in fact be restrictions on who can make and receive political donations in the ACT.

This would certainly be a new direction for the Liberal Party here in the ACT. Having been in this place when, frankly, the Labor and Liberal parties combined to unpick the restrictions that were in place on donations here in the territory, I would be very happy to have a conversation with the Liberal Party after this debate today about moves we might make together to reconsider that unfortunate move and look at what restrictions we might put on donations here in the territory, if they are up for that conversation.

This certainly is not the first time that Mr Wall has brought forward a motion concerning the MOU with UnionsACT. It is clear that this motion is an attempt to cobble together a range of pretty tenuous attacks on the wider union movement and the ACT government's engagement with UnionsACT. I do not believe the motion is about the MOU. It is not about the workplace standards for procurement, safety and labour in the ACT. It is simply a political statement on behalf of Mr Wall and his colleagues. Mr Wall seems particularly to have an axe to grind when it comes to the union movement.

The ACT Greens have long campaigned in support of the rights of workers and the need to have sufficient protections in place to prevent the exploitation of workers and exposure to unsafe workplaces and the union movement has an essential role in providing these protections. As I have said previously in this place, through their work, unions are intimately involved with companies, their projects, their records and their interactions with the law, such as through Fair Work Australia. Giving unions an easy avenue to provide this information to procurement officials is useful. The officials then use it in their decision-making if it is relevant. The information is, of course, viewed carefully and critically, just as the officials view any information they receive. This is all useful information when it comes to making decisions that properly take into account worker health and safety. That is an outcome all of us should want. We should all want the safest workplaces, and for workers' rights to be protected and respected.

Other stakeholders also provide procurement officials with information. The business community provides procurement officials with information as well. As I have observed in this place in the past, the suggestion that the provision of information by unions to officials is disproportionately considered is actually an interesting observation on the conduct of the public service. Mr Wall's suggestions indicate that he does not believe the public service is acting in an independent way in this regard. I think that is regrettable, and I think it would be worth tempering those remarks in reflecting on the officers in procurement.

I heard him talk today about a range of assertions around corruption. If he has that information, he should bring it publicly forward. He should table it in this place. He should give it to the press, if he believes that to be the case. If that is the case, this place should know about it. We should see the examples of it. I think everyone in this place would be keen to act on concrete evidence of that information.

That is why the Greens were the first party at the ACT election to put forward the notion of an integrity commission. I am pleased that we are now working on that. Certainly, that will provide a more formal environment. But we need not wait until an integrity commission is in place, if Mr Wall has concrete information.

An essential part of this procurement process is ensuring that the ACT government models best practice procurement processes. In doing this, the government has an obligation to engage services from providers that are meeting their workplace health and safety obligations to their employees.

I note that the ACT government has limited ability to legislate on many aspects of industrial relations law, as most of it resides within the ambit of the commonwealth government, but it would be entirely appropriate for the ACT government to leverage the abilities that it does have to ensure that it is supporting an ACT economy that provides a fair and safe go for Canberra workers.

I note that the latter part of Mr Wall's motion refers to the fact that there has been an indication that legislation will come forward to move some of the elements from the MOU into legislation. I am surprised by Mr Wall's positioning on this now because one of his key concerns about the MOU has been its apparently secret nature. I think it was unfortunate that many people did not know about it, so I agree with him to some extent. It was regrettable that it was seen in that way, because it does invite a degree of conspiracy theory. It invites insinuations that I think are regrettable. Surely, it is better to have relevant elements brought forward in legislation.

We can have a debate in this place about whether it is appropriate or not for those to be the protections for workers in our community. Surely, this is a better approach. For Mr Wall to rule it out, out of hand, is regrettable. It means that we will not be having a discussion on the merits of whether particular provisions are the right provisions or not. It simply says there is an ideological stance being taken from the get-go when it comes to issues of workers' safety, and I think that is unfortunate.

It is quite appropriate that we have procurement processes that invite a degree of ethical standards, that invite a degree of standards that reflect the values of our community. I think it is a clear value of this community that we should have safe workplaces.

**MR PARTON** (Brindabella) (11.03): I rise to support the motion in its original form. This is not an anti-union motion. Unions have played a major role in making this country as great as it is today, and I support the core business of unions in advocating for workers and giving a voice to those who have none. But when that role becomes expanded into having a major say in every aspect of our lives, I think things have gone too far. The major benefit of union motions in this place is that we know Mr Pettersson will be awake, and I think that is a win for democracy.

I have spent six months here, listening to some of the rubbish that comes from the other side, and one of the things that surprises me most—and it happens not just in this place; it happens out in the public space, and it happens sometimes in social media—is when those opposite and others make the assertion that the Liberals are in the pockets of property developers: these evil property developers. There was almost a veiled suggestion from Mr Rattenbury along those lines, and I have heard Mr Steel make these calls as well.

I know that those opposite—because we hear from Mr Barr pretty much every day in here—are well aware of the fact that we have not been in government for some time, so God knows what these evil property developers could possibly have achieved by

whispering into our ear. But it amuses me so much in particular when it comes from a political party, the members of which are no more than puppets of UnionsACT, the CFMEU and others.

Those opposite can smirk; I notice they have been smiling and laughing all the way along. Don't smirk, shake your heads and laugh about it, because if you laugh too loudly, you might get another stern letter from Alex White. You may be summoned to a meeting with Dean Hall; or you may have some problems doing the numbers for preselection.

I still cannot quite believe that Alex White would have the gall to write to Labor members of this place and demand that he should have the power of veto over whom they meet and when they meet them. I suppose, as has been outlined by Mr Wall, we should not have all that much difficulty in coming to terms with it, when you consider the extraordinary memorandum of understanding between UnionsACT and the ACT government, which has been described by some in the public space as "formalised corruption".

It has been roundly criticised across the nation, and I am dismayed to think that this government is now considering further formalising this extraordinary agreement in legislation. I would love to have been a fly on the wall during some of the conversations between government and union members on this point and to see just who is being held over a barrel.

It is no wonder that unions are a law unto themselves here in the ACT, because who is going to stop them, when they have so much influence over each member of the government, when they can so easily mobilise their numbers to bring about an outcome? Sometimes it is very clear that parliamentary proceedings in this chamber are actually more like a Punch and Judy puppet show, and I think we all know who the puppetmasters are.

As Mr Wall's motion clearly states, the 2016 royal commission into trade union governance found evidence of union bullying and intimidation, and we need look no further than the recent robocall campaign against my colleague Mr Wall by the unions. What a dog act that was: to systematically target a member of this place for daring to raise legitimate questions in a committee hearing.

Will the unions come for me after speaking out in this fashion? I do not know; they probably will. I am not sure how they will try to bully and intimidate me, but I would almost be disappointed if they did not have a go.

*Mr Barr interjecting—*

**MR PARTON:** Let me be abundantly clear: what we are debating here has very little to do with politics of the left versus the right. It does not have much to do with Liberal versus Labor. What we are debating today is whether the people of Canberra have the right to be truly represented by members in this place free from undue external influence, irrespective of where that influence may come from. I am always pleased to get a rise from you, Mr Barr.

**MR PETTERSSON** (Yerrabi) (11.08): I rise today to speak in favour of the amendment and against the original wording of Mr Wall's motion. It seems like we cannot go a single week in this place without an ideological attack from those opposite on unions and working people. Their ideological obsession on this issue puts them out of step with the wider Canberra community. It is just another example of why they are not ready for government. The Chief Minister just gave a detailed explanation of the reason that this government is pursuing a secure local jobs package. Minister Rachel Stephen-Smith also spoke yesterday in a ministerial statement about the importance of this policy.

We seem to see reports on a regular basis of Canberrans being negatively affected by job insecurity, unsafe work environments and wage theft. This package will promote job security and ensure that government contracts are awarded only to companies that meet the highest ethical and labour standards. That is what Canberrans expect.

There seems to be an insinuation in several points in the original motion that implies something rather sinister. Subparagraph 2(b) seems to suggest that members of the ACT Labor Party and the Greens may be acting under external undue influence. That implication is ridiculous. The codified links between the Labor Party and the trade union movement go back over a century. Trade unions are not external to the Labor Party. They are an intrinsic part of it. Our support for working people and their right to collectively organise are the key foundations of our party. To suggest that our policies on these matters reflect anything other than our longstanding, united belief—

**Mrs Jones:** Oh, so you have been corrupt forever.

**MR PETTERSSON:** is patently ridiculous. Now, Madam Assistant Speaker—

**Mr Gentleman:** Point of order, Madam Assistant Speaker.

**MADAM ASSISTANT SPEAKER** (Ms Lee): Mr Pettersson, there is a point of order.

**Mr Gentleman:** The interjection from Mrs Jones is completely unparliamentary. I ask that she apologise and retract that interjection.

**MRS JONES:** I withdraw.

**MADAM ASSISTANT SPEAKER:** Mrs Jones, thank you. Mr Pettersson.

**MR PETTERSSON:** Thank you, Madam Assistant Speaker. Our policies are clearly written by our members, but the suggestion that parties in this place might be affected by donations is an interesting one. As Mr Wall has just said, "follow the money". I think this should be explored further, as some members of the Canberra Liberals seem particularly concerned about it.

What is truly extraordinary is that those opposite would dare to accuse the government of being for sale when they have demonstrated on multiple occasions that their policies are written by their donors. In the lead-up—

**Mrs Jones:** Like what?

**MR PETTERSSON:** Thank you for asking, Mrs Jones. In the lead-up to the last election, we saw the Liberal Party abandon its longstanding policies on the casino for some big buck donations from the Canberra clubs community. That is right; the Liberal Party, the people in this chamber trying to accuse Labor of being dodgy, cannot even keep their story straight when it comes to pokies in the casino. Who would have thought that it would take only a couple of donations to an anti-Labor campaign from Canberra clubs to get the Liberals singing their no pokies in the casino song?

We all know that the Canberra Liberals actually support pokies in the casino. They did when they were last in government and they did until there were donations on the line. I note that everyone has gone quiet on their side. I know we might be going down memory lane to think back to the last time the Canberra Liberals were given any authority in this place. In their time in government, however, they were very clear in their policy on this matter. Some might even suggest that their view back then, supporting pokies in the casino, had something to do with the sizeable donations the casino made to the Carnell government, but we will let others judge that.

The Carnell government was a while ago. For those interested on the other side, I think I was actually getting ready for kindergarten. What were the Liberals saying more recently? Funnily enough, we have seen this issue raised by a number of Liberal MLAs in recent times. Mr Hanson seemed to be very concerned that the lack of pokies in the casino put Canberra at a competitive disadvantage. How very noble of him!

Those concerns of the Canberra Liberals disappeared, however, when the clubs came along with their cheque book to bolster their shot at government. Let us not forget Mr Parton, who is wide awake on the other side of the chamber. He is ready to go: the infamous, the famous shadow minister for gaming and racing, famous for his Facebook videos. I enjoy watching them, Mr Parton.

Back in 2008 when he was a Liberal Party sleeper cell, Mr Parton advocated for getting pokies into the casino. As late as 2010, Mr Parton was still advocating for pokies in the casino. But, in 2016, when Mr Parton comes in from the cold and reveals himself as a Liberal Party operative, he does a complete 180. He was pokie-Parto then but it seems like he is pay-cheque-Parto these days. Again, I am sure this policy change had very little to do with the clubs bank rolling an anti-Labor campaign. I am sure Mr Parton has a compelling reason for his views on this matter changing overnight. The Liberals have been both for and against pokies in the casino, but this seems to be dictated purely by their donations.

In respect of insurance reform, you mentioned property developers before; that is not where we are going. Insurance reform is another issue you have shown your shady behaviour on. Ahead of both the 2012 and 2016 elections we saw a number of personal injury law firms making substantial donations to the Canberra Liberals. I cannot imagine that these personal injury law firms only discovered their passion for politics a decade into the 21st century. But there they were in 2012 handing over cash donations in record amounts. As an aside for those watching, they also made substantial donations to Chic Henry, another “independent” but, in reality, a sleeper cell who tried to trick the Canberra community into voting for him as an independent. Mr Wall just shrank into his seat when I mentioned that one.

Why would a well-established injury law firm make donations to an obscure minor party candidate? It is almost like they were let in on the Liberal shenanigans. And surprise, surprise, Madam Assistant Speaker! When insurance reform came before the Assembly in 2012, not only did the Liberals oppose every amendment put forward. They actually sought to reverse previous reforms that would add more time and legal costs to the injured parties if the amendments were to get up.

You know what, Madam Assistant Speaker? I am somewhat new to this place, as many members are. In no way do I claim to be an expert in how any vote in this place will go down. However, I am very curious how the Canberra Liberals will respond to the community panel on insurance reform announced by the Chief Minister yesterday.

I turn to the largest donation ever recorded in ACT politics. The donor, a prominent personal injury lawyer, claimed he was spurred to give the donation to the Canberra Liberals because of his concerns about the Manuka Oval redevelopment. A noble cause, indeed, except the Canberra Liberals were actually supporting the proposal. Mr Hanson very publicly stated that he endorsed the “significant and creative investment in the Manuka Oval precinct”. If you are going to line up donations for your policy flip-flops, can you at least get your story straight before you do it?

One cannot help but think that this donor’s record-breaking donation was more about influencing the Canberra Liberals’ ongoing support to quash insurance reform than it was to prop up the Canberra Liberals’ non-existent campaign to stop redevelopment at Manuka. What we see here is a pretty clear pattern. The Canberra Liberals’ policy is up to the highest bidder. Ideology be damned! Their suggestions that Labor members are under any sort of external influence reveals more about themselves than it does about us.

The Labor MLAs in this chamber are proudly bound by the ACT Labor Party; our policies are decided by our members and, yes, that does include trade unions. Labor’s policies reflect our longstanding values and ideals. Your policies reflect the last donation you got. I support the amended motion.

**MR COE** (Yerrabi—Leader of the Opposition) (11.17): I have been inspired to contribute to this debate by the insightful contributions of those opposite. What captured me in particular, Madam Assistant Speaker, was Mr Pettersson’s line when

he said that the union movement is an intrinsic part of the Labor Party. Therefore, what the MOU is is actually a deal with the Labor Party. We actually have an even dodgier deal than it originally appeared. By Mr Pettersson saying that the union movement is in fact part of the Labor Party, we now have a situation whereby veto power is being given to the party with regard to tenders and contracts.

To date the government has always said that the issuing of tenders and contracts has always been separate to the role of politics and also separate to the role of politicians. But by in effect handing over power to the Labor Party itself for the issuing of contracts, this is an extraordinary development—

**Mr Barr:** I think you are overreaching a little, Alistair.

**MR COE:** It is all very well for Mr Barr to say that I am overreaching, but it was Mr Pettersson who said that the union movement is an intrinsic part of the Labor Party. He did not say the Labor cause; he said the Labor Party. And if they are a part of the Labor Party, then we have a situation whereby the Labor Party is actually the determinant of where the contracts are awarded in the ACT. The Labor Party is the one that ticks and flicks which company gets public money in the ACT.

It is all very well for Mr Pettersson to try to draw a long bow with regard to a few circumstances, but you do not need to draw a very long bow to get to the Labor Club, do you? Are you going to say that the Labor Club is somehow separate to the Labor Party or is that an intrinsic part of the Labor Party as well? The truth is in the name, is it not, Mr Barr? The truth is in the name. What we have is a situation in Braddon whereby a 35-unit apartment complex by a developer—no less, the Labor Club—did not pay lease variation charge.

*Mrs Jones interjecting—*

**MR COE:** Meanwhile, you do a dual occupancy—

**Mr Barr:** Point of order, Madam Speaker. Mrs Jones, having previously been asked to withdraw an unparliamentary slur, has repeated it again just then.

**MADAM ASSISTANT SPEAKER:** I must say I did not hear it.

**Mrs Jones:** On the point of order, is it unparliamentary to say that corrupt behaviour is corrupt?

**MADAM ASSISTANT SPEAKER:** Mrs Jones, I ask you to withdraw.

**Mrs Jones:** Pardon?

**MADAM ASSISTANT SPEAKER:** I ask you to withdraw.

**Mrs Jones:** I withdraw.

**MADAM ASSISTANT SPEAKER:** Thank you. Mr Coe.

**MR COE:** Thank you, Madam Assistant Speaker. You have a situation whereby if you do a dual occupancy development in Kambah, you have to pay \$60,000. But if you are doing a 35-apartment development in Braddon, you do not pay a cent. Developers in Canberra have never had a better friend than Andrew Barr and the Labor Party. That is the truth. But it is not just any developer; it is particular developers in Canberra. We all know that there are particular developers in Canberra that are doing very well because of specific decisions by this government. We all know that.

It is not every developer. It is not like anyone in Canberra can go and take risks and create opportunities—take a punt. It is only certain developers in Canberra. That is what is outrageous. Of course, one of those developers is the CFMEU through the Tradies club. Another one is the Labor Party through the Labor Club. Of course, there are a few others as well.

You need look only at the Auditor-General's report into certain land acquisitions by the LDA to get a picture of the preferential deals that this government is willing to make. This government is treating taxpayers' money with contempt. They are treating the resources of our territory with contempt. That is why they are willing to do special land deals right across the territory. That is why a situation was allowed to prevail whereby the ACT government bought a block of land in Dickson for \$3.9 million a week after Mr Barr came to power. A week after he came to power, the cheque is signed; three days after, contracts are exchanged. The tenant that was once the owner is still there paying \$1 a year. One dollar a year!

How many community groups are there in former school sites right across Canberra that are paying thousands of dollars a year for their rent? Meanwhile, the intrinsic part of the Labor Party gets their rent for \$1 a year after pocketing \$3.9 million.

**Mr Parton:** It goes a bit quiet here, doesn't it?

**MR COE:** It is outrageous. For Mr Pettersson to say that the union movement is an intrinsic part of the Labor Party is to say that the Labor Party has pocketed \$3.9 million through the sale of the Dickson block. Of course, you also have the outrageous circumstances with regard to the Labor Club's development in Braddon.

This government is conflicted and individual members on the other side are conflicted as well. That is why Canberrans can have no trust whatsoever in the current arrangements, let alone if the MOU is enshrined in legislation.

**MS CODY (Murrumbidgee) (11.25):** I would like to thank Mr Wall for the opportunity to yet again spruik this government's commitment to making sure the people of Canberra are treated fairly at work. Whilst the frequency of the opposition's highlighting of the government's achievements in this area is surprising, I must say it is very welcome.

I will be supporting Mr Barr's amendment, along with my colleagues who have already spoken. I am one of the majority of members of this Assembly who are in favour of providing the working people of the ACT with proper protection at work. I prefer construction and manual workers to go home with all their fingers and all their toes. I prefer cleaners not to have their lungs burnt by being exposed to inappropriate chemicals. I want to see everyone paid their fair superannuation, not just us here in the posh jobs. I prefer subcontractors to be paid on time.

I thought all of these things were just common sense. Mr Wall's ridiculous motion, however, seems to be motivated by a desire to do something different than that. Every time I hear a speech in this place by a Liberal describing the protections this government is delivering to local workers as a scandal, I ask myself: are fair pay and workplace safety really a scandal? I am for democracy, and for letting all voices be heard, but Mr Wall's motion is surely one of the weirder points of view I have heard.

If UnionsACT, or anyone else, can help the government achieve safer and fairer workplaces, I say: bring it on. Anyone who thinks providing fair and safe working conditions is undesirable has a nasty view of the world, and I am glad they are not in government.

**MR WALL** (Brindabella) (11.27): It is disappointing to see those opposite try to hide behind the standard argument of its being about protecting workers' rights, when there is intrinsic corruption and influencing from the union movement, impacting the daily decisions that the government makes in this place.

**Mr Barr:** A point of order, Madam Assistant Speaker.

**MADAM ASSISTANT SPEAKER:** Chief Minister.

**Mr Barr:** You have previously asked Mrs Jones to withdraw exactly the same language, because it is unparliamentary, and Mr Wall has, for the third time in this debate, identified individuals and referenced members on this side of the chamber in his language. You cannot make those allegations; they are unparliamentary, Madam Assistant Speaker. He should withdraw.

**MADAM ASSISTANT SPEAKER:** Thank you, Chief Minister. Mr Wall, I ask you to withdraw that word.

**MR WALL:** Madam Assistant Speaker, the comment was in reference to the operations of the union movement, not the character of those directly opposite, but for the benefit of Mr Barr, I will withdraw.

So many local businesses, particularly, lose out as a result of union-led influence dictating government policy in this town. Have a look at the two major construction projects happening in the territory at the moment: the capital metro project heading up Northbourne Avenue to Gungahlin and the University of Canberra public hospital. They are two of the biggest construction projects going on in Canberra at the moment, and there is an absolute absence of local content on those projects, light rail especially.

There were millions spent by the ACT government, and in contributions to organisations like the Canberra Business Chamber, to help promote local content on this project, and there is next to none, simply because deals were sewn up, particularly by the CFMEU, regarding who would and who would not be awarded contracts to work on that project. Those opposite have said, “It’s about protecting workers’ rights.” What about protecting the rights of ACT taxpayers to get value for money, when we as a territory are paying, in some instances, more than double what we need to be paying for construction services, simply because a deal has been done with their union mates?

The influence and the intertwined nature of the union movement and the government and the way that they operate run deep. There is a plethora of issues on the table. The MOU has been spoken about in some detail this morning. We have touched on donations. It seems that the donations and the influence that the intrinsic part of the Labor Party contribute to members and their campaigns and the party more broadly in an election footing is evidence that the Labor Party is wholly marching to the beat of the drum of the union leaders. Their preselections are influenced by this influence.

We can look at some government policy areas. There are the land deals at Dickson, selling a car park to the Dickson Tradies; the acquisition of the CFMEU headquarters for \$3.9 million and the peppercorn rent that has been paid since; and the very generous sale of the car park at Woden to the Tradies club. And what about the rent that the government paid back to them for use of the car park—assuming the car park was full for every moment of the day, paying the full parking ticket amount? That is an absolute win for any investor in this town, but that kind of option is available only to someone with the ear of those opposite.

It would be remiss not to remind members that, whilst the royal commission was going on, the then police minister was leaking information about AFP investigations through her staff back to the union movement. If those sorts of actions do not raise an eyebrow and get people asking questions about what on earth is going on amongst the government, I do not know what will. I understand that tomorrow the government will be bringing forward legislation for poker machines in the casino. We can only assume which clubs have already done deals to see their poker machine licences transferred over to a casino. I dare say it will be someone awfully close to this Labor government.

It also makes one really wonder as to the aversion this government has to anti-consorting laws. I remind everyone in this place of the evidence that came up during the royal commission—the use of outlaw motorcycle gangs on construction sites, running the intimidation network on behalf of unions as common practice—and then think of the ACT experience and the influence that unions have here. The cynic in me says perhaps there is something going on more broadly here in the ACT. The minister should come clean and explain clearly what, if any, influence the union movement has had around the implementation of consorting laws in the ACT. I believe it was in Victoria that there were some very clear examples of outlaw motorcycle gangs being the bagmen for the union movement. Is that happening in the ACT? What is being done to address it? And why is the minister so afraid of anti-consorting laws in this town? It really makes one wonder.

Question put:

That the amendment be agreed to.

The Assembly voted—

Ayes 13

Noes 9

Mr Barr	Ms Le Couteur	Mr Coe	Mr Parton
Ms Berry	Ms Orr	Mr Hanson	Mr Wall
Ms Burch	Mr Pettersson	Mrs Jones	
Ms Cheyne	Mr Ramsay	Mrs Kikkert	
Ms Cody	Mr Rattenbury	Ms Lawder	
Ms Fitzharris	Mr Steel	Ms Lee	
Mr Gentleman		Mr Milligan	

Question resolved in the affirmative.

Amendment agreed to.

Original question, as amended, resolved in the affirmative.

## Population growth

**MR PETTERSSON** (Yerrabi) (11.38): I move:

That this Assembly:

(1) notes that:

- (a) the ACT has seen a population increase from 356 586 people in 2011 to 406 403 people by the end of 2016, equating to growth of more than 11 percent in this period, the fastest growth rate of any State or Territory;
- (b) in the same period the number of families in the ACT has risen from 93 397 to 102 036;
- (c) Canberra's population grew by 7000 people in 2016 alone, and is projected to continue at 1.5 percent per year into the 2020s; and
- (d) much of this growth has been in Canberra's north, with the Gungahlin region growing by almost 24 000 people in the past five years;

(2) also notes that the ACT Government has, and continues to, enact forward thinking policy to accommodate this population growth, as evidenced by the \$2.8 billion infrastructure investment program delivered in the 2017 Budget which includes:

- (a) building Light Rail and investing \$54 million on upgrading the Territory's roads;

- (b) investing an additional \$210 million in our education system to upgrade and expand the capacity of ACT schools;
  - (c) delivering \$443 million for better health infrastructure for Canberra, including the construction of new Walk-in Centres in Gungahlin, the Weston Creek region and the Inner North; and
  - (d) investing in renewable energy which will assist with the transition towards a low-emission energy future and provide stability to energy prices; and
- (3) calls on the ACT Government to:
- (a) continue to invest in vital infrastructure, such as Light Rail, so as to ensure that Canberra can continue to accommodate this population growth; and
  - (b) support investment in health and education to ensure that Canberrans continue to receive world class services.

Canberra is a vibrant, welcoming and progressive city. Our community is part of what makes Canberra such a great place to live. The Canberra community is growing, with more and more people choosing to make our city their home. This growth presents amazing opportunities for Canberra. However, grasping these opportunities will require careful planning. Our government has always been forward thinking and I think the current works pipeline is evidence of this. However, there is always more to be done. It is vital that the government continues to commit to Canberra's future by building vital infrastructure now, before it is needed, before it is too late.

The most recent census demonstrated that the ACT is the fastest growing state or territory in the country. We have seen our population increase from roughly 357,000 people in 2011 to over 406,000 people in 2016. Last year alone our population grew by 7,000 people and it is projected to grow at 1.5 per cent per year over the next decade. That is why this Labor government has provided \$2.8 billion in the 2017-18 budget to continue to fund and build infrastructure for Canberra. These numerous projects will revitalise Canberra's suburbs, reduce congestion on our roads, improve ageing infrastructure across the city and, handily, create jobs.

The strong growth in population is particularly obvious in my electorate of Yerrabi, which is the fastest growing region in the ACT. Over the past five years the Gungahlin region has grown by almost 24,000 people. This growth will continue as the new suburbs of Jacka, Moncrieff, Taylor and Throsby are developed. Increased density has led to the development of new businesses and a vibrant town centre.

This increase in population is not without its challenges. As anyone who needs to get into the city before 9 am from Gungahlin can attest, this growth has tested our existing transport infrastructure. The government's current investment in transport, in particular the duplication of Horse Park Drive and Gundaroo Drive as well as building the first stage of the light rail network, will alleviate this pressure.

From the \$210 million for transport infrastructure in the 2017-18 budget, more than \$71 million will be invested in building better roads for Gungahlin and Belconnen: \$57 million of this will be dedicated to completing the duplication of Horse Park Drive between the Federal Highway and Mulligans Flat Road; and \$9.8 million will be devoted to duplicating Aikman Drive between Ginninderra Drive and Emu Bank, a key piece of infrastructure for the public hospital to be built at the University of Canberra. And we are not investing just in roads.

Public transport is a necessary component of any effective and efficient transport system. ACT Labor showed its commitment to that ideal by taking light rail to not one election but two elections. Construction has already started on stage 1. I know my constituents in Yerrabi and people right along the line are very excited at its commencement. But it will not stop just in Yerrabi. The government has also committed \$53.5 million to the second stage of light rail between the city and Woden.

Of course, a modern public transport system cannot rely just on roads and rail. The digital infrastructure that supports our transport system is becoming more and more important. \$2.1 million has been announced to progress the procurement of integrated bus and light rail ticketing. This will make it easier for Canberrans to use both buses and light rail to get around Canberra.

In the past five years the number of families in the ACT has risen from 93,000 to 102,000. With more families comes more Canberra kids. Our education system needs to grow to ensure that all Canberra kids receive a world-class education. The ACT government is meeting this growth by investing an additional \$210 million in our education system right across the territory. This investment will see over \$26 million in upgrades to expand schools in Gungahlin. The existing schools of Harrison, Gold Creek, Neville Bonner Primary School and Palmerston District School will all benefit from this investment. The government will also commence design and feasibility work to explore options for a new school in east Gungahlin.

The growth in suburbs like Harrison and Franklin has been extraordinary and, judging by the level of construction activity occurring currently, it is likely only to continue. It is great to see that we are preparing for that growth now.

I mentioned in my speech yesterday that schools do not just educate our children. They form an integral part of the community. They are often used not just by their school community but by various other community and sporting groups. The ACT government recognises this and that is why I am very pleased to see that this budget has increased the scope of the proposed north Gungahlin school so that it includes two playing fields.

Our growing population has also meant we need to invest more in our health system. With the federal Liberal government's repeated attacks on our healthcare system, state and territory governments must meet any shortfalls in funding. That is why we are investing an additional \$443 million in our health system. When others do less, this

government will do more. This includes investing \$236 million to plan, design and commence construction of the new SPIRE centre within the Canberra Hospital precinct.

The government will also be investing \$70 million to expand the Centenary Hospital for Women and Children. The Centenary hospital has been a tremendous success that has been of great benefit to the women and children in the Canberra community. This budget will see that great work continue by delivering a new ward with another 40 maternity beds.

Who could forget the nurse-led walk-in centre? After we announced a new nurse-led walk-in centre for Gungahlin in the election campaign last year hundreds of people spoke to me about how excited they were by this new announcement. I was delighted to join Minister Meegan Fitzharris in that announcement in Gungahlin a few months ago. This budget fulfils that commitment and I look forward to seeing those same constituents over the coming months and speaking to them about this vital investment. And it does not stop just with the walk-in centre. This government has also announced \$3.3 million to begin planning for enhanced north side hospital facilities.

Again, this is a government that plans for future growth in our city. Making Canberra sustainable is vital for our future. Investing in clean energy is not just good for the environment, it will also provide jobs and make Canberra internationally competitive. Our policies in reducing emissions by 2020 with wind generation, roof-top solar and voluntary GreenPower purchases are truly on the cutting edge of industry. These projects will deliver more than \$500 million in local benefits to the territory by 2020 by investing directly in jobs, trades training and research partnerships and supporting industry development initiatives such as the renewables innovation hub.

Canberra can, and will, create jobs for the future in the renewable energy and clean tech sectors. Investing in Canberra's future is an essential role of government. That is why we cannot stop now. The ACT government must continue to invest in our growing population.

**MR BARR** (Kurrajong—Chief Minister, Treasurer, Minister for Economic Development and Minister for Tourism and Major Events) (11.46): I thank Mr Pettersson for bringing forward this motion today. It is a timely discussion to focus on what is needed in our city to not only ensure that current population growth is harnessed for the good of all Canberrans but also the need to plan ahead. As we know, more people will be calling this city home. The 2016 consensus confirms why the government should be focused on that future growth, and I am pleased to advise the Assembly that we have been.

As of December last year, Canberra's population stood at 406,403 people, which means our city grew by almost 7,000 people over the course of 2016. That was a growth rate of 1.7 per cent, which was the second highest in the country. In the five years between the 2011 census and the 2016 census the territory's population grew by over 35,000 people, the fastest growing state or territory.

It is worth noting that more than half of this population increase came from the natural increase of births over deaths whilst fully one-third of our growth came from overseas migration. The 2016 census shows that our population remains younger than the Australian average, a median age of 35 compared with 38 nationally. We continue to be the best educated Australians, the happiest Australians, the healthiest Australians, the longest living Australians and we have the highest average earnings in the country. Thirty-two per cent of Canberrans, one in three, have attended post school study compared with around one in five nationally.

Population growth has been a contributor to the city's economic growth. Having more people increases demand for local goods and services. It certainly stimulates construction activity not only in the housing market but in other areas of construction activity. Clearly with more students coming to study in Canberra it is contributing to the growth of our single largest export earner, the higher education sector. In the four years between June 2012 and June 2016 the ACT's population grew by 7.1 per cent, helping our economy grow by 8.5 per cent.

The point worth emphasising here is that the population growth is contributing to our city's economic growth and over 26,000 local businesses benefit from a larger customer base. The 15,000 Canberrans who work in construction benefit from more and better local job opportunities. The 74,000 young people under the age of 15 years benefit from growing up in a thriving and more diverse city.

Fortunately, in this community there is not much sympathy for the "f-off, we are full" mentality that is seen in other parts of this country. I want to take this opportunity this morning to again emphasise that we welcome new Canberrans and that we see population growth as a strong positive for this community.

Much of the city's growth since the last census has been in our north with the Gungahlin region growing by almost 24,000 people between 2011 and 2016. Our inner suburbs and Woden also saw continued growth, adding around 7,800 people and 6,500 people, respectively.

These census figures reinforce the government's strategy of investing in our city so that we are ready for future growth and getting ahead of some of the congestion challenges that larger cities are facing. We do not want Sydney-style traffic jams to bank up. That is why we are building new infrastructure now. It is why work is well underway on stage 1 of light rail, linking the fastest growing part of our city with our CBD. It is why we are getting on with the planning of stage 2 of the network.

We are not waiting for bed block and long waiting lists to become a problem before investing in our health system. We are getting on with building a range of new health infrastructure, including the SPIRE centre at the Canberra Hospital, expanding the Centenary Hospital for Women and Children and planning for a future north side hospital.

We are working to ensure that every Canberra student can find a place in a great local school. This year's budget invested in expanding five Gungahlin schools, as well as starting scoping work for a new school in the Molonglo Valley.

The work we are doing in this year's budget to deliver infrastructure and services that will support the city's growth comes on top of a significant level of infrastructure investment over the past 15 years. Since 2002 we have invested more than \$5.6 billion in capital works for the city that have improved our city's transport, health, education and municipal infrastructure, amongst other areas of investment.

We have also stepped up housing supply to ensure that there is a continued stream of new housing available and an appropriate mix of housing choices. For example, in the five years between 2011 and 2016, there were just under 7,000 new freestanding homes in the Canberra market. The 10 years previous to that, 2001 to 2011, saw a similar number. I want to reiterate that in the past five years we have delivered as many new freestanding homes as were delivered in the 10 years prior to 2011.

The census also highlights the great value of Canberra being open to the world and actively engaging with international markets. The three source countries for new migrants that have seen the most rapid growth are India, up 77 per cent since the 2011 census; China, up 72 per cent since the 2011 census; and the Philippines, up 57 per cent since that 2011 census. This has been driven particularly by our very strong tertiary education sector and shows that Canberra is increasingly coming to the world's attention as a livable, interesting and thriving city. The government has a clear plan to continue to expand Canberra's overseas footprint because we know that there are very significant economic, social and cultural benefits in doing so.

The 2016 census represents an opportunity to take stock of what we are getting right in planning for the city's growth and where we have still got more work to do. Government will be drilling down into the fine detail of the data and insights provided by the census in finetuning our plans for the next budget and beyond, but the headline data show that the city is growing. The source of that growth is principally a natural increase. I do not think the causes of the natural increase are going to go out of fashion any time soon. We can expect that trend to continue. We will also continue to be an attractive destination for interstate and international migrants.

A vibrant community, a diverse multicultural community, is a good thing for our city. We support that approach, and the government will continue to plan for future population growth, to prepare our city for that growth and to support our community as our city continues to diversify.

I note Ms Le Couteur has circulated an amendment to this motion. I will indicate that the Labor Party will not be supporting that amendment. I would just make a couple of quick observations in relation to elements of the amendment. Certainly I agree that population growth does place additional pressure on infrastructure and will, of course, drive up demand for various services.

I think it is important to note, though, that in the context of federal financial relations in this country the extra population that our city has will be reflected in additional revenues. For example, the ACT's share of the GST pool has in fact increased as a result of the new data available from the 2016 census. Yes, there are additional costs

associated with population growth but we will now receive a greater share of GST revenue because our population is higher, as the GST distribution is based on the relative populations of states and territories. A larger city, a more diverse city, leads to a more diverse economic base and more diverse streams of revenue for the territory government.

Whilst there are increased costs, there are also increased revenues, and the federal financial relations system does take account of that. Similarly, in most areas of national partnerships with the commonwealth government, your population is what determines your level of commonwealth funding for various programs. So the revenue side of the equation is also enhanced when population increase occurs.

But yes, we do need to be very conscious of the impacts on the environment, particularly of urban sprawl, and that is something that other speakers will speak about. *(Time expired.)*

**MS LE COUTEUR** (Murrumbidgee) (11.56): Some elements of the motion circulated by Mr Pettersson are admirable. It is clearly a good thing that the ACT government is investing in infrastructure. Obviously, the Greens support adequate investment in public transport, investment in education and investment in health infrastructure. I do note one noticeable omission in terms of his calls was concern about affordable housing. That is something I have been banging on about in this place for a long time, and I will do so again here. We are not having affordable housing. At this point I seek leave to move my two amendments together.

Leave granted.

**MS LE COUTEUR:** I move:

(1) After paragraph (1)(d), insert:

- “(e) economic growth driven by population growth and consumption is unsustainable, and alternative approaches to prosperity must be sought;
- (f) the ACT’s ecological footprint is determined by the number of people in the ACT, their per capita consumption of resources and energy, and factors such as urban design, transport and food production;
- (g) population growth can therefore have large negative impacts on the environment, including increased greenhouse gas emissions, higher demand for water, loss of farmland to housing and higher production of waste; and
- (h) population growth also places increasing pressure on infrastructure, including driving up demand for hospitals and schools and increasing traffic congestion, and that this puts a large financial burden on the ACT Government to fund both infrastructure expansion and rising operating costs;”.

(2) After paragraph (3)(b), add:

“(c) take strong action to reduce the ACT’s overall ecological footprint despite the pressures of a rising population; and

(d) continue to take action to reduce the ACT’s greenhouse gas emissions and implement the necessary policy measures to achieve the target of zero net emissions by 2050 at the latest.”.

I will have a bit of a discussion about ecology and ecological impact. The starting point for Mr Pettersson’s motion and Mr Barr’s discussion is that population and economic growth are good. However, unfortunately, if you look at it from a bigger point of view, that is not actually so.

Economic growth driven by population growth and consumption is, unfortunately, unsustainable from an ecological point of view. Looking at ecological impact, we have a commissioner for sustainability who, every five years, does work on the ecological footprint of the people of the ACT. Her website defines “ecological footprint” as measuring—and I quote:

... the amount of land and water required to produce goods and services and absorb waste (including carbon).

In 2011-12—unfortunately, these are the most recent figures we have available—Canberra’s ecological footprint was 8.9 global hectares per person. Global hectares mean productive land and excludes deserts and ice caps. The main component of our ecological footprint is household consumption. The greater the household income, the more income is spent on consumption such as air and car travel, and the construction, renovation and furnishing of buildings.

As well as consuming too much of the world’s resources, we release too much carbon and other pollutants into the environment. Canberrans use an average of 3½ times the global average per person. Also, we are above average per person for ecological footprint of other Australians, who use only 8.2 global hectares per person; we are at 8.9. In total, we use the equivalent of 14 times the land area of the ACT.

There is only one planet. There is no plan B. Eventually, human beings must and will learn to live within our limits. Right now, we are using the savings from past millions of years with fossil fuels and depleting the world’s resources. We are spoiling our home by polluting the atmosphere, the land and our oceans.

I now come to the scariest bit of my speech, which is an equation that I learnt in ecology 101: impact equals population times consumption times technology. This is something that we all, as lawmakers, as part of the government of the ACT, need to be aware of. Ecological impact can be given by the population, how much it consumes and what sort of technology it uses to do its consumption, to live its life.

I will go through this a little bit for those of you who may not be aware of this. I assume that would be the majority of people here. I do not think we would all be supporting Mr Pettersson’s motion if we really thought that population growth could continue in an unlimited fashion, as his motion appears to state.

Population increase is a major concern. As population goes up, our greenhouse gas emissions almost certainly increase. Demand for water rises. Farmland is lost to housing but at the same time we need more farmland because we need more food to feed more people. Waste production goes up. And on and on it goes. I could spend all of my next nine minutes talking about that.

Our environmental footprint has significantly increased over the 60 years that I have been in Canberra. When my family first moved to Canberra, we moved in to Yarralumla. We were told, “How could you live in Yarralumla? It is the end of the world.” People usually laugh at that—and I am glad I have got one laugh. I have a picture of our house there. We did not have a road to it. It was a dirt track. There was a sheep paddock. There were no trees and no roads; just this little house and nothing. I have a picture of us on it. Our environmental impact was a lot less then. The increased population of Canberra has led to a much greater environmental impact. But the world has not increased in size. It has not increased in resources. We cannot keep increasing our population.

Population growth also increases our demand for infrastructure. That is what Mr Pettersson’s motion talked about. As I said, I agree with the concept that we have to provide infrastructure for our population. We just have to look at what population is sustainable for the world.

Population increase is driving up demand for hospitals and schools. It is increasing traffic congestion. It means that we have to build roads and provide more public transport. It puts a huge financial burden on the ACT government. Mr Barr pointed out that the federal government would give us more money if there were more of us, but that is a scheme that does not really work. We are not actually making a profit out of more people, and certainly the world as a whole is not getting any better, in order to support more population.

I refer to a debate in this place a couple of weeks ago. Ms Cheyne brought forward a motion about birth control, and abortion in particular, and the need to reduce population growth in a humane way is one of the reasons I strongly support both of those things. The best way to reduce population growth is to ensure that every child is a wanted child, and that we have laws and legislation that enable women to make choices about reproduction.

The second part of my little equation is consumption. People make their ecological impact through the goods and services they consume. That is, of course, why the ecological footprint of Canberra is so high. We have the good fortune to be an affluent community, but this good fortune comes at a cost. It is the impact that we make on the world and our local environment.

We are working on this. We have made the commitment to turn our electricity supply into 100 per cent renewable by 2020, and I am very glad that that is on track. But there is a future challenge to go on from that. We are currently importing a lot of embedded carbon in the goods we consume, the food we eat, the clothes we wear, the buildings we build and the furniture we put in them. You name it; we are importing it.

We also consume goods that are created through some very destructive processes. We create overseas pollution in effect from the plastics, chemicals and fabric dyeing of the things we are consuming. Those of us who saw the *Four Corners* report on waste will know about the impact that our consumption behaviours are leading to.

The next part of the equation is technology. Clearly, how we do things makes a considerable difference to our ecological impact. One I have just talked about is in terms of our electricity supply. We can get our electricity from fossil fuels, or we can make the choice, as the ACT has made as a community, and before that as many citizens of the ACT made, to get our electricity from renewable energy.

Technology can be fairly subtle. One of the bits of technology that I am quite interested in relates to how we plan our city. We can sprawl out to everywhere, and that will have a huge impact in terms of transport costs, or we can have more compact cities, and that will certainly have a lower impact as far as transport is concerned, and probably in terms of other infrastructure as well.

I would like to point out that there are alternative approaches to prosperity. Over the last decades, clearly the ACT community and Australia as a whole have become more prosperous, but it is pretty hard to argue that we have become happier. Increased prosperity seems to be linked to increased mental illness, and in the past 10 to 15 years it has been linked to greater inequality and greater environmental damage.

Most economists and national statisticians will agree that the GDP is not a particularly useful measure of whether things are getting better in any way for a community. A good example of this, of course, is war and natural disasters, which add in general to a country's GDP, even though they destroy lives and capital, both built capital and actual capital. Alternative measures for national prosperity are being developed internationally. We have probably all heard of Bhutan's national happiness index, which I think is a wonderful idea.

In all of this, there is a real role for government in terms of our ecological impact, and thus on the impact of increased population. The government controls a number of key impacts, such as water and waste. Both of these things are supplied and maintained by our government. I mentioned earlier that our government has committed to buying 100 per cent renewable electricity. The government basically controls our transport system. While we individually buy cars, it controls the road system and it controls the public transport system. The decisions that it makes will make a significant difference to our ecological impact, and thus to the impact of any population growth.

The Greens, of course, are very much in favour of a renewable energy target, and we are very much in favour of the target of zero net carbon emissions from Canberra by 2050. We are incredibly pleased that in this budget we have finally reached the point where there is greater investment in public transport than there is in roads. If there were a Greens majority government we would attempt to do a lot more than that: close the loop on waste and be a world leader in reducing environmental impact. We would look much more at food security, and in particular at local production—looking

at the Canberra region as a whole, which has the prospects and the capability of potentially being an area that can be self-sustaining, food-wise. We would look at stronger sustainable transport targets and stronger action.

In conclusion, I thank Mr Pettersson for his motion, but I feel that it does not go far enough in looking at the costs as well as the benefits, if any, of increased growth. We need as a community to look at what is happening. There are already about nine billion people in this world. It is hard to see how our ecology can accommodate more. In fact, it is clear that it cannot. We have already reached ecological overshoot and we need to do what we can to ensure that we have a world that we can all live in.

**MS LAWDER** (Brindabella) (12.10): I am pleased to speak today to Mr Pettersson's motion. I agree that infrastructure planning is vital to keep up with, and plan ahead for, population growth. Good planned infrastructure is vital to ensure that Canberra becomes and remains a great place to live. I think we all agree that the people of Canberra deserve the best when it comes to infrastructure. They deserve infrastructure that is reflective of our diverse community. The people of Canberra deserve infrastructure that is inclusive of everyone, no matter what part of Canberra they live in. It should also leave visitors remembering what made Canberra such a great place.

This is a quote from Rick Yancey:

Cities are more than the sum of their infrastructure. They transcend brick and mortar, concrete and steel. They're the vessels into which human knowledge is poured.

You know this yourself. You go to a particular site, possibly a building, and it is really memorable for you. What is it that makes it memorable? If it is part of the built environment, it may be one of those grand, world-renowned, beautiful properties. It may have a charming lobby or lovely rooms. It may have been there for decades. People remember visiting that particular building long after the time that memories of others fade away.

That starts with a vision. Of course, it is backed up by planners, architects, builders, a whole lot of other specialists, good advice and, of course, capital. It must also be followed up with an ongoing commitment to evolve and adapt in the modern world. So the infrastructure motion that we have from Mr Pettersson today I think reminds us that communities continually demand better infrastructure. As politicians, as elected representatives, we increasingly see major infrastructure initiatives as a centrepiece of budget announcements and policy platforms.

It is a topic that everyone likes to talk about but sometimes, or even frequently, disagrees on, such as at the last election. The government went to the election with the idea to build the tram. But a focus on infrastructure is not in itself a guarantee of better outcomes. The focus needs to be on the right areas to get the right results. What we have seen sometimes in the past decade or more here is a lack of emphasis on the planning phase.

There is no question that everyone is keen to get to the implementation and delivery phase. People love the hi-vis jackets, turning the first sod with a special shovel and seeing cyclone fencing. It is an opportunity for a lovely photo opportunity for those opposite. But often we see they have not taken the time to get the planning right. What we then see, of course, are some really well-documented cost blowouts. If more planning had gone into these projects this may not have been the case. Just one amongst myriad examples to choose from may be the Gungahlin Drive extension. There were very well-publicised, huge cost blowouts. Other planning failures that we have seen more recently include the addition of what was already known to be inflammable cladding on the Centenary Hospital for Women and Children building. What we are seeing a lack of is the link between planning and delivery.

Another part of getting infrastructure planning and delivery right is consultation with the public. Working with others and a range of views, not just those who agree with you, will generally lead to a better outcome. There is no point surrounding yourself with what we may refer to as “yes men”, because you do not see an alternative view. You get a silo effect.

By engaging with communities and stakeholders in an open and meaningful way right from the start, we can better develop the evidence base, test ideas and challenge assumptions. The key here—I have spoken about it many times—is open and meaningful consultation, not secrecy. Access to information and making information readily available helps build understanding of the issues and opportunities. It brings people on board with projects. Having genuine and honest consultation gives transparency, builds trust in the work and, in turn, the decision.

Once again, I will give one example, that is, the proposal—the thought bubble at the time—of a new suburb of Thompson near the Tuggeranong town centre. There was a lack of consultation, a lack of planning. There was just an announcement on the spur of the moment. There was huge community backlash to that particular announcement. It demonstrates that this government is not consulting with people. The announcement of the proposed new suburb of Thompson had no connection whatsoever with the Tuggeranong town centre master plan, a process which had been gone through not all that long before. People rightly become suspicious of consultation processes if what happens during those processes is ignored and something else completely different comes along.

Madam Speaker, back in 2013 the government undertook a big consultation on the city to the lake project. It included a new stadium, a new 50-metre pool, apartments along the lake and a much-needed new convention centre. But as time has gone on, the city to the lake project is looking less and less like the one people were consulted on. We have seen in more recent times that the government has downgraded the 50-metre pool to a smaller leisure pool and city beach on the lakeside. In February of this year the Chief Minister shelved the convention centre and in March he backflipped on his promise of the new stadium.

In 2017, the city to the lake project, once a grand plan, has now become apartment blocks and a boardwalk. There is not necessarily anything wrong with the change of plans per se. Plans do change; infrastructure planning must have some flexibility in it. But the government should have gone back to the community to consult about this. The big plan of stadiums, convention centres and pools is very different to what we are now seeing being delivered at the lakefront.

Sir Robert Menzies is remembered for creating the lake, which is now one of the centrepieces of our city, the largest purely ornamental lake in the world, as I understand it. Equally, the Chief Minister can be now remembered for not only filling in a piece of that lake for a boardwalk, but depriving the people of Canberra of the vista that is the West Basin and Acton Peninsula to allow units to be built there without constructing the assets and amenities that were previously promised with this project.

Mr Pettersson's motion also makes reference to education infrastructure, that the government is spending more money in ACT schools to expand their capacity. Obviously, this is a positive thing. It is no secret that our schools in the ACT are under enormous enrolment pressure and that the ACT government needs to better manage the education system in order to cope. We have the government trying to rezone school halls and libraries as classrooms so as to allow more students to enter each school.

Of course, we may not have been under such pressure if it had not been for Mr Barr's decision to close 23 schools in 2006 when he was the education minister. Mr Barr clearly did not think that this infrastructure should be maintained for future use. The closure of so many schools resolved a short-term political challenge, but has created a long-term problem, a problem that will continue to affect the people of Canberra until the government takes it seriously.

One very small example in terms of numbers is the ongoing impact this has had on the village of Tharwa, whose school was closed. People in Tharwa still talk about the need for a school in their village. The school closures brought about by Mr Barr were supposed to fix education issues but they have only worsened them. The government was warned about closing schools at the time but those warnings were ignored.

I turn to the health infrastructure, which was mentioned in Mr Pettersson's motion. I nearly laughed when I saw this. In a week when the government has been under a lot of pressure, they have been on the back foot because of lack of investment in health infrastructure. We are meant to talk about how fantastic the health infrastructure is.

In the past fortnight alone we have learnt more about the government's knowledge since 2009 of the fire risk to the women and children's hospital due to the cladding and the fact that more and more Canberrans arriving in emergency have to wait in hallways on trollies to be seen because there is not enough room. We have had the HIAC report released recently that the government tried to hide from the people of Canberra. It detailed some 143 high risks associated with ageing infrastructure assets across the hospital and four extreme risks, with serious concerns about the hospital's main switchboard and ageing helipad.

Of course, that point was further reinforced by the recent fire at the hospital. It was a risk that had been identified. Mr Pettersson's motion welcomes the investment in health infrastructure. Of course it is welcome. The question is: why has it not been done before now when these risks have been well known for quite some time?

In my role as a member for Brindabella, I would like to point out that the people of Tuggeranong feel a bit neglected with respect to infrastructure, particularly health infrastructure. I wonder whether my counterpart members for Brindabella, such as Mr Gentleman, ever stand up for Tuggeranong in cabinet meetings. The government never seems to invest much in Tuggeranong. Recently we have seen a very small investment in the town centre with a strange lighting feature in prime position. It looks like it has been welded in someone's backyard. Where is the artwork? Where is the feature piece that could have gone in this important spot in the town centre? Most other town centres have artwork. Why does Tuggeranong not deserve a piece of art in the middle of its town centre?

In conclusion, we have ageing education facilities and ageing health facilities from an ageing government. The government has been in power for such a long time they do not really have a clear infrastructure investment plan. We have seen this piecemeal approach: city to the lake, then something more exciting comes up over here and we completely change our mind about city to the lake. Infrastructure must also be about maintenance of current facilities, not just donning a high-vis vest and a hard hat.

The people of Canberra are crying out for better communication. They are crying out for more involvement in the decision-making process. They want the average person on the street to have more of a voice in these big decisions that are being made on their behalf, not just their friends in the unions who are influencing what the government is doing.

The government has for too long been a government who has talked the talk but not walked the walk. They have been full of rhetoric but lacking in substance. There is the opportunity for this government to take a step forward, to communicate effectively. But it is an opportunity that the government must grasp with both hands and they must listen. It must be followed up with an ongoing commitment to evolve and adapt but also always to maintain the ideals that made Canberra a great place in the beginning.

In the last minute available to me, I would like to say that while we agree with the thrust of Mr Pettersson's motion, whilst it may be a little belated in terms of investment in health and education infrastructure, we will not be supporting Ms Le Couteur's amendment. I feel it has changed the thrust of Mr Pettersson's motion away from infrastructure more specifically and I have some general agreement with some of the points that Mr Barr raised when he spoke about why the government would not be supporting it.

Thanks, Mr Pettersson, for bringing forward a very interesting motion today. It is talking the talk, not necessarily walking the walk, but there is still a chance for the government to start doing that. We will not be supporting Ms Le Couteur's amendment.

**MS ORR** (Yerrabi) (12.25): I rise today to speak in support of Mr Pettersson's motion. As a member for Yerrabi, this motion is highly relevant to my electorate and its residents. The Gungahlin region has seen remarkable growth in recent years. The 2016 census found that Gungahlin was the second fastest growing region in the country between 2011 and 2016. With more new suburbs in the early stages of development, population growth in my electorate is expected to continue into the near future. This growth presents significant challenges for how we plan and deliver our services.

Population growth of this magnitude requires ongoing government investment in both enabling infrastructure and the capacity to provide public services. This is necessary to ensure that public amenities can be accessed by new residents while maintaining access for the existing population. This is a clear challenge in many parts of Canberra but particularly so in Yerrabi. While population growth in the new suburbs of the electorate has been staggering, and will continue to be so, the established suburbs remain stable. It is imperative therefore for the ACT government to have the vision and understanding to enable the expansion of services to meet the needs of new Canberrans without taking away from those already here.

To do that takes investment in the things that matter: infrastructure, schools and health care. These are all the things that Labor stands for and believes in. They are all areas where this government made significant investment in this year's budget. I spoke last week on the importance of investing in school facilities and I reiterate that here today. The need for lifelong learning to ensure ongoing workforce participation and employment opportunities may never have been more important. The link between educational attainment and labour participation is well established. This is particularly noticeable in the ACT.

Unemployment here is well below the national average while our participation rate is one of the highest in the country. This is not just what the latest ABS figures tell us but a reality of the territory that is backed up by years of data. ACT workers have the highest average weekly earnings rate of any state or territory. It is education that provides the anchor to these outcomes, with Canberrans having the highest educational attainment on average in the country. A well-paid, well-educated and highly-employable workforce does not just happen by accident. It takes a commitment from the government of the day to invest in its people. It is a commitment ACT Labor has always stood for in the belief that an education is the best path to opportunity.

In this year's budget, ACT Labor reaffirmed that commitment to education in the ACT, delivering on its election promise to upgrade facilities in our schools: \$210 million in new funding for local schools was announced, which is in addition to the \$1.2 billion this government provides for schools each year; and \$24 million in funding will be invested in schools infrastructure in Gungahlin to deliver 800 additional places for students by 2021. Harrison School, Gold Creek School, Neville Bonner Primary School and Palmerston District Primary School will all receive funding to increase student capacity.

The government will also begin planning for a new school in east Gungahlin as this area continues to grow into the future. As the population of Canberra approaches the half million mark, the challenge of providing a world-class education to every Canberran grows. This government acknowledges this and has sought to address these challenges in a budget that puts the investment in the right places at the right time.

But it is not just the expansion of existing schools and the opening of new ones that ensure that the infrastructure in our schools meets our standards. We need to continue to invest in local schools everywhere, whether or not they are in suburbs of enrolment growth. That is why this government continues to invest in the maintenance of our existing schools.

This year's budget includes an additional \$85 million in funding for public school infrastructure upgrades. This funding will be directed towards priority capital works projects around the territory to ensure that the facilities we provide to our students continue to meet the high standards that we as a community expect. It is easy to forget as well that infrastructure goes beyond the tangible, physical infrastructure we see in our schools, such as buildings and classrooms.

The importance of adequate information and communication technology infrastructure continues to grow as the digital world becomes more prevalent. Our budget also delivers on the need to invest in our ICT infrastructure in Canberra schools, continuing the rollout of upgrades for school administration and staffing systems. The government is also continuing to provide additional resources into schools to ensure that digital systems and infrastructure are modern and reliable.

The approach taken by this government to schools infrastructure encompasses a long-term strategy. It seeks to build the physical and digital capacity upon which the future of education in the ACT can take shape. It is only because of our commitment to invest in the infrastructure necessary to sustain and enhance our schools that we can engage the community in a discussion that will inform our ongoing strategy for education in our city.

This is a government that understands that you cannot build new schools without ensuring the ongoing success of your current ones. It understands that you cannot provide a world-class education without the right infrastructure. And it understands that you cannot continue to grow your population and economy without delivering high-quality student outcomes in your schools. This government is doing just that while also putting the planning in place to ensure that this continues into the future.

I am happy to stand here today in support of Mr Pettersson's motion, which calls on the ACT government to support investment in education to ensure that Canberrans continue to receive world-class services. I am happy to support the motion because I know only an ACT Labor government can deliver this. This is the case because only an ACT Labor government believes every Canberran has a right to a world-class education and only an ACT Labor government has the vision and capability to plan a long-term strategy for education in the ACT, one that ensures that our schools are resourced and have the capacity to educate young Canberrans at the highest standard possible.

We do this and we believe in this because we understand that education is the pillar upon which opportunity is built. Madam Speaker, I call on all members of this Assembly to support this motion as a symbol of our willingness to invest in the people of Canberra and its future.

*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 12.31 to 2.30 pm.**

## **Ministerial arrangements**

**MR BARR** (Kurrajong—Chief Minister, Treasurer, Minister for Economic Development and Minister for Tourism and Major Events) (2.30): Minister Stephen-Smith will be absent from question time today and tomorrow. The Deputy Chief Minister will take questions in the community services and social inclusion, disability, children and youth, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander affairs and multicultural affairs portfolios, and Minister Gentleman will assist members in responding to questions in the workplace safety and industrial relations portfolios.

## **Leave of absence**

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

That leave of absence be granted to Ms Stephen-Smith for today and tomorrow, on account of official business.

## **Questions without notice**

### **Bimberi Youth Justice Centre—staff safety**

**MR COE:** My question is to the Minister for Disability, Children and Youth. So in her absence, I direct it to the Deputy Chief Minister. I refer to an incident that took place at Bimberi Youth Justice Centre on 16 July, which the minister described as involving 12 young people and five youth workers playing a game of touch football on the oval. Deputy Chief Minister, what knowledge do you have about the incident that took place on that day? Were any youth workers injured during this incident?

**MS BERRY:** I thank the Leader of the Opposition for the question. I will have to take the question on notice and bring some information to the Assembly. I know the same information that has been provided in this place about that particular issue but I have not been advised on that particular issue.

**MR COE:** Deputy Chief Minister, will you please also take on notice how many youth workers were injured, if any, and whether any youth workers or staff or contractors were stood down as part of the events or whether any disciplinary action was taken.

**MS BERRY:** Yes, I will take all of that detail on notice.

**MRS KIKKERT:** What specific support does the ACT government provide to Bimberi staff who experience occupational violence?

**MS BERRY:** There would be a number of programs provided by the ACT government to support employees in different circumstances within their workplace. For employees at Bimberi, if there have been employees at Bimberi who have been exposed to occupational violence, I will have to take it on notice to see what sort of particular support was provided to those individuals.

### **Crime—motorcycle gangs**

**MRS KIKKERT:** My question is to the Minister for Police and Emergency Services. Following the arrival of more than 100 bikies in Canberra over the weekend, Minister, the *Canberra Times* reports:

Canberra has experienced an outbreak of bikie-related violence in recent Weeks ...

The most recent incidents—three shootings in less than a fortnight—have marked an escalation in the battle for supremacy in the south ...

In one incident, an AK-47 assault rifle was used to pepper the Waramanga house and car of a Comanchero with 27 bullets, days after a Kambah home linked to a Nomads member was targeted.

Minister, you are quoted in the article as saying: “I haven’t received any evidence to see that they would work in the ACT.”

Minister, with shootings, fire-bombings and hundreds of bikies coming to Canberra in a “battle for supremacy”, what further evidence do you need to give Canberrans the same protection as citizens in New South Wales?

**MR GENTLEMAN:** I thank Mrs Kikkert for her question. The important part here is to look at the application of these particular laws. The question goes to laws that are about consorting. What we are trying to do is give the ACT police more powers in relation to work that they can do on the ground to stop outlaw motorcycle gangs. As you would be aware, Madam Speaker, the chief police officer has told her people on the ground that outlaw motorcycle gangs are the number one priority. In the most recent activity, where Comancheros came into the ACT, ACT police were at their strongest with regard to outlaw motorcycle gangs. They followed them for the whole day. There were a number of traffic infringements issued. Motorcycle gang people were excluded from a late-night club in Fyshwick as well, and police were involved in that.

With regard to consorting laws as against other laws, we have not seen any evidence that they would work in the ACT. Indeed, there have been some issues with them in other states. That is where—

*Opposition members interjecting—*

**Ms Fitzharris:** I wish to raise a point of order, Madam Speaker. The opposition has interjected on almost a dozen occasions during Mr Gentleman's reply.

**MADAM SPEAKER:** I remind members opposite that it is question time and we all accept that there is a bit of cut and thrust and theatre but constant interjections are tedious at least. Minister, do you have anything else to add?

**MR GENTLEMAN:** Thank you, Madam Speaker. The government is of course committed to responding to the criminal activities of OMCGs. That is why we are working with ACT police on other possible laws that could be implemented that would assist them on the ground. They have said to us that they would like to see these in place to assist them with their toolkit against outlaw motorcycle gangs.

**MRS KIKKERT:** Minister, what evidence can you produce that your laws will work more effectively than the anti-consorting laws?

**MR GENTLEMAN:** The evidence lies in the request from ACT Policing for these particular powers. They are in relation to firearms prohibition orders and crime scene powers as well. If the AFP and ACT Policing have requested this sort of assistance and we can provide it, without of course breaching our human rights obligations to citizens, then we will work down that track.

**MR HANSON:** Minister, why have you ignored the Chief Police Officer's public calls for anti-consorting laws? Is she wrong and, if so, what evidence have you got to present that she is wrong?

**MR GENTLEMAN:** I thank Mr Hanson for his interest in this area. I can say, of course, that I do not agree with the premise of his question. We are working with ACT Policing, as I have said, and the Chief Police Officer with the appropriate tools. We have invested strongly in Task Force Nemesis. It is working well. There have been a number of arrests. There has been the incarceration of outlaw motorcycle gang members. There has been the impounding of prohibited firearms, drugs et cetera. This all shows that the support that we are giving ACT Policing is working on the ground.

### **LGBTIQ community—government support**

**MS LE COUTEUR:** My question is to the Chief Minister and relates to the ACT government's commitment to support the ACT's LGBTIQ community during the period of the non-binding voluntary postal survey. Minister, can you provide financial details on the extent of government funding and in-kind support for promotional materials supporting marriage equality and the provision of counselling support, and relationship and advice services, to meet the increased demand expected in this period.

**MR BARR:** I thank Ms Le Couteur for the question. Yes, I am happy to provide the Assembly with details. The ACT government, through our office of LGBTIQ affairs, which was established as part of a suite of measures contained in this year's budget,

will be providing support to the local community. We are currently in negotiations with a range of existing community service providers who are experiencing an increase in demand for services. Those providers are made up of a number of groups who have formed the ACT LGBTIQ community consortium. They will be provided with additional support to provide counselling, support materials and referral pathways.

We are also working with the ACT Human Rights Commission and ACT Policing to ensure that we can promote awareness of appropriate criminal and complaints processes under ACT law. During the postal vote process, the office of LGBTIQ affairs will coordinate and manage community engagement activities relating to the promotion of Canberra as an LGBTIQ inclusive and diverse community.

The ACT government regularly engages with the Canberra community on inclusion issues. We have a range of initiatives, from the National Multicultural Festival to NAIDOC Week and the ACT inclusion awards, all of which promote a sense of community and bring us together. Promoting contributions of LGBTIQ Canberrans during the postal vote survey process and the 2017 SpringOUT Pride Festival continues this approach to community inclusion.

The exact financial contributions will be finalised in due course, but I would draw Ms Le Couteur's attention to the allocations in this year's budget. *(Time expired.)*

**MS LE COUTEUR:** Is the ACT government able to provide support to the postal survey by providing contact points for the ABS to contact homeless people in places such as the Early Morning Centre or St Vincent de Paul's night patrol?

**MR BARR:** Yes, we will endeavour to work with the Australian Bureau of Statistics to ensure that those of no fixed address are able to participate in the voluntary, non-binding postal survey. This is clearly an appalling process for seeking to find the community's views on this matter. It is hurtful and divisive, and it excludes a large number of Australians from participating.

The logistical challenges for the Australian Bureau of Statistics to conduct this survey are enormous, and they are regularly seeking support from other areas of government in order to undertake this task. They have recently updated their website, and are still at this point, even a few weeks away from this survey beginning, yet to announce how they will engage or seek to engage with people of no fixed address. They are barely able to address the issues of silent enrollees, and most Australians who live overseas are going to be excluded from this process. It is a farce, and it is an incredibly poor reflection on the Australian government, particularly, who have done this without any parliamentary approval.

**MR STEEL:** Chief Minister, how does the support being provided during the postal survey period fit in with the government's existing policy of making Canberra a LGBTIQ-friendly city?

**MR BARR:** It is entirely consistent. The contrast between my approach on this issue and that of the Prime Minister is very clear. I have sought parliamentary approval for the ACT government to provide support to our LGBTIQ community. We have allocations within the budget for the office for LGBTIQ Affairs and support for A Gender Agenda. The exact financial amounts are outlined in budget paper 3, I think on page 77 from memory. If members want to look at the exact amounts they can find them there.

There are, of course, existing allocations for support to community sector organisations as diverse as the AIDS Action Council of the ACT through to Lifeline, which also provides support in the youth mental health area. Organisations like beyondblue nationally are involved in providing support to the LGBTIQ community.

The ACT government has been followed by other state governments. The Victorian government announced on the weekend that it will provide \$1 million of support to the LGBTIQ community in the state of Victoria during the voluntary, non-binding postal survey process.

So our approach has been followed by other state and territory governments. It has been endorsed by this parliament. It is the right thing to do in what is a hurtful and divisive debate. We are already seeing some outrageous things being said and done by those who seek to denigrate the human rights of LGBTIQ Canberrans and Australians. We stand against that. We stand with LGBTIQ Canberrans.

### **Director of Public Prosecutions—funding**

**MR HANSON:** My question is to the Attorney-General and relates to the budget cut being applied to JACS. The DPP has stated in his annual report that:

One of the problems is that although the Office is fiercely independent in relation to its decision making, all financial matters are filtered through the JACS directorate. Unfortunately, the directorate has been singularly unsuccessful in representing the interests of the Office in budgetary discussions and this has led to the current resourcing crisis ... This is a pressing issue.

Attorney-General, how can the DPP maintain their, as they say, fierce independence when they cannot make their own budget submissions?

**MR RAMSAY:** I thank Mr Hanson for his question, noting that there will be further discussions on this shortly after question time on the motion. I note, for the sake of the Assembly and of Mr Hanson, that a review is taking place. The government has received the report from that and is considering a response in relation to it. We will be looking at the way in which the DPP is resourced in an ongoing way. I note that, again, as was mentioned the other day by the Chief Minister in my absence due to sickness, there has been an increase in the DPP's resources this year. The way that we will continue to fund in the future is something we will do in response to the report that has come in.

**MR HANSON:** Attorney-General, why were efficiency measures applied to the DDP?

**MR RAMSAY:** I thank Mr Hanson for his question. There are ways for governments to be able to improve delivery of services across government in each budget. I note, for the record, that the savings that the DDP contributed to the JACS budget overall was 0.53 of a per cent of its allocations. Just note: 0.53 of a per cent. I think putting everything in context may be helpful for us as we think through how it is that we can continue to govern for the overall justice system.

**MR MILLIGAN:** Attorney, when will you allow the DPP to make its own budget submissions?

**MR RAMSAY:** I thank Mr Milligan for his question, which I note has already been answered. We are looking at the report coming from the review. We will consider that in light of its recommendations on the way that we will be funding the overall justice system, ensuring that we have truly accessible, transparent, timely justice, and considering it in relation to the overall system and not just one element of it.

### **Transport—connectivity**

**MS CHEYNE:** My question is to the Chief Minister. Chief Minister, why are interstate and international transport connections important for Canberra?

**MR BARR:** I thank Ms Cheyne for the question. There is no doubt that connectivity, and better connectivity, to regional, national and international markets further enhances our city's economic offerings. We are focused on establishing new transport links and improving existing ones.

In aviation services, the international links between Canberra and Singapore and Canberra and Wellington have commenced. Soon Qatar airlines will provide a new conduit for local producers to access international markets and provide new opportunities to boost tourism for Canberra. Promotion of our city in international markets demonstrates the direct value of improved transport connectivity, not only for visitor numbers and a higher per visitor spend, but also for a strong tourism industry that employs over 16,000 Canberrans.

Cross-border transport and infrastructure services are a key part of the ACT-New South Wales memorandum of understanding for regional collaboration. An upgrade of the Sydney-Canberra rail corridor is a priority. It would certainly deliver significant productivity gains through reduced travel time and diverted traffic volume from the Federal and Hume highways, and would lead to increased travel between Canberra and Sydney. The benefits of an even faster high-speed rail linkage for both cities and communities along the corridor would also be significant.

**MS CHEYNE:** Chief Minister, how has the ACT Government been working to improve transport connections?

**MR BARR:** We have been actively engaging in all areas of transport policy and are particularly focused on practical outcomes for the city. In partnership with Canberra Airport we have boosted flights into Canberra from low cost carriers and international carriers. I recently met with the New South Wales transport minister, Andrew Constance, and discussed a number of regional transport issues, not the least of which is the improved rail service between Canberra and Sydney. An upgrade to the rail corridor, including the introduction of tilt train capability, would be a once-in-a-generation opportunity to improve transport between the two cities.

We will continue to focus on freight opportunities. It was fantastic to see the first major export for freight from Canberra Airport on the Singapore Airlines flights last month. The government committed \$7.3 million over four years from 2016-17 to support aviation partnerships, and we will continue our work with domestic and international carriers to increase both the frequency of services to and from Canberra Airport and also the range of destinations, with a particular focus on the low cost carrier market.

**MR STEEL:** Chief Minister, what are some recent improvements to transport connectivity?

**MR BARR:** As I mentioned, Qatar Airways will start a service out of Canberra Airport, a daily service, from February next year. We are focusing also on low-cost carriers and on the regional market, too. It is worth noting that Pelican Airlines have further extended their regional transport network utilising Canberra Airport as a major hub. That feeds more passengers into the international and major city services that Canberra Airport currently offers.

We are working with our local government partners in regional New South Wales on a number of road transport priorities, not the least of which is the duplication of the Barton Highway which, I note, was an election commitment from both sides of politics at the last federal election. It is a key piece in Canberra's regional freight network.

We look forward to further collaboration with the New South Wales and federal governments on regional road transport priorities but with a particular emphasis on rail corridors; and the opportunity for the Canberra-Sydney rail corridor to be improved clearly is a priority for us and for the surrounding local government areas along that rail corridor.

### **Crime—statistics**

**MRS JONES:** My question is to the Minister for Police and Emergency Services. Minister, I refer to the latest crime statistics released by the Australian Federal Police. In their statistics it was revealed that over the past five financial years assault has increased by approximately 30.8 per cent, robbery is up approximately 25.5 per cent, motor vehicle theft by approximately 45.6 per cent, and other offences by 21.9 per cent. In the same crime statistics, it was revealed that offences against the person had increased by approximately 302.4 per cent. These increases in crime are well above the increase in Canberra's—

**Ms Fitzharris:** Point of order, Madam Speaker. I think that under standing order 117(a) questions shall be brief.

**MADAM SPEAKER:** It is worth noting, whilst those opposite often refer the executive to standing order 118, that it would be useful for those asking the questions to be very mindful of standing order 117 as well, because often times the question takes longer than—

**Mr Barr:** In the House of Representatives you get 30 seconds and Bob Katter gets 45 seconds.

**Mrs Jones:** Maybe you should change the rules, Mr Barr.

**Mr Barr:** Alright; we will. Done!

**MADAM SPEAKER:** Often times the question takes longer than—

**Mrs Jones:** But we have wasted a fair bit of time now and I am ready to finish the question if—

**MADAM SPEAKER:** I will also make the point, whilst you are having a good joke, that often times with your questions you are on your feet for longer than the minister has to answer your question when you interject and take points of order.

**MRS JONES:** Thank you, Madam Speaker. These increases in crime are well above the increase in Canberra's population. What are some of the specific crimes this data has categorised as "other" crimes?

*Mr Hanson interjecting—*

**MADAM SPEAKER:** You are not amusing, Mr Hanson. I call the Minister for Police and Emergency Services.

**MR GENTLEMAN:** I suppose domestic violence would be associated with those "other" crimes. That goes into the general violence counts as well. But it is important to note that whilst these crime trends are increasing, police are increasing their presence and their workload. In my conversations with ACT Policing, it is my intention to have police officers out on the beat much more than they are at the moment.

That is why we are investing in this budget in ACT Policing resources for them to do a study on their future needs for the ACT. We have invested quite significantly into that. When they come back with their future plan, we will be able to see how they will be able to better address these crime trends.

**MRS JONES:** Minister, how does the government intend to reduce the level of assault, robbery, motor vehicle theft and other offences, given that the government has maintained funding of ACT Policing at a rate far below inflation and the population growth of Canberra over the past five years?

**MR GENTLEMAN:** There are a number of measures, firstly the one that I just talked about, investing in ACT Policing's future in the way that they plan to address crime into the future, and then resourcing ACT Policing as well. In this budget, of course, there is quite a bit more money for ACT Policing for on-the-ground work. I am sure that that will bring the results that we are looking for.

**MR HANSON:** Minister, why did your government cut \$15 million from ACT Policing in 2013, and is that having any bearing on police efforts on the ground?

**MR GENTLEMAN:** I thank Mr Hanson for his question. The chief police officer has advised me that they are doing the best they can. We have increased the resources for ACT Policing. In fact it is indicated that we will have to recruit more staff this year in order to fill positions where ACT police are moving up the ranks and being promoted into national AFP jobs. We are also looking into staff profiles for people who are looking at retirement in the future. So we are investing more in ACT Policing and we are investing more in on the ground work.

*Mr Hanson interjecting—*

**Ms Cody:** Madam Speaker, I wish to raise a point of order. It is very difficult to hear Mr Gentleman's answer from all the interjections.

**MADAM SPEAKER:** I would agree with that. Mr Hanson, you are a serial interjector. Do you think you could contain yourself for the rest of question time?

**Mr Hanson:** I will do my best, Madam Speaker.

**MADAM SPEAKER:** Consider that a direction, Mr Hanson, and if there is any more cheek back to the chair you will see yourself warned. Do you have anything further to add, Minister?

**MR GENTLEMAN:** No, thank you.

### **Education—connect 10 program**

**MR WALL:** My question is to the Minister for Education and Early Childhood Development. Minister, as you are aware, the connect 10 program is in place in ACT colleges and assists disengaged students in years 9 and 10 to continue with or recommence education. This program has provided a much needed connection to education for many students since 2009 across all school districts in the ACT. Minister, will the connect 10 program continue beyond 2017 in a college in each school district in the ACT going forward? If not, why not?

**MS BERRY:** I thank Mr Wall for his interest in equity and equality in our schools through programs like connect 10, and providing opportunities for our children to have a continuum of education regardless of their background, their abilities or different things that are going on in their lives that we might not know about.

The connect 10 program has been operating out of a couple of schools in the ACT for a little while now. There are about 30 students in attendance in that program. I will be making sure that the directorate speaks with the school communities and with those parents to ensure that school communities, parents and children are supported in the best way possible. This, of course, goes to the conversation that the ACT community is now having via the future of education conversation, with a very clear focus on equity and how we can ensure that we get the best outcomes for our children, no matter what their backgrounds are.

**Mrs Kikkert:** A point of order.

**MADAM SPEAKER:** A point of order, Mrs Kikkert.

**Mrs Kikkert:** On relevance. The question is: will the connect 10 program continue beyond 2017 in a college in each school district in the ACT? It is not about what connect 10 is.

**MADAM SPEAKER:** Did you have anything further to add, minister?

**Ms Berry:** No.

**MR WALL:** Minister, what explanation has been provided to parents and students currently accessing connect 10, particularly students at the UC Senior Secondary College Lake Ginninderra, as to the continuation of that program beyond the end of this year?

**MS BERRY:** The directorate will be having conversations with the school community, including the school principals, teachers, parents and children, to ensure that they get the best outcomes for their learning in our schools, whether that be through a connect 10 program or another different type of program that will best suit their needs, taking into account that these are children who do not generally—

**Mr Wall:** Point of order, Madam Speaker.

**MADAM SPEAKER:** Point of order, but I remind you again that the minister is 20 seconds into her answer.

**Mr Wall:** I take that observation, Madam Speaker, but also just ask that you ask the minister please to be directly relevant as to whether the program is continuing or not. She has managed so far to obfuscate in answering on the simple crux of both the primary question and also the supplementary.

**MADAM SPEAKER:** Minister, you have over a minute left in your answer.

**MS BERRY:** Thank you, Madam Speaker. I want to make sure that we engage the students who have been participating in that program and the parents who have been involved in that program as well as the school to make sure that we get the best

possible learning outcomes and lifelong learning outcomes for those particular students. If it comes to the attention of the directorate that the connect 10 program is the best way for these children to be supported, then I would consider that that program will continue.

**MRS KIKKERT:** Minister, will the connect 10 program continue post 2017? If not, why not?

**MS BERRY:** I responded to the question in my previous answer.

### **Education—early childhood development**

**MR STEEL:** Can the Minister for Education and Early Childhood Development update the Assembly on the work towards an early childhood strategy?

**MS BERRY:** I thank the member for his interest and early work in this area prior to his election to this Assembly. This is another first in the history of the ACT government, drawing on the foundation principle that every child is valued and that the government is committed to preparing an early childhood strategy. The strategy is a first for the ACT and will guide efforts to support the development and education of children in their early years. Alongside this, the government has elevated the importance of this policy area by for the first time recognising early childhood education as a discrete area of ministerial responsibility.

These are vital decisions and I am sure all us will agree that education is a key in setting a child on the best path to their future. A child's development and learning does not start at school or when they enter school and it is not confined to activity within the school. So much of what happens beforehand and around school can determine a child's learning throughout their primary, secondary and tertiary education.

In taking up responsibility for this area I have led the Education Directorate to move to deliver on this commitment early in this term of government. I have kicked it off with the start of the conversation on the future of education. Since then I have also established a new ministerial advisory council comprising representatives from the early childhood education and care sector, including service providers, educator representatives and policy experts. The group met for the first time yesterday, and shortly the first in a series of discussion papers will be released to support the conversation about key issues that the strategy needs to consider.

**MR STEEL:** Minister, what are some of the emerging directions of the strategy?

**MS BERRY:** As I mentioned, early childhood development learning starts well before formal school. Cognitive, social and emotional progress during their early years as well as physical health and wellbeing directly affect the ability of a child to engage in school education and learning. But each child reaches school with different factors influencing their early development. Some children start school already behind. It is unacceptable for societal inequality to entrench disadvantage in this way. The

government will not allow the potential of a great education to be limited because all children have not been adequately supported according to needs in their early years. A key focus of this strategy will be equity.

Based on initial work and early feedback, some themes are already becoming clear. I have already touched on access, equity and affordability. Cost, geographical factors, disadvantage and similar issues should not prevent any early childhood services reaching those that need them. There is a clear need to consider the issues of transition: the need for systemised approaches that provide continuity of knowledge about a child's development between early childhood services and school and community services, to improve a child's confidence in managing change. Related to this is how the government and the sector partner with key services such as child and family health and community services.

Finally, and very importantly, there is a need to value early childhood education and educators as a profession and consider in this strategy issues related to workforce, qualifications and professionalism.

**MS CODY:** Minister, how can members of the community be involved in this work?

**MS BERRY:** Just as with the future of education conversation, I value the input of all interested members of our community in the development of the early childhood strategy. I am keen to hear from educators and teachers, service providers and community sector organisations, parent and community bodies, non-government schools, professional organisations, unions, academics, policy experts and others with an interest in this area.

As discussion papers are released—and apart from them—I encourage anyone with a contribution to submit it. Some people might have a desire to provide a detailed, lengthy, academic submission. Others might have the opportunity to provide only a sentence or two. All input is welcomed.

The strategy, just as with the future of education strategy, will be developed with expert guidance and rigour, but will be founded in a genuine conversation with the community. The government respects the expertise of educators and teachers. We value their insight. The government also values the perspective and views of children and parents, alongside a whole range of service providers who are involved in our children's lives. These strategies will not be thrust upon the community; they will be drawn up from the community.

### **Homelessness—overnight shelters**

**MR PARTON:** My question is to the Minister for Housing and Suburban Development. It is in relation to the report last month of overloaded night shelters for the homeless. We are talking about Safe Shelter and Samaritan House. Minister, what contact have you had with organisations providing night shelter services for the homeless in Canberra, and why is the government not adequately responding to this crisis?

**MS BERRY:** I do not agree that the government is not responding to the matter of rough sleepers in the city. We are the state or territory that provides the most funding in homelessness support. Our program, funded by the national partnership on housing—which will soon change with the National Affordable Housing Agreement—includes funding for night patrol, which is conducted by St Vincent de Paul. We also have funding for UnitingCare in the city, which provides services all through the week for people who are sleeping rough, need support or just need some companionship in spending some time with other people in the same place, getting a hot breakfast and accessing different services that might be available there.

Every time I have been made aware that there might have been an issue raised by an organisation like Safe Shelter, I have reached out to that organisation and made sure that they were put in touch with the professional organisations that can provide the best support to people who might be experiencing homelessness, and that they were put in touch with support services as well. I am also briefed every week on any changes to the numbers of rough sleepers who might be coming into this city or whom St Vincent de Paul, through its night patrol program, becomes aware of. I am advised that that number has not increased.

**MR PARTON:** Minister, how many people are utilising overnight shelters in the ACT?

**MS BERRY:** The ACT government does not fund any overnight shelters.

**Mr Parton:** You just said you were briefed every week.

**MS BERRY:** We do not fund Safe Shelter, about which I have responded in a question in this place previously. The ACT government has never funded Safe Shelter, and nor have Safe Shelter ever asked for funding, as far as I am aware, from the ACT government to support their services.

**MS LE COUTEUR:** Minister, you said you were briefed weekly on numbers of rough sleepers, and presumably other things. Can you share those numbers with the Assembly? That is certainly something that is of public interest.

**MS BERRY:** Yes, I can. There are 30 rough sleepers at the moment.

### **Waste recycling facility—government shareholder status**

**MS LEE:** My question is to the Chief Minister. Chief Minister, in question time on 16 August, Ms Le Couteur asked when you will be approving or rejecting Icon Water becoming a 25 per cent owner of the waste to energy plant in Fyshwick, to which you responded that “there is a formal process that needs to be gone through” and that “there are elements of community consultation as part of the process”. Chief Minister, who will initiate that formal process and what role will the government play, given its shareholder status?

**MR BARR:** There are a number of elements to that question. Clearly, any process associated with seeking development approval for a project has both a consultation process associated with the development application itself and, potentially, depending on the zoning and nature of the project, environmental impact assessment processes that also involve community consultation.

It is important to note that ascribing certain percentages of shareholdings in the context of a proposal that has been put forward by an organisation that would partner with ActewAGL—assuming the ACT government would be a 25 per cent shareholder—is a fundamental mistake from the outset. With shareholdings, it is not necessarily just because they are two steps removed that the ACT government would be a significant shareholder in such a proposal. That remains to be determined. Any ACT government shareholding would be through Icon Water's share of ActewAGL's share of any project. So in that context, the premise of Ms Le Couteur's question was not entirely accurate, or could not be determinedly established at that point to be a 25 per cent share.

On community consultation, the government will not be having a consultation in relation to whether, three steps removed, we might have some indirect ownership, or direct ownership, of the project. That is not the subject of community consultation. But the development application and the project itself will be.

**MS LEE:** Chief Minister, will the government take a similar approach to the community consultation process as they have for the Federal Golf Club proposal, for which there is no current DA?

**MR BARR:** If by that you mean a community panel looking at the project itself, that is something that I am not in a position to make a determination or an announcement on. You would be seeking an announcement of government policy in that regard, Ms Lee, and I am not allowed to do that in question time. And your question cannot seek that from me either. I understand it would be a breach of the standing orders.

However, clearly the proponents who sit outside of government, the proponents of the project, have been quite public in announcing their intent and in presenting at various public meetings. That there will be views for and against the project specifically or even the concept of waste to energy is well known. There will not be a consensus on this—in the context of the debate we had in this place earlier this morning. There will be people who will be opposed regardless and there will be people who will be supportive regardless of other people's views.

The community consultation will need to focus in the first instance on what the proponent is undertaking now ahead of lodging a development application and then any specific statutory requirements when the development application is lodged vis-a-vis environmental impact and then the development assessment itself.

**MS LAWDER:** Chief Minister, what additional transparency requirements will the government require from the proponent of the waste to energy plant to allay public concerns about the potential impact on health and the environment?

**MR BARR:** The planning system would require additional measures associated with environmental impact statements and the like. We have a three-track development assessment system—either code, merit or impact—and in this context this proposal certainly would not be a code-compliant development application and would automatically trigger further levels of community engagement and various additional levels of oversight.

I think, to the credit of the proponents, they are holding a series of pre-DA consultations. In the context of this debate in this city, I do not think that they can do much more than consult prior to lodging a development application. I guess they could consult on the consultation to the consultation to the consultation prior to considering consulting with the community in relation to whether they would lodge a development application. But I think they are doing pretty well; they have been very public, in the first instance, about intending to lodge a development application, consulting prior to lodging the development application and then consulting during the development application assessment process—some of which is statutory, required by the government, and otherwise what the proponents themselves would do in order to ensure that the full range of views were heard.

But, as I said, I do not think that this is a project that will achieve a consensus. There will remain people who will be opposed until they draw their last breath. There are also people who are very supportive of waste to energy technologies.

### **Higher education—economic benefits**

**MS CODY:** My question is to the Minister for Higher Education, Training and Research. Minister, how do international education exports benefit the territory's economy?

**MS FITZHARRIS:** I thank Ms Cody for her question and for her excellent ongoing interest in this area. I am very pleased to inform the Assembly that of the nearly \$3 billion per annum in the higher education and research sector value added into Canberra's economy, \$579 million last year came from international education exports—

*Mr Hanson interjecting—*

*Mr Barr interjecting—*

**MADAM SPEAKER:** Could the conversation stop across the chamber. That would be you, Chief Minister and Mr Hanson. Ms Fitzharris, you have the floor.

**MS FITZHARRIS:** Thank you, Madam Speaker. I welcome your assistance. This was an increase of 21 per cent from last year's international education exports. There are 14,000 international students currently studying in Canberra and growth in international numbers has ranged between seven and 13 per cent in recent years.

Growing our profile as a destination of choice for international students and researchers is an important component of the government's broader economic diversification strategy. While we already benefit from a strong international footprint by being home to world-renowned institutions, making the most of future economic opportunities will require us to further draw on cutting edge research and top tier talent abroad to improve our linkages to the global economy.

That work begins by ensuring that we support our higher education, training and research institutions in being able to attract, retain and leverage students and researchers at all levels of study and help them give international strong linkages to the Canberra community.

In this way we will continue to strengthen our international education exports and give even more back to the ACT economy by promoting our community to the world and growing its presence in the global economy.

**MS CODY:** Minister, how is the government working to attract students to our higher education institutions and ensure that enrolments continue to grow?

**MS FITZHARRIS:** Last year, members will recall, we released "Canberra: Australia's education capital", which commits the government to work collaboratively with Canberra's education providers to build on our reputation as a centre for high quality higher education, world-class research, innovation and employment outcomes. Through the ACT vice-chancellor's forum chaired by the Chief Minister we are working to build on existing activities to coordinate our marketing presence abroad and enhance the student experience with the Canberra community.

Under the strategy the government is actively marketing Canberra as a centre for high quality higher education and a study destination of choice for international students and researchers. It is working with education providers to grow existing source countries and diversify into new ones, leveraging trade missions and the higher education institutions' overseas alumni networks to promote Canberra to international communities.

I welcome the recent announcement of a possible new University of New South Wales campus in the ACT. This broadens our already extensive offering for tertiary studies in a sector where we are already recognised as one of the world's leading education cities. Canberra is already home to top ranking universities and research institutions including the ANU, the University of Canberra, UNSW Canberra at the ADFA campus, the Australian Catholic University, Charles Sturt University, Data61, CSIRO and Geoscience Australia and, of course, the Canberra Institute of Technology. There is enormous potential for an expanded UNSW Canberra to collaborate with these institutions, boosting our city's research capability and attracting more students. In this year's budget we also continued to fund the very important study Canberra program.

**MS ORR:** Minister, can you provide an overview of popular areas of study and what the student population comprises?

**MS FITZHARRIS:** I thank Ms Orr for the supplementary question. For the 14,000 international students currently studying Canberra, some of the most popular areas of study are management and commerce, society and culture, mixed field programs, IT, natural and physical sciences, engineering, education and health. In the skills and trades sector they are electrotechnology, carpentry, plumbing, IT, early childhood education and care, business administration, community services and project management.

The majority of our international students studying full qualifications on student visas came from the Asia-Pacific region. The top source countries for Canberra's international students as at May of this year were China, India, Korea, Malaysia and Vietnam. This is almost identical to the national data.

In order to help grow our international presence beyond the Asia-Pacific region and attract more students for long-term studies, several institutions are pursuing specific outreach and exchange arrangements with institutions and governments across Europe and in the Americas. Currently students from these regions tend to come to Canberra's institutions for non-award, that is, short-term, studies and exchanges.

We are also exploring targeted strategies that hold promise of attracting more international students and researchers. For example, we are working with our institutions to build world-leading hubs in key sectors such as defence technology, cybersecurity, space technologies and new and renewable energy. We will continue to also look for opportunities in traditional sectors such as plant and agricultural sciences and healthy ageing and active living, where Canberra has another unique advantage.

### **Canberra Hospital—emergency waiting times**

**MS LAWDER:** My question is to the Minister for Health and Wellbeing. I refer to a media release by ACT Health issued on 18 August 2017 which says:

The current increase in demand for ED services is putting pressure on our staff and we are seeing higher than usual waiting periods for non-urgent patient presentations.

Yet you advised the Assembly on 15 August 2017:

... Canberra Hospital emergency department waiting times are coming down.

Minister, how do you reconcile your claim of 15 August 2017 that Canberra Hospital waiting times are coming down with ACT Health stating on 18 August that waiting periods for non-urgent patient presentations are higher than usual?

**MS FITZHARRIS:** I thank Ms Lawder for the question. In relation to the statements made by health staff last week and the statements made by me, they are consistent because in my statement I referred to the trajectory of waiting times coming down. As we have seen and discussed in this place last week and this week, we do see pressure

on health services right across the country. As we do in many winter periods, we plan extensively for those. We are seeing a very significant flu season, which is yet to peak and, which is yet to conclude.

What we are doing is what good and responsible governments do, and that is encouraging people and reminding people that they can seek health services in a number of different settings at our two emergency departments in Canberra. For those residents nearby in New South Wales, they can seek treatment at the Queanbeyan emergency department. We have our nurse walk-in centres in Belconnen and Tuggeranong. And of course there are many GP practices, some of which open after hours and on the weekend. There are also the National Home Doctor Service and CALMS.

We are encouraging people and reminding people of the most appropriate setting in which they can seek a variety of different health services. I am very confident of and very pleased with the very hard work of our doctors, nurses and allied health staff right across the hospital but particularly in the emergency departments at this time of year. They are remaining very responsive to the community, continuing to provide the high quality health care that is their professional duty. As minister, my responsibility is to ensure that we are providing the community with enough information and providing our health practitioners with the right setting for them to deliver health care for Canberrans.

**MS LAWDER:** Minister, why have you stated twice in the past month here in the Assembly that Canberra Hospital waiting times are coming down?

**MS FITZHARRIS:** Because, in the broad trajectory of waiting times, they are coming down.

**MS LEE:** Minister, will you table in the Assembly by close of today the evidence that waiting times are coming down?

**MS FITZHARRIS:** I have answered this question on a number of occasions. There are a range of different waiting times, depending on, of course, which triage category you will be in. As I also said—

*Opposition members interjecting—*

**MADAM SPEAKER:** Minister, resume your seat, please. Stop the clock. Members, less than 15 seconds into the answer, the minister could not be heard because of interjections from multiple members on the opposition benches. I call the minister.

**MS FITZHARRIS:** I have also indicated, as members well know, that there is a data review process underway. I have indicated as well that in the September sittings I will be providing the next quarterly update on that, and also providing members with a response to how ACT Health are going to report on their ongoing data performance in the period under which the health data review takes place.

**Mrs Jones:** A point of order.

**MADAM SPEAKER:** A point of order, Mrs Jones.

**Mrs Jones:** On relevance, the question asked whether the data can be tabled by the end of today. It is quite a straightforward question. I am worried that we are not going to actually get any information about that particular set of data.

**MADAM SPEAKER:** Mrs Jones, there is no point of order. The minister has been explaining the datasets that are available and the work in progress. Do you have anything else to add, minister?

**Ms Fitzharris:** No.

### **Planning—community engagement**

**MS ORR:** My question is to the Minister for Planning and Land Management. Minister, can you provide an explanation of the new DA finder app and how it supports engagement with the community on planning?

**MR GENTLEMAN:** I thank Ms Orr for her interest in planning and also new technologies. The recently launched DA finder app is a key initiative of the ACT government to enable the local community to engage with and to provide feedback on proposed developments in their local area. The app, easily accessible on smart phones and tablets, enables users to view and link to current development application notifications, both nearby and Canberra wide.

In addition, users can elect to receive an alert when a planning notification is available in their specified areas of interest. Users can select then view a notification via the Environment and Sustainable Development Directorate's website and respond through the existing feedback channels. The link will take them straight there. Allowing residents to be kept up to date on development applications and providing them with quick, easy methods by which they can respond to the new proposal is a feature of the app. The latest version of the DA finder app, version 2, allows users not only to search for development applications but also provides access to the latest environmental impact studies, master plans and proposed Territory Plan variations as well.

As part of the ACT government's commitment to continual community involvement, the DA finder app plays a simple but key role. It increases accessibility for those who may have been unsure how to participate in the current feedback system. Whether you are a builder, a property developer, a local business person, real estate agent or community council representative, or you just have a keen interest in what is going on around you, the DA finder app will help you to stay informed. The app enables all development application information to be readily available at your fingertips, with information sent directly to smart phones and tablets. It enables easy access to key information and development applications that some may not have realised have been lodged in areas nearby.

As the ACT government moves towards a digital Canberra, initiatives such as the DA finder app—(*Time expired.*)

**MS ORR:** Minister, can you outline how pre-DA consultation guidelines for developers that are currently being developed will also support engagement with the community on planning?

**MR GENTLEMAN:** Consulting the community prior to submitting a development application—as we have heard earlier, known as the pre-DA consultation—can both improve the agreement of the local community and lead to better overall planning outcomes. With this in mind, the government, through the Environment and Sustainable Development Directorate, has sought to develop key guidelines whereby developers of significant projects in Canberra will be required to involve the community in the early stages of the proposal.

While developers are currently required to consult with the community before submitting a DA to the Planning and Land Authority on major projects, different developers have taken different approaches.

The draft plans for the guidelines, which been open for public consultation since 5 July, provide information on when an application will be required to go to a pre-DA consultation. But, importantly, the guidelines outline key principles for how the engagement should take place to ensure that it is genuine and effective.

Once finalised, the guidelines will ensure that at a minimum the developer is required to ensure that the community is informed about the consultation process and consulted on the proposal; engage with a diverse demographic, that is, age, gender, race, religion and physical abilities; make available to the community conceptual drawings and the relevant documentation; and conduct face-to-face engagement sessions with a diverse cross-section of the community.

Overall, these guidelines will ensure that everyone has the opportunity to have their say on projects that have the potential to define our suburbs and our city. It is a clear commitment by the ACT government to ensure that community engagement is expanded to all citizens of the ACT.

**MR PETERSSON:** Minister, can you further outline how the government is enhancing engagement with the community on planning issues?

**MR GENTLEMAN:** As I said in my previous answers, the government remains committed to the engagement of the public in the planning decisions of the ACT. Through both the DA finder app and draft guidelines for pre-development application consultation, we are ensuring that the community are kept up to date on the development of their suburbs and the city. Further to this, the government is seeking to engage the community in other ways on planning issues. The recent announcement of a community panel process in the Kippax and Curtin centres and the Federal Golf Club are key examples of this. For Kippax and Curtin the process will be used to facilitate a conversation about the future direction of the centres.

Following the extensive consultation that has already occurred for both centres, draft master plans were released with broad community support. But subsequent development proposals from various owners have presented new consideration for both the ACT government and the community. Extending consultation to those panels has proved hugely successful in the past, for example, with the Red Hill community. Further, these panels show the clear commitment the government has to involving the local community every step of the way through major developments that have the potential to guide Canberra to be the city we want it to be.

In addition to this, roundtables involving local residents such as that which occurred at Woden earlier this year show the manner in which the ACT government seeks to bring together various groups within the community to get their views on proposed planning items. These are just a couple of ways the government remains committed to reaching out to the community and engaging them in the conversation about Canberra's future.

### **Roads—William Slim Drive**

**MR MILLIGAN:** My question is to the Minister for Transport and City Services. During the 2016 election the Labor Party once again committed to the duplication of William Slim. Minister, when do you intend to honour this commitment?

**MS FITZHARRIS:** Yes, indeed we did, and we intend to honour that commitment in this term.

**MR MILLIGAN:** Minister, why was this capital expenditure not included in the recent budget round?

**MS FITZHARRIS:** In this budget we have invested in stage 2 of the Gundaroo Drive upgrade to build on stage 1 of the Gundaroo Drive upgrade. That also builds on other extensive duplication works we currently have underway along Horse Park Drive, Ashley Drive and Cotter Road. Only so many of these infrastructure projects can be delivered in each budget. We will deliver the duplication of William Slim Drive. We also note the work that the commonwealth has planned at the CSIRO Ginninderra site. The government has made it very clear that we expect to have a detailed conversation with the commonwealth about their obligations for infrastructure upgrades around that development.

**MR COE:** Minister, when will William Slim Drive be fully duplicated; also, when will stage 3 of Gundaroo be duplicated?

**MS FITZHARRIS:** I believe I answered the first part of Mr Coe's question in my first answer. I do not know what stage 3 Mr Coe refers to. I assume he means from Horse Park Drive to Anthony Rolfe Avenue and Mirrabai Drive. We have not made a commitment to do that. My understanding is that the volume of traffic at the moment would not require us to do that for quite some time. There would be other priority infrastructure around the region and around the city that would require a road upgrade before that stage.

**Transport—on-demand transport review**

**MR PETTERSSON:** Can the Minister for Regulatory Services update the Assembly on the planned review of the on-demand transport industry?

**MR RAMSAY:** I thank Mr Pettersson for the question. The government is committed to evidence-based policy and working together to implement innovative ideas in Canberra in a safe and lawful way. That has been made evident by our approach to the on-demand transport industry. Since the legislation of ride share in the ACT, the government has been collecting data on the use of both traditional point-to-point transport options, such as taxis, and newer models including ride share. We have also been monitoring how each of the various sectors in the industry has been utilised. This has all been feeding into the upcoming promised review of the industry.

We have recently opened consultation to add to this data that we collected. We are seeking the opinions of those who work in the industry as well as those who use it. The level of feedback so far has been excellent. Early results indicate a strong approval for ride share. Well over 85 per cent say that it is making it easier for travelling around Canberra, and over 85 per cent say the ACT is better off because of the reforms. But Canberrans have suggestions for improvement too, and the evaluation team is reviewing these suggestions carefully.

My directorate is looking at the data, speaking to people to see how it is impacting on the people of Canberra and those working in the industry as well as gathering information from the community on what expectations and what needs they have from the industry. I look forward to receiving the report by the end of the year, their analysis of the industry and any further suggested improvements we might be able to make.

**MR PETTERSSON:** Can the minister outline why the government is undertaking this review?

**MR RAMSAY:** I thank Mr Pettersson for the supplementary question. We should not forget that the ACT was nation-leading in these reforms. On 30 October 2015 this government enabled the introduction of ride share services in the ACT and reduced unnecessary regulatory costs for taxis and hire cars.

Consumers are at the centre of the reforms. We want them to benefit through competition, through better use of technology and through more choices, something that Canberrans certainly asked for when this process began. The government also wanted to support other things that Canberrans wanted for themselves and the community. This included on-demand travel that is safe, efficient, accessible, good value for money and a pleasant experience every time one travels in a taxi, through ride share or in a hire car. The community also expects a high quality wheelchair-accessible taxi service in the ACT, meeting the on-demand transport needs of all Canberrans.

Back in 2015, we promised that we would formally evaluate the outcomes of the reforms and see if Canberrans were getting what they asked for. We also wanted to make sure that the industry was transitioning to support these consumer outcomes, so we wanted to look at industry competitiveness, driver incentives and other industry factors.

Right now, we are in the midst of an evidence-based evaluation process that is systematically reviewing the impact of the reforms over the 24 months since they began to ensure that the community's needs and expectations are being met. I look forward to the outcome of the review.

**MS CHEYNE:** Can the minister outline how Canberrans can provide input into this process and the level of response received so far?

**MR RAMSAY:** I thank Ms Cheyne for her supplementary question. We are consulting drivers, owners, hotels, government departments, community groups and, most importantly, consumers. This is because these reforms are primarily designed to ensure that we are providing Canberrans with an on-demand transport industry that meets their needs.

We have received over 1,000 responses to both full-length and quick surveys. More than a dozen stakeholder groups have also met with the evaluation team. We are keen to hear from all members of the community, whether they are drivers, owners or just people who want to get from point A to point B.

I encourage Canberrans to head to the Your Say website and provide feedback to the government by 5 September. We have various surveys that the community can fill out, depending on how they participate in the industry, so that we can collect the various pieces of information that we need. Further information or submissions can also be sent through to the team which is running the evaluation to their email address: [regulatoryreform@act.gov.au](mailto:regulatoryreform@act.gov.au). I encourage Canberrans to jump on to the website or to send us an email, to ensure that we are building a system that meets the needs of everyone in the community.

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

### **Supplementary answer to question without notice LGBTIQ community—government support**

**MR BARR:** During question time, Ms Le Couteur asked me some specific questions around the participation particularly of homeless people in the non-binding voluntary postal survey, and to what extent the territory government could seek to assist.

The Australian Bureau of Statistics has released some further information in relation to what they are calling special strategies to support participation. Within these strategies—which cover participation by people experiencing homelessness; Australians overseas; people who are blind, who have low vision or have another

disability; or Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander peoples—the ABS makes reference to working with state and territory government officials to ensure that people have the opportunity to participate in the survey. They also specifically reference, in the case of people experiencing homelessness, that they will work with homeless service providers and community organisations.

An interesting addition to the process now, according to the ABS website, is that we are introducing the concept of a proxy vote in the voluntary non-binding postal survey. If a person cannot access their survey form or complete it independently, they can authorise someone else to fill it out for them. We are now in the position where you can proxy your voluntary non-binding postal survey to someone else. You need to specifically authorise the trusted person to open the postal survey envelope on your behalf and to communicate your response to the trusted person so that they can accurately fill it out for you. The trusted person would then seal the form in the reply-paid envelope and post it back to the ABS.

Madam Speaker, I am delighted to say that I am prepared to act as a trusted person for anyone who wants to vote yes in the non-binding voluntary postal survey. Should anyone wishing to vote yes not have someone they trust to vote yes on their behalf, I am happy, as Chief Minister of the territory, to be a trusted person in those circumstances. I do not think anyone would doubt how I will vote in the survey. Should anyone trust me to do so on their behalf through the proxy vote process, I will be very happy to do so.

## **Personal explanation**

**MS LAWDER** (Brindabella): I seek leave to make a brief personal statement under standing order 46.

**MADAM SPEAKER:** You believe you have been misrepresented?

**MS LAWDER:** I believe that many people have been misrepresented. It is in relation to what I thought were extremely non-inclusive remarks by the Chief Minister in relation to postal votes. Many people with a disability—such as people with an intellectual disability or a brain injury, for example, amongst many other types—have, by longstanding tradition, had someone else fill in a proxy vote for them. For a Chief Minister who prides himself on his inclusivity, I am quite horrified by the remarks that he has made today.

## **Supplementary answers to questions without notice** **Public housing—maintenance**

**MS BERRY:** Last week, on 16 August, I stated that the new public housing maintenance contract would begin on 1 July 2018. In fact, it will begin on 1 October 2018.

**MADAM SPEAKER:** Thank you. And Ms Lawder, even though I gave you the time to make your comments, I do not think that they were really applicable under standing order 46. You could have used another forum to make your statements.

**Ms Lawder:** So could the Chief Minister.

**MADAM SPEAKER:** That is not for debate. There is no point of order; I ask you to be quiet, please.

### **ACTION bus service—flexibus**

**MS FITZHARRIS:** Yesterday in question time Ms Lee asked me this:

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?

I replied that I was not aware that that was the case, but I can confirm that the inner south flexible bus service does include the Manuka and Kingston shopping precincts, and the flexible bus service regularly takes passengers to those shopping centres. I would like to remind those opposite of standing order 117(b), which says that questions shall not contain statements of fact that cannot be authenticated.

### **Personal explanation**

**MS LAWDER (Brindabella):** Under standing orders 46 and 47, I seek leave to make a brief statement about being misrepresented and to table an email trail between me and Mr Gentleman.

**MADAM SPEAKER:** Thank you, Ms Lawder. In the absence of seeing it, leave is granted through me.

**MS LAWDER:** Thank you. During question time on Wednesday, 17 August, I believe I was misrepresented. On 12 July, I sent an email to Mr Gentleman regarding aluminium cladding, with a total of 23 questions. During question time on 17 August, Mr Gentleman was asked by Ms Lee why he had failed to answer questions asked of him in that email. In reply to Ms Lee's question, Mr Gentleman advised the Assembly that his office had—I quote from the draft *Hansard*—"supplied a direct answer in relation to all of those 23 questions". The email trail I table today quite clearly shows that Mr Gentleman did not answer the 23 questions.

**Mr Hanson:** Has he misled? Has he misled the Assembly?

**MS LAWDER:** I believe he has misled the Assembly. I table the following paper:

Aluminium cladding safety in ACT—Email correspondence between Ms Lawder and Mr Gentleman's office, dated 12, 21 and 24 July 2017.

## Population growth

Debate resumed.

**MR STEEL** (Murrumbidgee) (3.46): I rise to speak in support of Mr Pettersson's motion today. The government is investing in the health, education, transport and infrastructure needs of our growing city, to harness the opportunities and to manage the challenges that come with this growth.

The latest population data from last year reflects that Canberra is no longer a country town, but a city of 406,000 people. Canberrans should expect even more growth in our population into the future, with recent statistics forecasting that Canberra will be growing at a rate of around 6,000 people a year by 2021.

The birth rate is the key driver, with international migration and interstate migration also contributing. These are things that we cannot and should not stop. People want to live here because we are a livable city. I have had to remind Woden Community Council on a couple of occasions—Ms Le Couteur was there as well—that we do not want to adopt a one-child policy to reduce the birth rate, and nor could we in our human rights jurisdiction. We also do not have the power to secede from the commonwealth to stop interstate migration even if we wanted to. Of course, we also have a responsibility, as a good international citizen, to settle our share of refugees. So our population growth is here to stay.

I am glad to say that we are in a situation of strong growth, both economically and in terms of population, rather than in a position of stagnation. We know from economic history that decreasing national population tends to increase the influence of capital accumulated in previous generations, and that would create its own problems for increasing inequality in our society.

As I said in my maiden speech in the Assembly, growth brings significant challenges but also new opportunities for our city. For Canberra to remain livable, we have to change. It is the role of government to plan for change with a policy response that reflects a considered level of foresight by thinking far into the future and asking sometimes the difficult questions such as “How can I make this place better, not just for me but for future generations to come?”

The election last year provided an opportunity to look forward. The overall theme from the election was that Canberra is growing. All of the major policy debates were about managing growth: the demands on our health system, the congestion on our roads, transport infrastructure for a bigger city, and planning and land development issues. I am pleased that this Labor government has a vision to address these issues that was endorsed at the election. We are stepping up to meet the long-term challenges in population growth and demographic transitions, and investing in the future through the budget.

We are also recognising and harnessing the opportunity that this provides us, with scale, to make Canberra more livable, not less livable. We have seen that with international flights, which are as much a factor of growth as of our government's determination to secure them, and with improved retail opportunities as well. Another example was the opening of Impact Properties' second office in Mawson this month, which I attended to cut the ribbon for; one of our growing businesses here in Canberra benefiting from the booming housing market.

I believe that population growth for Canberra can be a good thing, but it does come with challenges as we transition from a small country town to a large international city. It will mean that Canberra will look a little different in the future. I believe that that is a good thing. It will certainly look different from what it looked like in the 1950s and 1960s, which were a time of very high population growth. We can make Canberra even better than it already is. In the process, we need to continue to take steps to manage our environment. That is not in question in this motion, but it is also not the focus of this motion today.

On the south side, the Molonglo Valley is a new and rapidly growing region. With almost no people a matter of years ago, there are now around 5,000 people living in Molonglo and we are on track to seeing 20,600 people living across Coombs, Wright, Denman Prospect, Molonglo and Whitlam by 2021. Of these people, just over half are women, 51.1 per cent, above the ACT average. And Molonglo is both a new region and a young region. The average age is 30 years old in the Molonglo Valley, compared to 35 across the ACT. There are also significantly more children under 15 years living in the Molonglo Valley proportionately compared with the rest of our city. Along with this, there are significantly fewer people over the age of 45.

Equally, we are seeing demographic transitions on the south side, with an ageing and declining population in established suburbs. Kambah's average age is now 40, up from 36 just 10 years ago and 37 at the census prior to the most recent one, in 2011. And the population is diminishing. It went down from 15,500 in 2011 to 14,900 last year. There are similar trends in Weston Creek, which has been around stable at 22,000. The average age is well up there, up to 41 from 39 in the previous census. Our community needs to continue to advance inclusive policies so that both younger and older people in our community have the opportunity to continue to contribute to our society. The importance of these statistics for Murrumbidgee is that we have a diverse electorate and our government is catering to the needs of different Canberrans living in our different regions. I want to comment on a few aspects of what the government is doing, particularly in health.

As our demography increases and transitions, one of our greatest challenges is ensuring that Canberrans have access to best quality and affordable health care. That is our government's priority; it is Labor's priority. The June budget delivers in the area of health for the needs of our young, our adults and our elderly. A 10-year health plan builds the infrastructure, investing in healthcare professionals and ensuring that we have the capacity and resources to provide quality and affordable health care as our city grows.

We will provide better health services for women and young people by investing in the expansion of the Centenary Hospital for Women and Children, more maternity beds and more paediatric high dependency unit beds, and by introducing new services, including the new paediatric intensive care treatment space, an adolescent gynaecology service and a child/adolescent sleep lab. That will help to meet the growing needs of the community and its demand for maternity services. We are also investing in a new hospital building in the surgical procedures interventional radiology and emergency centre at the Canberra Hospital to ensure that we can continue to provide quality health care on the south side as our population continues to grow.

We are also building new nurse-led walk-in centres, through an investment of \$14 million over five years. As part of the 10-year health plan, we are looking to build a new nurse-led walk-in centre for the Weston Creek region. As Mr Pettersson mentioned yesterday, the centres are an extremely popular part of the government's health service provision and help to reduce pressure on primary healthcare providers and keep people out of hospitals by providing immediate and effective care, delivering fast and accessible advice and treatment for minor illness and injuries at no cost. The Liberals outright opposed these measures. Given the questions today around waiting times, I find it extraordinary that they continue not to support the walk-in centres.

Also, they do not support light rail. Our government has brought forward our light rail plan to address the growing needs of our city in terms of transport infrastructure. With more people wanting to call Canberra home from across Australia, it is a responsibility for us to actually deliver quality public transport options and an integrated transport system—I spoke about that last week in this place—and, in particular, integrating our first mass transit system in light rail with other transport modes, including more rapid buses. This is important to reduce congestion, but also in making Canberra a more livable city, with more people living close to public transport, providing regeneration opportunities along the route. Woden in particular is in need of regeneration and of more people living and working in it. Its population has been fairly static over the past five years.

Last week, I reminded Mr Coe that we cannot live with the bus system of the 1980s, when Canberra was almost half the size that we are now. It was just over 240,000 back in 1980. We need to invest in new infrastructure when it comes to transport. The ACT Labor government went to the last election with a positive plan to renew our schools, hospitals, transport infrastructure and neighbourhoods to meet the needs of our growing city. In government, we are enacting these forward-looking policies and investing in new infrastructure. I commend Mr Pettersson's motion to the Assembly.

**MR RATTENBURY** (Kurrajong) (3.56): I rise today to support Ms Le Couteur's amendments. Ms Le Couteur has made some very important points in the context of the issue raised by Mr Pettersson about population growth in the territory. I think her central premise contained in new paragraph (1)(e) that she proposes in her

amendments is that economic growth driven by population growth and consumption is unsustainable. I think it is a very important point and one that is not often raised in these sorts of discussions. I think it is very valuable that Ms Le Couteur added it to the discussion today.

Certainly here in the ACT, as Ms Le Couteur touched on, we have managed to make some progress in terms of decoupling some issues such as energy usage growth and population growth, and certainly with our investment in renewable electricity we have done a lot to clean up that sector. Nonetheless, the ACT continues to have a very significant environmental footprint, and certainly a large part of that goes to the heavy consumption of what is a relatively affluent community. That consumption side of these discussions simply cannot be ignored.

As a community with a strong degree of disposable income, we have a footprint that is significantly higher than that of many other people on this planet. That is played out in issues such as waste, where our stockpiles continue to grow, and it has been difficult for the ACT government to turn that issue around. I think there is a lot more that we can do.

It is important that we also have a discussion about alternative approaches to prosperity. We must think carefully about what we measure our success by and I think it is fair to say that simply assuming that a larger economy is the answer is a narrow agenda and a narrow measure that we should not solely rest on. A bigger economy is not in itself a straight out gain. Traditionally economies are measured by GDP and like measures. I believe that GDP is a flawed measure of prosperity. It was created during World War II to measure how much production could be diverted to war. Certainly it was never intended as a measure of quality of life. It certainly does not include environmental services like rivers flowing into our dams and it certainly does not count environmental damage like pollution.

I have always been struck by the fact that the inherent flaws in a measure like the GDP are best exposed by the example of the Exxon Valdez oil spill in Alaska in the 1990s—help me, colleagues; I think it was the 1990s—anyway, well before the turn of the century. In that case, the measured GDP of Alaska actually went up, despite the enormous environmental damage caused by that oil spill. Because of the arrival of a significant number of people in Alaska to run cleanup crews and the significant funds that had to be expended on it, the actual GDP of the territory went up, despite that enormous environmental cost of the spill and the impact on wildlife and water quality and a range of other very important measures. That example classically highlights the shortcomings of GDP as a measure. It counts only money and not wellbeing.

Similarly, redundancy payments count towards GDP, despite the personal impact that that can have on people. The casualisation of jobs boosts profits and, therefore, GDP but causes inequality, hardship and uncertainty for individuals.

I think it is incumbent upon us to consider alternative approaches to measuring progress in what we consider to be prosperity. There are serious efforts internationally towards a better system. There are examples such as the human development index,

which was created by the United Nations in 1980. It reports annually and it adds health and the level of education as measures of progress and human prosperity. I think all members would agree that they are both very good examples of the sorts of things we would want to measure when we come to assessing how we are progressing.

Another example is the OECD's better life index, which is based on quality of life and includes social and environmental outcomes. Certainly there are other measures being developed by academic institutions, think tanks and other organisations. I think this does not mean an end to prosperity, far from it. We should measure prosperity; I think we just need to think about prosperity more broadly than simply as measured by GDP.

This comes back to Ms Le Couteur's central point. Economic growth driven by population growth and consumption is unsustainable and alternative approaches to prosperity must be sought. I think this is a really important discussion. I think it is one the Greens are really keen to see further work on. It is why we have pushed at times to introduce measures such as triple bottom line accounting in order to try to capture some of these broader considerations.

In any discussion about population growth, which is what Mr Pettersson has brought forward today—and I think he has made some important points about the government needing to invest in infrastructure and to keep up with population growth—we cannot lose sight of the broader impacts and we should not simply be sucked down the path of thinking that population growth driving economic growth is a positive per se. We need to consider some of the broader factors. I think that is the important point made by Ms Le Couteur's amendments. I thank her for bringing them forward and adding to the depth of the conversation today.

**MR PETTERSSON** (Yerrabi) (4.02): I will be very brief. I am excited about the future of Canberra. I have lived a shorter life than some in this chamber, but even in my life I have seen tremendous change within Canberra. Think back a decade or so as Braddon transformed; go back 20 or so years as Gungahlin emerged from the paddocks out north; go back a few more decades and see what was the nappy valley of Tuggeranong emerging. I am excited to see Canberra expand even now.

As you see the new suburbs in Gungahlin, Belconnen and Molonglo Valley, you are seeing more people have the absolute blessing of being a Canberran. I do not think there is a better place in this world to live. One of my fears is that there is a push within our community to limit the growth of Canberra and there will be fewer people who get to live in this amazing city and experience all of the opportunities that it provides.

One of the best things about being a member of this place is the stories that you are told. There is nothing I quite enjoy more than standing at a street stall and having someone come up to you and tell you about the good old days. In many ways they were; not in all ways, but some. One of the favourite ones I love to hear is about the early days of Gungahlin as a town centre when there were no real local shops, when it

was a shipping container and you could not buy fresh milk. The very limited number of local residents who lived in Gungahlin at the time were very pleased when Gungahlin got more local shops and they did not have to venture all the way to town to get fresh milk.

I think the development of Canberra is a good thing. I think more people being Canberran is a good thing.

I understand some of Ms Le Couteur's concerns about the ecological footprint and the rising costs of government. They are somewhat substantiated. I accept them. I do, however, have concerns about the criticism in her amendments of population growth in general terms. On the whole I support the motion unamended. I encourage other members to do so as well.

Question put:

That the amendment be agreed to.

The Assembly voted—

Ayes 2

Ms Le Couteur  
Mr Rattenbury

Noes 20

Mr Barr	Mrs Kikkert
Ms Berry	Ms Lawder
Ms Burch	Ms Lee
Ms Cheyne	Mr Milligan
Ms Cody	Ms Orr
Mr Coe	Mr Parton
Ms Fitzharris	Mr Pettersson
Mr Gentleman	Mr Ramsay
Mr Hanson	Mr Steel
Mrs Jones	Mr Wall

Amendment negatived.

Original question resolved in the affirmative.

## **Director of Public Prosecutions—funding**

**MR HANSON** (Murrumbidgee) (4.10): I move:

That this Assembly:

(1) notes:

- (a) the Director of Public Prosecutions (DPP) noted in the agency's 2016 2017 Annual Report that funding for the DPP was "at a critical level";

- (b) at the hearing of 23 June 2017, the Select Committee on Estimates 2017-2018 heard that funding for the DPP “goes nowhere near meeting the needs of the office, particularly in the context of continuing efficiency measures”;
  - (c) the Committee also heard “the DPP must make compromises including selection of cases as well as compromises to the level of preparation and degree of expertise brought to cases”;
  - (d) the Committee stated “there is a valid argument for ensuring the DPP’s funding enables it to meet increasing prosecution service requirements to a high standard”; and
  - (e) the Justice and Community Safety Directorate is facing efficiency measures of \$4.9 million, which includes the DPP as shown in the table provided to the Committee by the Directorate on notice; and
- (2) calls on the Government to implement the Select Committee’s recommendation that the:
- (a) Office of the ACT Director of Public Prosecutions be excluded from the application of the efficiency dividend, and that all programs in this area be maintained or expanded as required to achieve the stated policy outcome;
  - (b) ACT Government seek submissions from the ACT Director of Public Prosecutions as to the funding required to attract and retain senior prosecutors and special provisions be applied to achieve this aim; and
  - (c) Office of the ACT Director of Public Prosecutions be authorised to prepare and present its own budget submissions, independent of the Justice and Community Safety Directorate.

At its heart, this motion addresses the undeniable problem in our justice system that is, the lack of funding for the DPP. We have spoken about this before, in question time. Indeed prior to that we have raised questions in annual reports hearings for a number of years and estimates hearings for a number of years. Today was not the first time we have asked questions about this matter in the Assembly. On each occasion the answer from the government is either, “No,” or “We’ll get back to you.” That is not good enough. Delay is no longer an acceptable option, not for the DPP, and certainly not for the adequate funding of justice in the territory. This is a serious problem in a vital area of government and it is not a time for the dismissive or evasive answers that we have seen. It is time to accept that justice in this territory is not properly resourced and that justice in the territory is suffering as a result.

Although this has been raised in the past, the most recent annual report from the DPP should have raised alarm bells. In that report the DPP stated:

... the stark reality for my Office has been that while the demands on the Office have increased, resources have actually decreased through so called “efficiency dividends” and the like.

I note that point, Mr Assistant Speaker. In the annual report the DPP said funding had decreased through efficiency dividends. In question time last week, the Chief Minister denied that there were any efficiency dividends. But I will get back to that point. The DPP continued:

The government has responded by increasing the number of beds at the prison, by appointing a fifth ... judge in the ACT Supreme Court, and by increasing the resources available to police. However our pleas for increased resources have gone unanswered.

During estimates hearings the DPP, Mr Jon White, advised that the current funding—and I quote:

... goes nowhere near meeting the needs of the office. It is in the context of continuing efficiency measures ...

One of the most concerning submissions we heard during estimates, and an important part of this motion, is the admission from the DPP that the lack of funding means that compromises would have to be made. I quote again:

There is an aspect of selection of cases; there is an aspect of compromise to the level of preparation of cases.

... the degree of expertise which is brought to particular cases.

If an appropriate level of resourcing is not given to my office, the standard of prosecutions will suffer.

... as presently resourced we will not be able to fully meet the capacity.

I note that there were in camera hearings. That is unprecedented. Certainly, in my time in the Assembly, it was the first time that estimates hearings have been taken in camera. I was not privy to those, but it certainly speaks to the severity of the case and some of the impacts that the DPP has highlighted that prosecutions will suffer.

It is not just about the number of prosecutions; it is about the standard of those prosecutions, and the number of caseloads that simply will not be met. That should not be forced onto the people of Canberra. The DPP are doing their best but they do not have enough money.

Ms Le Couteur is walking out of the chamber. It is my understanding that she was on that committee, and she would have taken part in writing this report. Correct me if I am wrong, but this is a tripartisan report. She is nodding, on her way out. I look forward to her support, because my motion simply says what is in the committee report, a tripartisan committee report. This is not some sort of Liberal agenda here. This report was written and agreed to by Liberal, Labor and Greens members. I look forward to tripartisan support for what is already in a tripartisan committee report. The report states:

... there is a valid argument for ensuring the DPP's funding enables it to meet increasing prosecution service requirements to a high standard. The Committee particularly notes the increased workload for the DPP likely to arise from other associated investments in the criminal justice system.

In light of the DPP's comments in committee hearings, and his comment in the 2015-16 DPP Annual Report that resources in his office have reached 'critical level', the Committee believes that efficiency dividends—

so the committee certainly identified efficiency dividends—

should not be applied to the office of the DPP.

The Committee recommends that Office of the ACT Director of Public Prosecutions be excluded from the application of the efficiency dividend, and that all programs in this area be maintained or expanded as required to achieve the stated policy outcome.

I urge the Attorney-General to heed that tripartisan committee recommendation. Simply saying "noted" or "agreed to in principle" is just not good enough.

The Attorney-General was away when we asked this question. The response from the Chief Minister that no efficiency dividend was being applied was flippant and it was a really insulting approach. The reality is that JACS is being asked to provide \$4.9 million in what is being called an "efficiency". The DPP themselves called it an efficiency dividend. The committee report identified it as an efficiency dividend. It is variously referred to as an "efficiency measure" or just an "efficiency".

With respect to saying that it is not being termed as an efficiency dividend, when you go to the technical definition of efficiency dividends, it is quite clear from the department of finance regulation that this is what is being applied, no matter what you want to call it. It is \$4.9 million being applied on the JACS Directorate. As we know, \$228,000 of it is being applied on the DPP.

It is important to address the issue, and the response that we got from the Chief Minister was not helpful to the debate. Let us accept that cutting funding is bad enough, but trying to play weasel words does not help the situation.

The DPP has made it clear in his submissions that one of the issues facing his office with the lack of funding is that it means he cannot attract senior prosecutors. He said the resources on offer would only provide for—and I quote:

... one grade 4 prosecutor ... goes nowhere near meeting the needs of the office  
... in the context of continuing efficiency measures ...

I repeat: "continuing efficiency measures". That is in light, as I have discussed already, of the increased load being placed on his office, including the new courts, an additional judge, more police officers and additional jury rooms at the new court. All of those elements need additional resources, and all of those elements have additional resources, except for the DPP. What we know is that they are being cut.

You have to be very careful in the response. There have been some extra amounts provided for specific cases, but in general terms the amount provided to the DPP, as he has said on page 158 of the estimates report, is manifestly inadequate.

One simple issue that was canvassed at question time was the extra resources being provided to the police for Taskforce Nemesis to deal with outlaw motorcycle gangs. I think that is good; although I think we are missing anti-consorting laws, do not misinterpret that as not supporting additional resources for police for that important issue. We certainly do. But whilst the police are getting extra resources, I imagine that will bring additional prosecutions before the courts, and there are no more resources for the DPP. We are only resourcing one part of the equation there, not the other, which is the DPP, which has to bring matters into the courts.

As noted by the DPP, “as presently resourced, we will not be able to fully meet the capacity”. That is a damaging quote. He further noted:

We find great difficulty attracting people with our current structure. ... I have to say that we do have difficulty attracting people appropriately qualified at high levels.

That is damaging stuff, and it is a matter of resources and priorities for this government, not just within JACS but within the whole of government. It is quite clear, when this sort of case is being put forward by the DPP, that the priorities of this government are wrong.

This is not something that has just emerged overnight. Go back to the estimates reports and the annual reports of the past three or four years, and you will see the same pleas from the DPP over and over again. I urge the government to rethink their priorities and to give the DPP the resources they need to keep the level of expertise in the office.

Part of the reason for all of this inadequate funding that the DPP has identified is that he is unable to make his own budget submissions, to make his own case. We went to this point in question time but I will make it again. I quote from his annual report:

One of the problems is that although the Office is fiercely independent in relation to its decision making, all financial matters are filtered through the JACS directorate. Unfortunately, the directorate has been singularly unsuccessful in representing the interests of the Office in budgetary discussions and this had led to the current resourcing crisis.

It is clear that the DPP, on the one hand, are being told, “You’re independent”, while, on the other hand, they are being told, “You can’t argue for your money independently, you’ve got to do that through the JACS Directorate.” I think the DPP is right in identifying that that is a problem. I note that the committee, with a Green member and two Labor members, also acknowledged this problem and recommended that that be addressed by the government.

In terms of the government's response, which is why I brought this motion to the Assembly today, I feel that the response is inadequate. I note from the minister's answers to questions in question time, and no doubt when he speaks, and looking at his amendment as well—I will go to that shortly—the government's response is wishy-washy. It does not provide the clarity, the direction or, importantly, the resources that the DPP needs. We have heard it all before. We have argued in estimates reports, and in annual reports hearings and reports, for additional resources, for more support for the DPP, and we get weasel words from the government.

It is not good enough. We cannot simply be washing this away. We have a tri-party report telling the government to act, and they should. It is clearly needed, and it is clearly the will unanimously having regard to the report.

In response to those recommendations, with regard to the ability to make submissions directly, it was "agreed in principle", and on the other two matters they were simply "noted". God knows what that means: "noted". It is not the sort of response that you would expect to these pleas from the DPP, because we know that they are not coming as a surprise.

In conclusion, I note that I have seen the amendment that will be moved by the Attorney-General. I will not be supporting that amendment because it does not go to the nub of the issues. It is just more weasel words. It just says, "Oh, we're looking at it." The government is saying that they are going to work closely with the DPP to consider its future funding. Well, they have been doing that for the past 15 or 16 years, haven't they? They have been working closely with the DPP to consider their funding, and the result of that is: not enough. Basically, you are saying, "We're going to continue to do what we've already been doing. And, by the way, we're going to get back to the Assembly."

We will know you have got back to the Assembly when you actually provide additional resources. So a response from the minister which says, "We're just going to continue to work with the DPP," when we know that that ongoing work has resulted in manifestly inadequate funding, is hardly a substantive or adequate response or a considered response from the government.

All I am asking is that the government take those three recommendations of a tri-party committee report, which I think are eminently reasonable, based on evidence that has been provided by the Director of Public Prosecutions over a period of years, and agree with those recommendations.

Rather than saying "noted", or "agreed in principle", you should say, "Yes, we will do it; we will act and we will restore balance to our justice system to make sure that the DPP, who is responsible in our justice system for bringing matters to prosecution, has the resources to do so." Any other response from this government is weak and is not providing taxpayers' resources where they are most urgently needed.

**MR RAMSAY** (Ginninderra—Attorney-General, Minister for Regulatory Services, Minister for the Arts and Community Events and Minister for Veterans and Seniors) (4.24): The government welcomes Mr Hanson's interest in ensuring that our justice system is adequately resourced. The Director of Public Prosecutions represents the interests of this community in being safe and seeing that justice is done in response to crimes. This government recognises the importance of the DPP as part of our criminal justice system. We have been working closely with the DPP to ensure that it is able to deliver on its responsibilities to this community, and we will continue to do so.

Members who are familiar with my views on the justice system know well that I believe that true justice is accessible, is transparent and is timely. To achieve a stronger justice system, it is essential that we look at all of the components as a whole. Decisions about resourcing for police, for prosecutors, for judges, for legal aid and for corrections are all interrelated. This is an area where thorough consultation and a detailed understanding of the entire justice system are essential to making a good decision. That is exactly how I have approached this issue. I have been in close contact with the DPP to discuss and to consider how the government can assist in progressing its work.

The government recently supported the DPP, in concert with the JACS directorate, to undertake an independent review of its resourcing. As I have already indicated in the government's response to the estimates committee, that review will inform the government's decisions about future resourcing.

There are some points in this motion that require clarification, and I will soon be moving some amendments to that effect. This motion calls on the government to exempt the DPP from an efficiency dividend. The DPP is not subject to an efficiency dividend in 2017-18, but, similar to all JACS directorate's business units, the DPP has been asked to identify savings measures. As I mentioned earlier today, these are expected to represent 0.53 per cent of the DPP's budget.

The government's fiscal strategy is focused on achieving a strong operating balance over the medium term, maintaining sound public finances, and ensuring the delivery of quality and efficient services. To deliver this strategy, the government routinely reviews processes and structures to ensure that the delivery of all government activities is efficient, productive and targeted towards areas of identified need.

The DPP has received new initiative funding in the 2017-18 and prior year budgets, resulting in a net increase in funding.

The government recently announced funding to increase the capacity of the office of the DPP to better support prosecutions in the territory. This initiative provides \$3.028 million in total for the DPP. It provides \$771,000 in base funding over the next four years for a full-time senior prosecutor at the grade 4 level, and \$2.257 million in the 2017-18 financial year for three additional full-time prosecutors at grades 1, 2 and 3, to pursue the retrial of Mr David Eastman and related proceedings. This funding is also provided for external counsel costs, witness expenses, and other administrative

costs. The funding will assist the office of the DPP to keep pace with demand and respond to the needs of the court, the police and other investigative agencies and the criminal justice sector more broadly.

This funding builds on previous investment in the services of the ODPP. In the 2016-17 ACT budget, the DPP received funding of \$1.363 million over four years through the safer families funding package to strengthen criminal justice responses to the alleged perpetrators of family violence. In the 2014-15 budget, the government provided \$1.158 million over four years to establish a work safety prosecutions unit.

It is the case that the government is working with the DPP, and it has supported an independent review of the DPP's resources. Mr Hanson's motion makes suggestions about how the DPP should be resourced for senior staff and how it should make budget submissions. Questions about how the DPP should be funded are being considered in detail as part of the review. Rather than jump at particular thoughts, this government is committed to working on this matter strategically and holistically.

Accordingly, the government will continue to work closely with the DPP to consider its future funding in light of the recommendations of the review and the funding of the justice system more broadly. This independent review, which will soon be considered by government, will assist in informing future decisions in relation to the DPP resourcing and future budget submission processes.

The amendments that I will be moving today accurately reflect the funding that this government has provided, as well as the consultation it has undertaken with the DPP. They also recognise that central to any decision about funding for the DPP, or indeed funding for any part of our justice system, is an understanding and an appreciation of the system as a whole.

This government will keep working with the courts and with the legal profession, including our prosecutors, to build a more transparent, timely and accessible justice system. We will absolutely commit to continue working closely with the DPP to consider its future funding in light of the review and in light of the justice system more broadly. Following the government's consideration of the review, I will be pleased to provide the Assembly with an update by the last sitting day of this calendar year.

I move:

Omit all words after "That this Assembly", substitute:

"(1) notes:

- (a) the recommendations of the Select Committee on Estimates 2016-2017 regarding funding of the Director of Public Prosecutions (DPP);
- (b) a recurrent increase in base funding was provided to DPP of \$3.028 million over four years in the 2017-18 Budget to fund the additional resources relating to the retrial of Mr David Eastman, plus a new Grade 4 Prosecutor;

- (c) the DPP is not subject to an efficiency dividend in 2017-18 but will absorb a small share of the broader Justice and Community Safety Directorate (JACS) savings;
  - (d) the savings contributed by DPP amount to 0.53 per cent of its 2017-18 budget appropriation; and
  - (e) the DPP and JACS have recently completed a review of DPP resourcing, which is currently under consideration by Government; and
- (2) calls on the Government to:
- (a) continue working closely with the DPP to consider its future funding model in light of the recommendations of the review and the funding of the justice system more broadly; and
  - (b) update the Assembly on this work by the last sitting day of this calendar year.”.

**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) (4.31): I welcome the opportunity to speak to this matter today. The Greens will be supporting the Attorney-General’s amendments and will not be supporting Mr Hanson’s motion in its original form. I appreciate Mr Hanson’s interest and concern in this area; however, I do not believe that his proposed approach is the best way to go about it. Mr Hanson suggests that the office of the Director of Public Prosecutions should be treated differently from the rest of the ACT government with regard to budgeting. I do not believe that this is appropriate, and would be concerned about the precedent that this sets for other parts of government.

I do note, however, the comments of the DPP during the estimates hearings earlier this year. The DPP was concerned that its funding had not increased in line with other areas of the justice system, such as legal aid and the courts. The DPP welcomed the addition of a fifth judge to the ACT Supreme Court, which will, hopefully, reduce the backlog of court cases, but the DPP was concerned that his office did not have the resources to keep up with the additional workload that this will create.

I am pleased to see that the Attorney-General has acted on this, and that the Justice and Community Safety Directorate and the DPP have recently completed a review of DPP resourcing. I note the additional resources provided in the 2017-18 budget for the retrial of Mr David Eastman, and I also note that in estimates the DPP said that he was satisfied with the funding his office had been provided with for that matter. I imagine that many of the concerns raised by the DPP during the estimates period will have been canvassed in the review. I look forward to the Attorney-General updating the Assembly on the outcome of the review, including the government’s response to the review, when he reports back to the Assembly.

A well-resourced prosecution office is essential for the administration of justice in the territory. It is important that the DPP can appropriately pursue the wide range of cases that come before it, which, in addition to criminal cases, can include regulatory matters such as animal welfare matters and workplace safety matters. Any case which goes to a hearing where the defendant does not plead guilty requires significant preparation by prosecutors. This can include reading briefs which can be hundreds of pages long and watching hours of video footage. Whilst some matters may be over in a matter of minutes, some trials can literally last for months. Due to the nature and unpredictability of their work, prosecutors need to be extremely flexible with their time and ready to take on new cases when, for example, their colleagues are stuck in court with other matters. It is therefore essential that the DPP has the resources to manage the changing and unpredictable nature of the work of prosecutors.

A criminal justice system works best when the prosecution, the police, the courts and the defendants, usually through their lawyers, work together. Prosecutors need to make hard choices about which matters to pursue in court, when to accept plea deals and the most appropriate sentences to argue for. Whilst, understandably, the prosecution and the defence will often disagree, a collaborative approach will allow cases to progress smoothly through the courts. In making decisions, the prosecutors are guided by the procedures and standards which the law requires to be observed, in particular by the office's prosecution policy.

The ACT DPP commenced operation on 1 July 1991. Previously the prosecuting service in the territory had been run by the commonwealth deputy crown solicitor's office, and then by the commonwealth DPP. Unlike all other Australian jurisdictions, the ACT does not use police prosecutors. The use of police prosecutors was abolished in all matters before the ACT Court of Petty Sessions, as it was then known, in the late 1970s, and since that time legally qualified prosecutors have appeared in both summary and superior courts in the territory.

Canberra has changed significantly since the DPP was established. The advent of new technology has presented a challenge to prosecuting technology-based crimes. The intimate image laws passed by the Assembly last week are just one example of laws needing to be adapted to modern technology. It is therefore important that prosecutors are adequately resourced to prosecute these new technology-based offences as one example of the challenges they face. This is a very challenging area and prosecutors, courts and legislators need to be adaptive and responsive to new technology and, perhaps more importantly, the unintended uses of these new technologies.

One area of the DPP's work which has changed significantly since the office was established has been community attitudes towards domestic and family violence. The ACT DPP now has a specialist domestic violence unit within its office dedicated to prosecuting these types of offences. This recognises the particular challenges and sensitivities that family violence matters present. Victims may be reluctant to come forward, or may later change their mind regarding pursuing charges against their alleged offender. Victims may not want to go through a lengthy court process, and may be forced to re-live a traumatic experience. Cases of domestic violence often

involve a power imbalance between the offender and the victim that can result in victims being emotionally or physically threatened for pursuing cases through the courts. Finally, some victims can even be financially dependent on their offenders, making them disinclined to pursue charges against offenders. This is where it is important to have specialist domestic violence prosecutors who know how to best manage these challenges. It is a very welcome addition to the ACT DPP that they now have this specialist domestic violence unit.

Finally, I would like to speak about the importance of the welfare of prosecutors. In estimates, the DPP expressed concerns about the workload of individual prosecutors. I note these concerns, and imagine that the review that the Attorney-General has undertaken will canvass these issues. Going to court is rarely a joyful experience. Whilst TV shows make criminal law sound very exciting and a tad glamorous, the subject matter prosecutors have to work with every day can be, I can only imagine, very emotionally taxing. Prosecutors can be subject to immense pressure from victims, witnesses and even the media to achieve a particular outcome in court. It is important that when we talk about resources for the DPP we are also talking about the resources available to staff for their welfare.

I would like to thank Mr Hanson for bringing this issue to the attention of the Assembly. I would also like to thank the Attorney-General for the work he has already undertaken in this area. The Greens look forward to the attorney updating the Assembly later in the year on the review of DPP resourcing and the conclusions that he and the government have drawn from that.

**MR HANSON** (Murrumbidgee) (4.38): In closing, and on the amendment, I thank the Attorney-General and Mr Rattenbury for their contributions. It does seem—I hope I am right in the way I am interpreting what the Attorney-General was saying, but certainly this is how I am interpreting Mr Rattenbury—that there is an understanding that the DPP is having trouble doing its job. This is based on evidence that came before the estimates committee this year but, as I said in my tabling motion, it has been the case over successive years. If that is the understanding of the Attorney-General—and, hopefully, also of Mr Rattenbury, cabinet and the government—that is a good thing. I would note, though, that the sort of response that “We are sitting down; we are going to consult with the DPP” and so on is language we have heard before. This issue has come up in various estimates reports. It has been the subject of debate with regard to the budget.

I do not support the amendment, because I think it is simply more weasel words, but I would say that I will put the Attorney-General on notice. He said he is going to sit down with the DPP and have a review. If that is going to result in additional resources, that is a good thing. We will have annual reports hearings this year, Attorney-General. We will have an estimates committee next year. There is a JACS committee in this place that can conduct inquiries and so on. It will be a matter for you to determine the next course of action the opposition takes. If we do not get a response, if there is no substantive action, we will be back and we will continue to litigate this case. And we will turn up the volume on it. I assure you that we will turn up the volume on it, because it is unsatisfactory.

Let me go to some specific points. This is an important point. The minister talked about dealing strategically, holistically and so on. That is all well and good, but when this government needs additional resources for dealing with domestic violence—\$30 million—when it gives extra money for dealing with Taskforce Nemesis and when it gave extra money for the courts for an additional judge or an industrial court and so on, there was none of that talk then. It seems now that, because the DPP is short of funding, rather than saying, “Yes, we recognise it as a crisis; we’re going to provide additional resources,” it all has to be dealt with strategically. It seems that there is one rule for the police, one rule for the courts and one rule in dealing with domestic violence and other things—which I support, by the way, in terms of additional funding—but it is very different when it comes to the DPP. It seems to be a very different standard. They have to be looked at holistically and strategically. I did not see much holistic or strategic review when it came to some of those other elements.

I am disappointed that Mr Rattenbury is not supporting this. He made the point that this was something where “Mr Hanson’s approach”, as he called it, was not appropriate. It is not actually my approach. It is your approach, Madam Assistant Speaker Cody, isn’t it? You were on the estimates committee, I believe, as were Mr Pettersson, Ms Le Couteur and a couple of Liberal members. The balance of power on the committee that signed off on that report was from the government side, from those opposite, from the Labor Party and the Greens, who are in a coalition.

To say that this is Mr Hanson’s approach or the Liberal Party’s approach is not the case. All I have done in my motion is put forward, word for word, the recommendations that are in your report, Madam Assistant Speaker Cody, a report of your colleagues on that committee, including Ms Le Couteur, and said, “These are pretty good ideas. This is a good approach. It’s got unanimous support from five members of this Assembly across the three parties. Let’s support it.” For Mr Rattenbury to come in here and say that he is not supporting it because it is Mr Hanson’s approach, when it is actually Ms Le Couteur’s committee report, goes to a broader point: often we will see Ms Le Couteur on a committee, or maybe some of the backbenchers from the Labor Party, in this case Ms Cody or Mr Pettersson, seeing some good ideas coming forward and coming up with a good approach but finding, when it comes back to Mr Barr—

**Mr Wall:** There was no argument in committee.

**MR HANSON:** No; that is right. When it comes back to Mr Barr, no. They then try to characterise this as Hanson’s idea. No. I would love to take credit for it, and politicians often do that, but I take no credit for this, no credit at all. I put all the credit for this on Ms Cody, Ms Le Couteur and Mr Pettersson for their excellent recommendations.

**Mr Barr:** There is a first for everything. If you sit in this chamber long enough, you’ll hear everything.

**MR HANSON:** I am very happy to give the credit. I was just making a point. Mr Rattenbury, you left briefly during this important debate. I am not having a go at you, Mr Rattenbury. I do want you to hear this point; it is a good one. You said that this is Mr Hanson's approach and therefore you will not be supporting it. I make the point that the recommendations in my motion are not mine; the approach is the recommendations from the committee report from Ms Le Couteur, amongst others, from estimates. You might not like these recommendations and you might not like the approach, but it is no wonder Ms Le Couteur is not here in the chamber. You characterised her good work as mine. Let us be very clear what is happening here.

We reach a bit of an impasse here. I am very disappointed. I thought when I saw those recommendations in the estimates report that this was good. I thought that finally the Greens and the Labor Party recognised the problem and that their members on the committee had seen some sense and were going to act on this. We thought we were going to get some results for the DPP. But it would seem that there is a very long way from what happens in that committee room—going up to Mr Rattenbury, and making sure that Ms Le Couteur's recommendations do not get carried, and that is what has happened here—and other members of the Labor Party stopping the recommendations put forward by their members. That is disappointing.

We will not support the amendment because all it is is wishy-washy weasel words.

**Mr Barr:** Excellent alliteration.

**MR HANSON:** Mr Barr is interjecting. Do you want to say it louder?

**Mr Barr:** Very good iteration there—and alliteration too.

**MR HANSON:** He likes my alliteration: wishy-washy weasel words.

**Mr Barr:** Indeed, yes. How much time did you spend working on that?

**MR HANSON:** I came up with it just then.

**Mr Barr:** Just then?

**MR HANSON:** Just then. I should not respond to interjections, should I, Madam Assistant Speaker? I will make sure I do not. Nor shall I refer to him under standing order 42. It should be through you, I think, so I will make sure I do not do that, Madam Assistant Speaker.

Regardless of my alliteration, the point is, and it is an important one, that there is not enough money for the DPP to do its job properly. Justice in this town is suffering as a result. I call on this government to heed the recommendations of the estimates committee and, when they do have this review of funding, look at the support that they will receive in this place. If you do come back here, Attorney-General, with the funding that is appropriate, we will recognise that and I will give you due

acknowledgement. This goes beyond politics. This is a tripartisan report. Credit will be given where it is due. I am encouraging you in the strongest terms to provide those resources that are sorely needed.

Question put:

That the amendment be agreed to.

The Assembly voted—

Ayes 13		Noes 9	
Mr Barr	Ms Le Couteur	Mr Coe	Mr Parton
Ms Berry	Ms Orr	Mr Hanson	Mr Wall
Ms Burch	Mr Pettersson	Mrs Jones	
Ms Cheyne	Mr Ramsay	Mrs Kikkert	
Ms Cody	Mr Rattenbury	Ms Lawder	
Ms Fitzharris	Mr Steel	Ms Lee	
Mr Gentleman		Mr Milligan	

Amendment agreed to.

Original question, as amended, resolved in the affirmative.

## Ministerial travel

**MR WALL** (Brindabella) (4.51): I move:

That this Assembly:

(1) notes:

- (a) the role of the Ministerial Code of Conduct in upholding the integrity of all ministers in the ACT Legislative Assembly;
- (b) that according to the Ministerial Code of Conduct item 3(a), ministers must act according to the highest standards of personal integrity and probity, and uphold the ACT's system of responsible government;
- (c) that according to the Ministerial Code of Conduct item 5(d), ministers must use administrative resources appropriately. Ministers must not permit public resources to be wasted or used in an improper manner;
- (d) the number of overseas trips taken by ACT Labor and Green ministers taken since the beginning of the 9th Assembly; and
- (e) the lack of transparency around the use of ACT taxpayer funds during ministerial overseas travel; and

(2) calls on the ACT government to:

- (a) uphold the principles of the ACT Ministerial Code of Conduct; and

- (b) make public within three months of return of travel a reconciliation of all expenses incurred and activities undertaken by the ACT government for ministerial travel, including all expenses for staff, public servants or any other person accompanying a minister during any official travel.

I bring this motion to this place as, at its heart, it has a subject matter that is always relevant and always of interest to the community, in particular the media. Some of us here today do not need any reminders that Labor governments have been in power in this town for a very long time and, while some current ministers are new to their roles in this Assembly, it is quite logical to assume that a culture possibly remains that is a legacy of previous governments.

I personally do not dispute that every current minister has a basic understanding of the importance of the ministerial code of conduct and that this code of conduct underpins the integrity of this place and this government. What I would like to draw everyone's attention to today is the importance of adhering to and acting in the interests of the code of conduct.

The code of conduct clearly articulates its intent and states, amongst other things, that ministers must apply the power and privilege of their office solely in the pursuit and the best interests of the people of the ACT. As we look at this in detail, point 3 of the code of conduct outlines the ethical principles set out for ministers. These principles include:

a. integrity

Ministers must act according to the highest standards of personal integrity and probity, and uphold the ACT's system of responsible government.

Ministers must not use their position or information gained in the performance of their duties to gain a direct or indirect advantage for themselves or their families or acquaintances that that would not be available to the general public.

I draw everyone's attention to the word "probity", which should be at the forefront of reading that part of the ministerial code of conduct. At point 5.d it states:

Ministers must use administrative resources appropriately. Ministers must not permit public resources to be wasted or used in an improper manner.

This item can be fairly loosely interpreted. However, the best test is the pub test.

We have a fairly decent bipartisan arrangement in this place when it comes to sitting weeks and Assembly and committee business. As Mr Rattenbury said in debate yesterday, we respect people's families and their commitments, we respect their personal pursuits and we respect their reasons for absence and take on face value the reasons given for such absences.

However, there have been a number of overseas trips taken in recent months that could quite fairly be questioned by members of the community as to whether or not the ratepayers of the territory received value for money or a significant benefit as a result of that ministerial travel; or which could be misconstrued because of the lack of probity and the lack of information published in the public arena. We need to be mindful of the expectations of the community.

For example, was it good value and was it appropriate that Minister Gentleman spent over \$70,000 on a trip to the US to observe major investments in public transport, including light rail, within months of an election that was seemingly won on the decision to pursue light rail? As was noted by a public transport advocate in the *Canberra Times* in February this year:

This is a large amount of money to spend given the decision to proceed with stage one of the light rail project had already been made. There wasn't any likelihood of changes being made to stage one based on the findings of this study tour.

In relation to transparency with regards to ministerial travel, ministerial statements on trips rarely outline detailed itineraries, rarely detail all the individuals or organisations that have been met with or initiatives or projects that have been visited and also seldom outline anyone who has accompanied the minister in that travel, be they staff, public service directorate officials or other members of the community. For example, on recent trips how many public servants or staffers were in attendance, in what capacity did they attend and were they required and necessary to the travel? Do ministers keep meeting diaries? Are minutes of meetings taken at every meeting? Much more detail can and, I and the opposition believe, should be provided.

The action point in my motion today calls on the ACT government to make public within three months of return from travel a reconciliation of all expenses incurred and activities undertaken by the minister on behalf of the government as part of ministerial travel, including all expenses for staff, public servants or any other person accompanying a minister during any official travel. This is a reasonable expectation and only a few steps further than what currently is commonplace in this Assembly.

The devil is in the detail. Questions along the lines of: "Why are members of other organisations in attendance and how much of the cost of their travel was borne by the government?" would be useful and welcomed by external observers. These are all details that should be held up for public scrutiny. The lines of propriety and the interpretation of the ministerial code of conduct can be viewed very differently by each minister.

A greater level of detail when representing jurisdictions or private groups in an official capacity is something that has been adopted by other parliaments and other organisations, particularly in the private sector. In the opposition's view, the details of overseas trips undertaken by members of this place should be transparent enough to pass the scrutiny of the general public, and expenditure and activities undertaken should be in line with what would be expected more broadly in the community.

No-one on either side of this chamber is immune from this scrutiny. Ministers and non-executive members of all parties are subject to community expectations, and none of us should take that for granted. There are numerous examples that come to mind where some members of this place, on all sides of the chamber, have failed to meet the public's expectation when it comes to travel. But the intent of this is to make sure that there is a high bar set around what this parliament expects and what the community expects in relation to members of the Assembly, particularly the executive.

The activities undertaken and the moneys spent should also be no different to the expectations of private enterprise. This is the aspect of probity that needs to be clarified. It is common practice in many other parliaments to publish not just this level of detail but, in some jurisdictions, considerably more detail. At the commonwealth level, the Department of Finance reports six monthly all travel and entitlements by current and former members. Given that the entitlements in this place are considerably different, we think that the steps that the opposition are calling for to have a detailed reconciliation of any ministerial travel within 90 days of returning are quite appropriate steps. We are not creating any additional burden of paperwork or administration but simply an increased level of transparency around the work and the travel that is being undertaken on behalf of the territory.

We can look at examples such as Queensland, where the call there goes much further for the level of transparency required of ministers. Ministerial diaries are published each month. That identifies not just meetings and engagements whilst they are on a formal engagement and travel as a representative of their state but their day-to-day diaries for their ministerial offices.

The opposition at this point is certainly not going to request that length of openness and transparency. We are simply focused on making sure that there is better accountability of the expenses incurred during ministerial travel. I think in the private sector it is widespread practice that, if travel is to be undertaken, a detailed reconciliation of any expenses incurred would be provided. In the private sector in many instances it is commonplace for an individual wanting to travel to have to put forward a business case prior to booking or making any arrangements. It has to state the purpose of the trip, what the expected outcomes are and what the return on investment for the business or the enterprise might be. And if it does not make business sense, the travel is not approved and it does not go ahead.

We have very lenient guidelines in the ACT. Simply what we are calling for is a push model of information being made available, after the fact, that can lay on the table quite clearly the details of what travel has been undertaken, what expenses have been incurred by the territory, who has accompanied a minister on that travel and what expenses were borne by the territory for anyone else accompanying in that capacity.

In that sense I hope that all members of this place can see a way clear to lifting the bar of transparency and accountability of this Assembly and putting forward a new standard that all members will abide by from this point going forward. I commend my motion to the Assembly.

**MR BARR** (Kurrajong—Chief Minister, Treasurer, Minister for Economic Development and Minister for Tourism and Major Events) (5.01): I move the amendment circulated in my name:

Omit all words after “That this Assembly”, substitute:

“(1) notes:

- (a) the Ministerial Code of Conduct;
- (b) that, according to the Ministerial Code of Conduct item 3. a., Ministers must act according to the highest standards of personal integrity and probity, and uphold the ACT’s system of responsible government; and
- (c) that, according to the Ministerial Code of Conduct item 5. d., Ministers must use administrative resources appropriately. Ministers must not permit public resources to be wasted or used in an improper manner; and

(2) further notes that:

- (a) official travel to further the interests of the Australian Capital Territory is a component of ministerial duties;
- (b) overseas travel by Ministers is undertaken in accordance with the International Engagement Strategy which provides a clear commitment to building enduring international relationships for the economic, cultural and social benefit of the ACT;
- (c) Ministers regularly report to the Assembly on official international travel including key objectives, outcomes and benefits to the ACT;
- (d) twice yearly, ministerial travel reports are provided to the Office of the Legislative Assembly by the Executive for publication on the Assembly website; and
- (e) study travel allowance for non-Executive Members was abolished by the Remuneration Tribunal in 2014 following inconsistencies in usage and reporting by Members on international travel.”.

The amendment I move notes the existence of a ministerial code of conduct, which Mr Wall has extensively referenced, and particularly highlights items 3.a and 5.d in relation to standards and appropriate use of administrative resources. The amendment also further notes that official travel to further the interests of the ACT is a component of ministerial duties. The vast majority of that official travel is domestic and predominantly relates to Council of Australian Government meeting requirements. There is some overseas travel undertaken by ministers and this is in accordance with the international engagement strategy, a public strategy I have released, that provides a clear commitment to building enduring international relationships for the economic, cultural and social benefit of the territory.

Ministers regularly report to the Assembly. Generally speaking on the first available sitting period after a trip, inside the 90 days that Mr Wall was talking about, lengthy statements are tabled in this place. Often speeches of 20 to 25 minutes in length go through almost minute by minute in some instances the detail of particular international missions.

There are, of course, twice yearly ministerial travel reports provided to the Office of the Legislative Assembly, and they are publicly available on the Assembly website. It would be fair to say they are routinely reported on by those who take an interest in this place.

My amendment also notes that what prompted this particular motion from Mr Wall was that the Remuneration Tribunal in 2014, following inconsistencies in usage and reporting by members on international travel, abolished study travel for non-executive members. I think it is fair to say that at the same time the Remuneration Tribunal also abolished any travel for partners of members of the Assembly. These issues were extensively canvassed at that time.

I think it would be fair to observe, from that process, that the pub test that Mr Wall talked about in his speech was applied by the Remuneration Tribunal, particularly in relation to partner travel. There were certainly some fairly egregious examples in the history of this Assembly—or there were in the first 20 years—of partner travel on study trips which might well not have passed the pub test that Mr Wall spoke of.

In the context of where we are now, the Remuneration Tribunal has ruled in relation to those matters. The ministerial code of conduct was updated. Ministerial travel is reported twice annually. All ministerial travel undertaken overseas requires the approval of the Chief Minister of the day. Ministerial travel under my chief ministership is focused on enhancing the government's international engagement strategy.

We have published our priority areas and relationships that we seek to pursue for economic, social and cultural outcomes. These vary depending on the nature of the relationship. Members would be aware that we currently have three sister city relationships, with Beijing, Nara and Wellington, and a friendship city relationship with Dili in East Timor. The bulk of international travel in recent times has been focused on the international engagement strategy.

From time to time ministers are invited to participate in various international conferences. I note that non-executive members are also invited to participate in various international conferences, and I note from recent travel reports published on the Assembly website that members of this place are frequent in their acceptance particularly of Commonwealth Parliamentary Association international travel.

I need to advise the Assembly that all ministerial travel is undertaken in accordance with the relevant Remuneration Tribunal determination. The determination recognises officeholders will be required to travel more regularly than non-officeholders. But, again, the bulk of that travel is domestic and principally relates to Council of Australian Government requirements.

In the ACT, with a smaller number of ministers, ministers in this jurisdiction have traditionally been on more ministerial councils than those in larger jurisdictions. I remember at one point in my career I was on 11 COAG ministerial councils. Most ministers in other jurisdictions would be on one, maybe two. I was on 11 at one stage. Clearly, now with the portfolio responsibilities I have, including first ministers meetings, Treasury, economic development, tourism and industry and skills meetings and the like, I do not think I am quite up to 11 but I still have more COAG ministerial council responsibilities than most ministers in any state or territory government and, indeed, at the commonwealth level across this country.

It is worth noting, of course, that the approval, reconciliation and acquittal process for ministerial travel is rigorous and provides a very high degree of transparency. As I have mentioned, it is reported publicly every six months via the Assembly website, and these reports identify by minister the dates, location and reason for travel and the break up the cost between the travel costs—principally air fares but on occasion train fares and self-drive—and the travel allowances that are paid in accordance with the Remuneration Tribunal's determinations.

There will be further changes that will come into place from 1 July 2018 that will extend reporting to include staff accompanying ministers. Public servants who accompany ministers also report on travel through the annual reporting process. And expenditure is clearly stated in annual reports each year.

I think overall the territory's system of reporting, reconciliation and acquittal is of the highest standards. The ministerial code of conduct certainly puts a significant onus on ministers and me, as Chief Minister in approving overseas travel, to ensure that we meet the high level of rigour and accountability that is expected under the code.

For these reasons I believe that the amendment that I have moved to Mr Wall's motion reflects current high standards of practice and, as I have outlined in my remarks today, there will be further reforms in this area that will commence on 1 January 2018. I commend my amendment to the Assembly.

**MR RATTENBURY** (Kurrajong) (5.10): The Greens are, of course, highly supportive of integrity measures in this Assembly and, therefore, the ACT and we have worked consistently over the two decades that we have been here to improve accountability processes in this place. Some of the things that we have worked on in this time include improving the lobbyist register. As I discussed earlier today, on Mr Wall's last motion, we were the first party to call for an independent integrity commission, and I think it is very positive that that is where all three parties landed and we now have a tripartite committee working on designing that process. I am optimistic that we will get a good outcome there.

We have pushed for our oversight bodies to become officers of the parliament—the Electoral Commissioner, the Auditor-General—to provide them with a degree of independence from the executive to fulfil their very important roles. As I also touched on this morning, we pursued the ban on corporate donations, which we agreed to in time for the 2012 election but which was overturned in the previous Assembly.

As the Chief Minister has noted, current requirements are that ministerial travel must be reported on and made public on the Assembly website each six months. He has outlined the necessary breakdown of that, and there is nothing that I need to add on that.

I think the observations around the number of ministerial councils are very interesting. Certainly in my time as a minister that has varied depending on the portfolios I had. Certainly when I was the TAMS minister my travel was much more local. When I was the education minister I spent a lot of time driving around to schools. In some other portfolios I have found that there is a degree more travel involved to attend various COAG processes and to represent the ACT in various fora.

But one of the key areas of integrity and oversight improvements that the Greens have pushed over the years was the new FOI legislation which was passed in the Assembly last year as a result of the parliamentary agreement and which will come into effect in January 2018. That will require a change to the reporting of ministerial travel.

One of the key features of that new FOI legislation is the requirement for an open-access information scheme, which requires ministers to push-publish a range of information. One of those areas is ministerial travel and hospitality expenses. This includes information about all travel and hospitality expenses incurred by the territory for the minister and the minister's staff. As the legislation notes, open-access information must be accurate, up to date and complete.

The obligation on agencies and ministers to publish information is ongoing, and the information they are required to publish must continually be updated and actively monitored to ensure that the requirement is met. In order for agencies and ministers to fulfil the requirement for information to be up to date, agencies and ministers must consider whether they are obliged to publish the information as the information is created or when it comes into their possession and, if so, to publish the information within a reasonable time.

It is also worth noting that under section 66 of the legislation, the Ombudsman may also publish guidelines to assist agencies and ministers in meeting their obligations. I think that there will be a little settling-in period where we work out exactly how that publishing system or that push system is going to work. I do not think people would expect it to be weekly, for example, but there clearly is a requirement in the legislation for that to be timely.

I think that what Mr Wall has called for in his motion today will be substantially addressed, if not more comprehensively addressed, than the case that he has put forward. I think that should go some way to addressing the concerns that Mr Wall has sought to raise in his motion today.

I was interested in the comparison with the private sector, having travelled for the non-government sector as well. I think there are a range of practices out there. I have seen anything from very strict requirements through to, frankly, some fairly laissez

faire requirements where those in the corporate sector, I think, enjoy a great deal more largesse than anybody in the government sector when it comes to travel and opportunities presented to them.

I always find the comparison between the private sector and the public sector quite intriguing. I think that there is a great deal more rigour in the public sector generally because of—I think Mr Wall referenced it—the front-page test or the pub test. Certainly I am very mindful of the fact—and members will recall—that we have seen a range of ministers and members in this place scrutinised over time for their travel expenses, in some cases unfairly, in other cases perhaps fairly. I guess that is a matter of judgement, but I think the public sector generally is fairly well scrutinised. Many of those travel entitlements are independently determined by the Remuneration Tribunal.

I will be supporting Mr Barr's amendment today, particularly in regard to the "notes" and the "calls" in Mr Wall's motion. I am mindful of the changes that will come with the FOI legislation on 1 January. I think that that is a better way to address this, given that it is already legislated and is being put into effect quite soon.

Amendment agreed to.

Original question, as amended, resolved in the affirmative.

## **Ecotourism policy**

**MS ORR** (Yerrabi) (5.16): I move:

That this Assembly:

(1) notes:

- (a) our natural environment is a diverse and dynamic system of finite elements which people are both a part of and a significant player within;
- (b) we gain much from our environment;
- (c) human activity can and has in many instances impacted adversely on our natural environment; and
- (d) our unique relationship with the environment means we have a responsibility to rejuvenate landscapes that have been adversely impacted by human activity where possible;

(2) acknowledges the:

- (a) ACT Government's continued support of and partnership with the Woodland and Wetlands Trust;
- (b) remarkable work the Woodland and Wetlands Trust undertakes at Mulligans Flat and Jerrabomberra Wetlands including the reintroduction of Eastern Quolls and Bettongs; and

- (c) recognition Mulligans Flat is receiving for their conservation and biodiversity research; and
- (3) calls on the Government to:
- (a) continue its good work in nature conservation and scientific research;
  - (b) complete the promised design of the Mulligans Flat Eco Tourism Visitor Centre; and
  - (c) develop an ecotourism policy to support greater access, understanding and appreciation of Canberra's natural environment.

One of the great joys of living Canberra is living in a city surrounded by nature. Our national parks, protected grassland, fresh air and some pretty amazing sunsets are a few gems our nature offers us. All of these contribute to our enjoyment as we go about our everyday lives, but our very presence within the diverse and dynamic systems of the natural environment in many ways disrupt the way our natural elements function, sometimes with little impact and sometimes with a lot.

This is no more so than in areas where, in the past, humans have trodden a bit too heavily on nature. Where our activity has disrupted the functioning of our natural environment, it may result in the natural areas taking on a new landscape but not necessarily a better landscape. As I have said before, we need to look after our environment so it can look after us.

The ACT government has taken many steps towards rehabilitating the natural environment within the ACT. Both through direct action and collaborative efforts involving many local, scientific, environmental and conservation groups, the ACT government has played a part in a number of projects aimed at preserving and enhancing the nature within our city.

Following a community-led campaign to protect box gum grassy woodlands, Mulligans Flat nature reserve was established in 1995 in north-east Gungahlin on the ACT-New South Wales border. Box gum woodland is a critically endangered ecological community, having been cleared, modified and grazed by farmers since the 1820s. Despite this, Mulligans Flat has retained substantial ecological value. The reserve covers roughly 750 hectares and is popular for bushwalking and bird watching as Mulligans Flat is known for its diverse and rare bird life.

Described as a living science experiment, the fact that so little was known about the ecological systems in box gum woodland was part of the motivation for establishing the reserve. Preserving this invaluable area, therefore, also offers opportunities in recreation, research and education. Nearly 10 years later, a similar area of box gum grassy woodland was protected just south of Mulligans Flat in Goorooyarroo Nature Reserve. In combination these two reserves total roughly 1,500 hectares, comprising the largest and most intact area of yellow box-red gum grassy woodland in Australia.

Protecting an area of land from being developed or further cleared is not enough to help the ecosystem fully regenerate. Part of this effort to return the environment to its natural condition includes removing the threats present in the nature itself. After beginning collaborations with the ANU and CSIRO in both reserves, it became clear in 2005 that Mulligans Flat reserve could include a sanctuary free from cats, foxes and rabbits and that this would help establish an environment hospitable to native species that were previously extinct in the region.

Having now been established, the sanctuary is protected not only by an 11.5 kilometre long fence but a cleared buffer zone between the fence and Gungahlin homes. The area was cleared of foxes and feral cats as well as rabbits and kangaroos, which have had a heavy effect on the landscape and vegetation.

Since the creation of the sanctuary, researchers have had a home to start reintroducing species that went extinct in the area 40 to 100 years ago. Thanks to Tasmanian ecologists' effort to preserve and restore the wildlife populations, several small mammals have been re-established in the ACT from populations in our southernmost state. Our 36 eastern bettongs were released into the sanctuary in 2012. The critters are like rabbit-sized kangaroos and their population has since sprouted to 350. The eastern bettongs burrow for truffles and other food, aerating the soil and enabling new native plants to establish roots in the loosened soil. Quolls had also vanished from the ACT after 50 years but were reintroduced in 2016 from a Tasmanian population. As a native predator, quolls can now be included on the reserve to help complete the food chain that herbivores are now naturally replenishing. Bush stone-curlews and New Holland mice have also been reintroduced.

Other charismatic species like echidnas, red-necked wallabies, stumpy-tailed lizards and antechinus are now rebounding, relieved from the pressure of foxes on their population. The sanctuary intends to eventually include goannas and bandicoots. The ANU is working with the reserve to help monitor the animals' condition and track their behaviour across the reserve.

While the animals make for a great poster child for the sanctuary, it is important not to forget the immense work the plant life does too. Several of the experiments have involved the scattering of 2,000 tonnes of large logs like fallen trees, known as course wooden debris. Researchers are now monitoring the ways in which flora and fauna are interacting with the dead material. This relationship and the important role it plays in maintaining the careful balance within an ecosystem had previously been largely prevented by farmers who had cleared the land to drive stock.

Jason Cummings, the general manager of the Woodlands and Wetlands Trust, highlights just exactly why Mulligans Flat is so unique. He says:

Importantly, Mulligans Flat is not a remote elitist locked-up space. Although the fox-proof fences look foreboding, this is a place borne of and for the community.

For generations now conservationists have sought to protect the place. Now it is a haven for wildlife and the community. Every week there are guided tours. Every day there are joggers, pram pushers, school and university students and cyclists enjoying their reconnection with nature. The partners involved work hard to balance the opportunities of visitation, recreation and conservation.

In addition to learning how to restore the woodlands, it is a place to inspire the community to care for our unique Australian wildlife. Volunteers with Friends of Mulligans Flat help in all aspects of sanctuary management from turtle patrol, helping eastern long-necked turtles pass the fox-proof fence, to weed control, citizen science and management planning.

I visited Mulligans Flat Woodland Sanctuary with my team in late June. Walking through the reserve after dark hearing about the ground-breaking work being done and the findings made was brilliant. The closeness of nature was remarkable. I spotted bettongs bouncing through the bush with living room lights on the horizon. This reserve is almost literally on Gungahlin's doorstep.

But the Mulligans Flat and Gorooyaroo reserves are not stand-alone reserves. They are part of a Canberra Nature Park, a group of 30 nature reserves over Canberra that help maintain our natural environment throughout our built environment. It is a large part of what defines Canberra as the bush capital and it is something that we Canberrans value.

Having just gone through the submissions for the billboard inquiry, I was reminded how passionate Canberrans are about the way their city looks and feels and how our identity as the bush capital plays into this. It is integral to our sense of place and home in the territory. In every electorate, every town centre, you can see out to the mountain ranges, the national parks and the nature reserves.

This year's ACT budget continues to address biodiversity and conservation in our local community. A further \$2.5 million will be invested in tackling environmental issues and protecting nature reserves in the ACT; and \$162,000 will be provided to the Woodlands and Wetlands Trust to work on the design of the Mulligans Flat ecotourism centre. The woodlands sanctuary at Mulligans Flat will be extended to create more than 1,200 hectares of predator-free woodland. Under the expansion, the woodland sanctuary's fence line will be extended to the doorstep of the new Canberra suburb of Throsby.

But it is not enough to simply carve out the patches of land where we permit nature in our city. We have to protect and integrate our built and natural environments so the people living here can use and learn from nature without harming it. Since the release of the ACT nature conservation strategy in 2013 the government has made a significant impact on the territory landscape through restoration and rehabilitation.

Partnerships between the ACT government, the federal government, community groups and researchers have guided the process. Achievements include improvements

to regional connectivity between natural environments; substantial development of the knowledge of local soils, vegetation and hydrology; the creation of new apps for the community to monitor plants and animals in their areas; successfully conducting captive breeding programs, redistribution of animals and propagation of vegetation; improved systems to manage biosecurity, including managing threats presented by new weeds and pests; and community engagement through groups like Landcare and Parkcare.

The government is now focusing on restoring vegetation in priority areas by continuing to restore priority landscapes and re-establishing vegetation; teaching the community about biodiversity in their areas; supporting better management of native plants on farms; supporting traditional custodians in the application of Aboriginal land management methods on country; encouraging Canberrans to spend time among nature to improve their health and overall wellbeing; strengthening the ACT's capacity to plan for and adapt to climate change; and building our ability to monitor the effectiveness of conservation within reserves.

This commitment to our environment, to conservation and to nature is not limited to the Environment, Planning and Sustainable Development Directorate. These concepts and values are being explored in our parks and playgrounds too. As part of our strategy to integrate the built and natural environments, the ACT government has recently opened three new nature play parks in Greenway, Barton and O'Connor.

Just this weekend I was at the community launch of the O'Connor park. Nature play seeks to provide more than your typical swings and slippery dips by introducing natural play opportunities to make nature fun for all ages. Where traditional playgrounds offer a specific type of experience, nature play brings people together from all demographics to get active.

Moving now to my home suburb of Giralang, where we are currently progressing a park, I have heard that the traditional playgrounds were quickly outgrown by anyone over the age of six. They also age quickly and limit the imaginative and creative elements of play that children want. Nature play works to use the landscape in place of play structures allowing for the maintenance of existing ecosystems and opportunities to interact within them. It aims to get us more excited about nature right from the start. For children and adults, it encourages engaged play with a natural setting that values the structures and tangible physical objects around us.

When I visited Mulligans Flat earlier this year, one of the fascinating species that our guide Shoshanna pointed out to us was the mistletoe plant. Not just a cheesy excuse for a Christmas peck, this parasite clearly disguises itself as a dense cluster of eucalypt leaves and clings to branches of gum trees. As a parasite, the mistletoe uses its host plant as a root system for water and support. Their fruit is sweet and full of carbohydrates that possums, sugar gliders, birds and insects rely on. Koalas even eat the mistletoe leaves. The thick foliage also provides shelter from the elements for smaller birds, mammals and insects.

But unlike a typical parasite, mistletoe provides a benefit to its host. Mistletoe does not kill its host. Instead, the native plant encourages fauna to spread the host's seed as well as the mistletoe's seed. The sugary fruit can also distract pest species from attacking their host and potentially destroying forests of blue gum. Charles Sturt University has found that there would be one-third fewer birds around without it, evidence of how mistletoe assists its whole habitat.

This mutually beneficial relationship is one that I think mirrors our relationship with the environment. It is sometimes hard to see why we should care about the environment. We can hear the calls from climate scientists and environmentalists that we have to change what we are doing, but these warnings seem so far removed from our day-to-day lives. Quolls and bettongs are cute and we can all stop using take-away coffee cups, but it is hard to really get a good sense of the change we can make through our individual actions.

Our community will continue to grow, a reflection of the fact that Canberra is the best place to live, at least in my humble opinion. You cannot blame anyone for wanting to live here. However, being a Canberran comes with the responsibility not to place undue burden on our environment. We do not have to see taking care of our environment has a hassle; it does not have to be something we are encroaching on, nor does it need to be something we lock away indefinitely.

The work being done at Mulligans Flat and across the ACT is showing the rest of Australia that we can enrich and strengthen our environment while enjoying the amenity it offers us. The living experiment taking place at Mulligans Flat shows just what can be achieved when we work responsibly within and with our environment.

**MS LEE** (Kurrajong) (5.28): I welcome the opportunity to speak to Ms Orr's motion this afternoon. Ms Orr's motion highlights the importance of ensuring that our native grassland areas, our open spaces and our native endangered species are protected and well managed, and calls on the government to continue its good work in nature conservation, to complete the design on a Mulligans Flat visitor centre and to develop an ecotourism policy to support greater access, understanding and appreciation of Canberra's natural environment.

I note Ms Orr makes reference at paragraph (1)(c) to human activity which can and has in many instances impacted adversely on our natural environment. It is disappointing that Ms Orr chose not to also recognise the high awareness that Canberrans have for the city in which they live and the many Canberrans who impact positively on our environment. On any day you will see people walking on Red Hill or Mount Taylor or Mount Ainslie, anywhere in her own electorate or around the lake taking care to stay on the track and taking their rubbish with them. Countless volunteer groups spend weekends weeding the walking trails, planting out areas to encourage regrowth, supporting awareness of our local environment by taking groups through areas like Westbourne Woods or Namadgi Nature Reserve or being Friends of the Arboretum.

Canberrans pride themselves on their recycling awareness and the conscious efforts they make always to leave an area as clean as they found it. We have people who fish for carp in our lakes to reduce this pest and others who sponsor various projects to reduce water or stop litter going into stormwater drains. We have Canberrans who plant trees in public spaces because they know it is important to do so. So it is not fair to suggest that human activity is a negative for the environment overall, and my colleague Andrew Wall will also be talking more on how human activity will help to grow ecotourism.

Successive ACT governments have prided themselves on their focus on matters relating to the environment. Indeed, since the ACT Legislative Assembly was first formed, successive Assemblies have looked at various environmental matters and a consistent theme has been development of an ecotourism strategy. In the early 1990s ecotourism was the focus of governments at all levels. In November 1993 the commonwealth Department of Tourism released a draft national ecotourism strategy, and a final strategy was released in March 1994. As many of the issues identified within that strategy fell within the responsibilities of the states and territories, the ACT government was among the first to identify the need and set in place the process for the development of an ecotourism policy particular to the Australian Capital Territory.

In 1993 the ACT Tourism Commission published the *Ecotourism in the Australian Capital Territory* issues paper, which said, inter alia, that:

Effective management of natural resources is essential if ecotourism is to develop. The very nature of ecotourism depends on the conservation of our natural resources. Any development of an ecotourism industry for the ACT must consider the implications for natural resource management and the role of ACT and Commonwealth Government agencies responsible for managing these resources.

Ecotourism is an industry which has the ability to attract interstate and overseas visitors to the region, injecting significant funds into the ACT economy and contributing to the employment of Canberrans. These benefits should flow largely to the ACT as host community. The issue of maintaining park areas and not diverting funds away from park conservation is an important element of this issue. The Government will examine the various revenue collection and management options during the production of a marketing plan for nature and conservation areas.

In 1994 Canberra Tourism established an ecotourism working group made up of private and public sector representation to develop a draft ecotourism strategy. In June 1995 the ACT Standing Committee on Economic Development and Tourism resolved to inquire into and report on the benefits to the ACT economy arising from the further expansion of tourism based upon the development of the territory's national and nature parks.

In July 2006 the ACT Standing Committee on Planning and Environment—the chair of which I note was the current minister, Mr Gentleman—published an issues paper to assist the committee’s inquiry into the proposed nomination of the ACT as a UNESCO biosphere reserve. In 2011 the Standing Committee on Climate Change, Environment and Water undertook an inquiry into current and potential ecotourism in the ACT and made various recommendations, including that the ACT government develop a strategic plan for the development of nature-based tourism in ACT national parks. Yet again in 2017 another call has been made—this time by Ms Orr—to implement such a policy.

In February this year the Chief Minister invited businesses to collaborate on a range of nature-based tourism opportunities to boost Canberra’s ecotourism. Tenders opened in February and closed in March, so we await the outcome of this call with interest. However, I note that only yesterday the Chief Minister, when I asked a direct question about the ACT government’s work on ecotourism, acknowledged that it is an important aspect but went on to say it was not a significant part of the total territory tourism offering.

This year’s budget has an allocation of \$4.1 million to support Canberra’s tourism industry, which is currently attracting the highest number of visitors to the territory in our history, but only \$162,000 was identified for ecotourism, being for design work for the Mulligans Flat ecotourism visitors centre. In this regard, I acknowledge the significant funding contribution made by the federal government for the expansion of Mulligans Flat. On that basis, I doubt the development of an ecotourism policy that Ms Orr is calling for will be the high priority of the current government.

Despite this, it would be interesting to know just how many people, both local and international, visit our many nature parks and reserves. An ACT government 2004 publication, *Shaping our Territory: the Business Case and Master Plan for the Tidbinbilla Nature Reserve*, reported that, despite the popularity of Tidbinbilla and its unique features, visitor numbers had been static in recent years despite the growth in the ACT’s population. A later report suggests that in the year ending December 2012 the ACT welcomed 1,955,000 domestic overnight visitors. Of these, an estimated 12 per cent took part in outdoor and nature-based activities during their visit. The ACT also welcomed 163,462 international visitors in the year ending December 2012. Of these, 77 per cent took part in outdoor and nature-based activities during their trip to Australia. One can only speculate on whether the existence of a specific ecotourism policy will increase those numbers; one can only speculate.

The story of Mulligans Flat and Goorooyarroo nature reserves are examples of what the ACT does well in managing the local natural environment and what is potentially a great international tourism story. Mulligans Flat and Goorooyarroo are two of the 30 reserves that make up Canberra Nature Park, which provides Canberrans and visitors alike with easy access to enjoy the best of nature on their doorstep.

Mulligans Flat is home to about 150 species of wildflowers which grow among red gum and yellow box trees, making it one of the most significant nature reserves in the

south east of New South Wales. The brochure produced on the area describes the nature reserves as containing a diverse mosaic of grassland, woodland and forest habitats, each supporting a characteristic collection of native plants and animals. The decision to incorporate Gorooyaroo within the nature reserve system came at a cost of potentially hundreds of millions of dollars' worth of otherwise developable land, and so it is important that the area is used to maximum research potential.

The Woodlands and Wetlands Trust was established to ensure that the Mulligans Flat Woodland Sanctuary together with the Jerrabomberra wetlands are managed to provide rich and diverse environments for current and future generations. The trust has strong governance with a wide range of highly qualified people, and I echo Ms Orr's acknowledgement of the remarkable work they do.

I have had the pleasure of visiting the Jerrabomberra wetlands on several occasions and I had already made arrangements to visit the Mulligans Flat area next week before this motion was lodged. I am looking forward to the evening tour next Monday. I am particularly interested to learn more about the eastern bettong research. So successful has this research project been that there are calls to make the bettong the ACT's fauna emblem. Whether this is intended as a replacement of the gang-gang cockatoo or as an addition I do not know, but I do know there certainly has been a big push in social media circles.

It is a wonderful story, given that the bettong was extinct in the ACT and, in fact, on mainland Australia for 50 years prior to its reintroduction into Mulligans Flat. Research of the woodlands area was started in 2004. The project's aims were to conserve remaining areas of native temperate woodlands and to understand ways of restoring the structure and function of temperate woodlands to increase biodiversity. In late 2008 construction began on a 12-kilometre long fence to exclude foxes, dogs and cats from a 480-hectare area. This was the catalyst for the return of the endangered eastern bettong.

We owe a deal of gratitude to whomever the skilful negotiator was who convinced authorities in Tasmania to allow the first bettongs to come here. A report in 2009 on the ACT lowland native grasslands by the then Commissioner for Sustainability and the Environment, Dr Maxine Cooper, identified that only five per cent of the natural temperate grassland that existed in the ACT before European settlement remains. Nationally this figure is less at around one per cent. The lowland grassland remnants that are left in the ACT are small, with only 11 sites over 100 hectares in area, so the work of the Woodland and Wetlands Trust is important.

During estimates it was reported that there are now over 200 eastern bettongs free ranging in Mulligans Flat, and it is only because of the predator-proof fence that their reintroduction has been such a success. We were told that most reintroductions fail, with the failure rate at about 60 per cent.

Quolls are also part of the reintroduction, even though they are prone to climb the fence. But, again, during estimates we were told that people in Gungahlin will call the rangers to advise them when they find a quoll in their garden so it can be returned to the sanctuary, another example of the positive human interaction for the benefit of our environment.

We need to acknowledge the commitment not only of the trust but the rangers and other staff within the ACT government, CSIRO and the ANU in the important research work that is ongoing in this woodlands project and the enormous success it has had. The \$162,000 grant to the Woodlands and Wetlands Trust to prepare a design of the Mulligans Flat ecotourism visitor centre is intended for the centre to be as the budget papers describe, that is, the gateway to one of Australia's unique woodlands, and provide a focal point for tourists. The visitor centre was an ACT Labor commitment in the last election, but if it is to be delivered in this term of government there will need to be significant follow-up funds to see it completed.

I refer to Ms Orr having gone to the nature playground in her electorate, and I had the same opportunity at the Telopea nature park playground over the weekend. I echo her sentiments that it is a great opportunity for children to get close to nature and really see the unique beauty of our bush capital through play.

I thank Ms Orr for the opportunity to speak on the work of the Woodlands and Wetlands Trust. On that point we are certainly in agreement. As for Ms Orr's call for the government to progress an ecotourism policy, I wish I could be more optimistic, but, given the history of this government's failure to deliver on this policy area time and time again, I remain less than hopeful.

**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) (5.42): I thank Ms Orr for her motion and her strong interest in the environment. It is with great pleasure that I speak today on the importance of our environment. Canberra is recognised throughout the world as a sustainable and creative city and as a place of great natural beauty. Its unique landscape setting, with parks and reserves scattered within and on the edges of the city, means that nature is easily accessed and enjoyed by many Canberrans every day.

With over half of the ACT—55 per cent—managed primarily for nature conservation and biodiversity management, the ACT government is strongly committed to ensuring that the significant tracts of land committed to the reserve system are well maintained and preserved for future generations.

Namadgi National Park, Tidbinbilla nature reserve and the Murrumbidgee River corridor protect our mountains, forests and major river corridors. Canberra Nature Park, made up of 38 separate nature reserves, provides scenic beauty as well as protection of two endangered ecological communities—the natural temperate grasslands and the yellow box-red gum grassy woodlands—as well as many other threatened plants and animals.

Canberrans are committed to and are actively involved in the day-to-day management of these natural resources through the 400-strong park care volunteer initiative. Canberra is unique in that it genuinely has incredible biodiversity right here on our doorstep. We have heard about Mulligans Flat woodland sanctuary, as part of Canberra Nature Park. There is also Jerrabomberra wetlands nature reserve, which is part of Canberra Nature Park, and one of the most valuable wetland habitat areas in the ACT, and of national and international importance.

The ACT has significant scientific and research institutions and makes good use of their expertise to drive innovative approaches to conservation. The Woodlands and Wetlands Trust is a great example of where science is informing the delivery of best practice management of our unique biodiversity. The Woodlands and Wetlands Trust works in partnership with the ACT government to manage the sanctuary and Jerrabomberra wetlands and is continually expanding opportunities for people to discover more about and be part of caring for the environment.

The trust is part of an international collaboration tracking Latham's snipe that visit Jerrabomberra wetlands and migrate to Japan during our winter. The government has provided \$28,000 for trackers and geo-locators to help us understand the Latham's snipe local movements and migratory flight paths.

At Mulligans, the trust brings together the ACT government, the Australian National University, James Cook University and CSIRO to undertake and communicate world-leading research on grassy woodland conservation. Over the past decade the government has partnered with the ANU to undertake internationally significant research and species reintroductions at the sanctuary. The sanctuary has successfully brought native animals back to the region. Members will have heard about the bettongs reintroduced in 2012 and the quoll reintroduced in 2016. Reintroduction of the bush stone-curlew and New Holland mouse have also been successful and plans are in place for possibly reintroducing the yellow-footed antechinus.

The sanctuary's tourist attractions are unique in that it is the only woodland in Australia that is predator free and houses fauna that are now extinct across south-east Australia. The experience at Mulligans is unique in that it offers a range of visitor experiences from natural woodlands to night walks. Visitors have the opportunity to see the eastern bettongs, the quolls and bush stone-curlews, along with a range of native animals in their natural environment. The success of the existing twilight tours that are now running twice a week highlight the tourism and educational opportunities that exist. The selection of the Mulligans Flat experience as part of the Canberra Airport virtual reality display that showcases nature-based experiences to incoming visitors further highlights what a unique asset Mulligans is.

In the 2017-18 ACT budget the government committed \$162,000 to the design of a Mulligans ecotourism visitor centre. The trust is seeking to leverage funding from other partners, including corporate sponsors, to further develop the site. The centre would be a national gateway to Australia's unique woodlands and focus on nature-based learning and tourism. The ACT government has allowed for this development through the provision of a suitable site within the Throsby estate development plan.

A visitor centre would be a great place to visit not only for tourists but also for Canberra kids interested in the environment. The Woodlands and Wetlands Trust, who will manage the centre formally, includes representatives of ANU, the local conservation community and the Friends of Mulligans Flat. The trust's active volunteering programs engage more than 80 mostly Gungahlin residents and broad communications are of interest to thousands of Canberrans each week and often reach a national audience.

Indigenous rangers within the parks and conservation service have been engaged early in the design process, and further and wider engagement with the Indigenous community will occur. Opportunities for employment, business development, storytelling and meeting places for the Indigenous community have been identified in the early engagement processes.

A focus on ecotourism, including at Mulligans Flat, supports our tourism 2020 strategy by enhancing the tourism offering for visitors already coming to Canberra as well as attracting new visitors. ACT parks and conservation is working closely with VisitCanberra to align our marketing strategies and ensure the greatest reach for our unique nature-based tourism opportunities.

The Murrumbidgee River corridor sees well in excess of a million domestic and international visitors per annum, with at least 300,000 enjoying the famous Cotter reserve. Tidbinbilla nature reserve enjoys a strong visitation of over 200,000 people, with increasing visitation from embassy facilitated groups from India and China, as well as a strong uptake of ranger-guided activities by domestic and international school groups.

The ACT government is growing existing nature-based assets and experiences, as well as identifying new partnerships and community engagement opportunities. This includes the healthy country program, which is a new section of parks and conservation dedicated to initiating activities that educate the community.

The Canberra community walks the walk in caring for our environment and amplifies our government's commitment to natural resource management by contributing over 22,000 hours of volunteer effort each year. On-ground work by park carers this year has included significant efforts in weed eradication, revegetation of degraded natural sites, fencing sensitive environmental areas and carrying out flora and fauna surveys with new digital tools such as the collector app.

In conclusion, people are a part of, impact on and benefit significantly from our natural environment. Canberrans enjoy our wildlife, trees, and walking and riding through our natural areas. Canberrans are avid volunteers, and places like Mulligans Flat sanctuary are strongly supported by the ACT government. Our natural environment is unique and valued by the people of Canberra. It is helping to grow the ACT's international reputation as a sustainable city and provides many opportunities to diversify our economy through ecotourism.

**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) (5.49): Canberrans are rightly proud of our beautiful bush capital. As our city grows, we must work hard to protect our environment and provide opportunities for everyone to connect with our beautiful natural places. We know that the protection of water, air and biodiversity is essential for the wellbeing of the planet and also for all of us as the human species. Degradation of catchments and global warming are impacting on the quality and amounts of available water. Habitat loss caused by humans and the spread of invasive species is a further major threat to biodiversity.

The Greens believe that current generations have a responsibility to ensure that the environment is protected for future generations. We need to maintain, expand and connect protected areas across the ACT in order to preserve our local biodiversity. In particular, we are fortunate to have some unique grassland and woodland environments right on our doorstep and these should be valued, restored and protected.

Since European settlement, 99.5 per cent of Australia's natural temperate grassland communities have been destroyed or damaged, and many plant and animal species have become locally extinct or critically endangered due to habitat loss and degradation. In the ACT we have been lucky enough to retain a comparatively higher level of the original temperate grassland remaining in moderate to good condition, although it is still only about five per cent of what originally existed.

Many of the species that depend on these grasslands are at risk of extinction, such as grassland earless dragons, the striped legless lizard, perunga grasshoppers, and the Ginninderra peppercress. The ACT government has a legal and moral responsibility to protect these plant and animal species and the ecological communities that support them.

As members are aware, the ACT's population and urban footprint are growing, as we discussed earlier today, and climate change is increasingly requiring us to take adaptive measures in response to its impacts. In this environment, it is even more important that the ACT government is consciously and actively ensuring that our native bushlands, rivers and protected biodiversity areas are preserved and enhanced.

This is not to suggest that our bushlands and protected areas should be inaccessible to the Canberra community. The ACT's fantastic natural assets make us an ideal place for nature-based tourism. By encouraging ecotourism, we have an opportunity to educate the community and visitors about the importance of biodiversity and its value, and how to protect and enhance our natural environment. From Tidbinbilla in the south to Jerrabomberra wetlands in central Canberra and Mulligans Flat in the north, the ACT is full of great resources that can support local tourism opportunities.

In particular, this motion highlights the work of the Woodlands and Wetlands Trust in protecting over 600 hectares of the territory's environmental assets. On behalf of the ACT Greens, I would like to add my thanks to the trust for all the important work they have done to protect our threatened habitats and species, as well as promoting nature-based tourism. We have seen some remarkable results in both Mulligans Flat and Jerrabomberra wetlands in recent times, which will help ensure that these areas can be enjoyed by future generations. Certainly in my time as the Minister for Territory and Municipal Services, when the Woodlands and Wetlands Trust sat within that agency, I was very pleased to work with the trust to both revamp their governance and strengthen their role. In particular, I was pleased to see them taking some key initiatives, such as introducing night tours. And I was very pleased that we were able to secure money in the budget to, with the federal government, facilitate the fence extension through the Gorooyarroo area and provide the opportunity for extending the predator-proof fence from what is already an incredibly successful area—it has been a remarkable ecological experiment—and increase the size of that area.

At Mulligans Flat, the expansion plan for the predator-proof fence will grow the protected sanctuary area. As Ms Orr's motion notes, we look forward to seeing plans for the development of a visitor centre soon. On the tourism front, as I touched on, the introduction of twilight tours at Mulligans Flat has proved very popular with local residents and visitors. The research programs to reintroduce native species such as the eastern quoll, the bettong and the bush stone-curlew are proving to be a great success.

In particular, we have seen growth in the eastern bettong population to more than 300, as Ms Orr touched on. It is an extraordinary success that I do not think anybody quite anticipated at the beginning. People hoped for this sort of success, but I think if you asked the people involved they would have to honestly say that the numbers we have seen are far greater than they had expected. One of the truly amazing things I have done in recent years is join one of the night-time surveys of bettong populations. It was a cold, middle-of-the-night exercise, but it was still very inspiring to actually witness the animals and see the scientists doing their work in measuring weight, size, population numbers and similar sorts of features. It has been an excellent collaboration with the ANU, CSIRO and ACT parks and conservation service.

At the Jerrabomberra wetlands, a new concept plan has provided the vision and strategy for the wetlands into the future. Visitor experience has been improved through the new swamp boardwalk, upgrades to bird hides and the addition of a dipping pond to the wetlands environment. A new schools program and public events program have been developed, with activities including birdwatching tours, workshops and clay sculpting sessions. The revegetation of the riparian zones has progressed with the removal of invasive weeds and replacement with native species.

It is clear that Mulligans Flat and Jerrabomberra wetlands are leading the way in providing both conservation research and nature-based tourism activities. However, outside these dedicated areas there remain many isolated hilltops in ACT reserves that are not connected and are not always strategically managed for biodiversity conservation. I believe there is still much work to be done to identify and actively manage key biodiversity linkages and corridors across the territory. The lessons from Mulligans Flat and Jerrabomberra wetlands will be important for informing this work, as will collaboration with New South Wales agencies and local governments.

I am pleased that this motion specifically calls for the development of an ecotourism policy. Having an overarching policy is important to support and enhance nature-based tourism opportunities in a way that protects and preserves our natural environment. The ACT Greens support programs that conserve and showcase our unique environmental assets. Ecotourism projects are also an opportunity to make the community aware of the impacts of our consumption on the local and regional environment.

Ecotourism has potential economic and environmental benefits for Canberra. At the same time, as we have already spoken about today, our growing population and footprint place increasing strain on our environment. An ecotourism policy is important to ensure we provide opportunities for our community and visitors to enjoy

our natural assets. Such a policy must also focus on preserving and protecting these assets for future generations. I am pleased that Ms Orr's motion makes mention of the need to balance these sometimes competing interests, and I look forward to seeing how a future ecotourism strategy addresses this issue. I am happy, on behalf of the ACT Greens, to lend our support to this motion.

**MR WALL** (Brindabella) (5.57): I am pleased to speak to the motion brought here today by Ms Orr that relates to the value that we as Canberrans place on our natural environment. I would like to focus today on the potential tourism opportunities that exist, and the revenue streams through ecotourism which could be gained by showcasing what we as residents of the bush capital have access to on a daily basis.

By the territory's own calculations, tourism continues to be one of the fastest growing industries in the ACT, contributing over \$2 billion annually to the ACT's economy, and to date employing 16,400 Canberrans. The fact that the current Labor-Greens government is only just talking about an ecotourism policy is, to my mind, a huge missed opportunity, an opportunity that they have discussed for many years but have failed to act and capitalise on effectively.

The national parks in the ACT region are our jewels in the crown. There are many recreational pursuits that can bring revenue into other jurisdictions while managing to maintain respectful attention to the ecosystems, that other drawcard. Just one of these pursuits, one very close to my heart, is recreational fishing, a popular pastime for Canberrans in our own backyard and a key destination for interstate anglers. Currently New South Wales presents far more opportunity for recreational fishermen, particularly in freshwater alpine streams, than is available in the ACT in terms of tourism spend.

A department of primary industry report in 2013 stated that the economic output for recreational fishing in all New South Wales at that time was \$3.42 billion, with associated employment of 14,254 equivalent full-time jobs. This included \$186.1 million of expenditure by interstate visiting fishermen, or fisher people, a significant amount of which no doubt would have come from many Canberrans' pockets. Creating more opportunities for pursuits such as this within the ACT will bring the opportunity for some great added economic benefit, as New South Wales has gained. We may well be the beneficiaries should the territory choose to open up these types of avenues.

This is also where I take some issue with Ms Orr's motion on point 1(c) of her motion, which states:

... human activity can and has in many instances impacted ... on our natural environment ...

*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.*

**MR WALL:** I would much rather take a different view from that of Ms Orr by observing that recreational users of our national parks and ecosystems are amongst the best custodians and are often in the best place to ensure that any adverse impacts on the natural environment are firstly identified and secondly resolved.

There is the opportunity to take two different approaches to this. One approach, which we often see by environmental groups, is that the best thing we can do to preserve natural ecosystems and the natural environment is to put a fence around them, put a gate on them and lock them up forever. I much prefer the option that sees people being encouraged to go in in a respectful manner and actually identify, recognise, learn about and experience the things that are important to keep and to treasure.

Our national park rangers are at the forefront of the fight to retain our natural environment and keep it in the best condition possible. In relation to the role of our rangers, I was disappointed to see that this government announced in the budget an approach thinly cloaked as a cost-saving measure directly relating to rangers and the Googong foreshore. The 2017-18 budget papers referred to the closure of the southern gate, commonly known as the London Bridge end, in budget paper 3 on page 100. This measure purports to save an amount of \$333,000. This budget mention was the first notice that any users of that area actually had, and at no point was there any consultation on this decision.

Let me go to other opportunities that I am fond of and believe that the government has missed and continues to ignore. One sits on the doorstep of my own electorate, the electorate that you share, Madam Speaker, Brindabella. Tourist drive 5, as it was commonly known, is the stretch of road that runs from Tharwa through to Corin and back into Stromlo. There is a significant opportunity to tie in a number of experiences that already exist along that route and create an absolutely wonderful tourism opportunity.

I note that a Cotter hub proposal has been put to the government as an unsolicited proposal which seeks to identify many of the opportunities that exist down there, in part revitalising the Cotter pub, a favourite of many Canberrans that was tragically lost in the 2003 fires. Along tourist drive 5 there is the rich historical village of Tharwa, with the artisans who operate there, historic homesteads and the like. A short drive from there you can head into Namadgi National Park, a gateway to some of the historical space tracking infrastructure that was used during the moon landing. Booroomba Rocks is a popular place for rock climbing and abseiling.

A little further up the road you can head to Corin, a great privately run tourism enterprise that I understand has had in excess of 60,000 people for snow play and skiing lessons this year. It is a phenomenal tourist attraction that could benefit from harnessing the common interests along that space. At the bottom of the hill you have the deep space tracking station that is still a critical part of NASA's work which is featured here in the capital.

There is the Tidbinbilla nature reserve, a reserve that we as the ACT government are responsible for. If anyone has been out there recently, they will know that the work that the rangers do out there is phenomenal. But on the stage of world-class tourism destinations, it could really do with a bit of love. Tidbinbilla nature reserve is often overlooked as a tourism opportunity, but how many places are there in the world where you can be within an hour's drive of an international airport, head down to a nature reserve and see a number of the most obscure and delightful creatures that exist in Australia? There are kangaroos, koalas and platypus all available on our doorstep at the Tidbinbilla nature reserve. It continues to be a completely undervalued asset that the territory holds.

As I mentioned before, there is the Cotter hub proposal to try to reinvigorate activity down at the Cotter precinct. And there is the work that is being done back at Stromlo. That concludes what tourist drive 5 was and most definitely should be again with just a bit of incentive from the government. A bit of marketing and collaboration would see a huge tourism opportunity, particularly ecotourism, for people to get out and experience the great outdoors and many of the wonders we have here on our doorstep in the territory.

I commend Ms Orr for bringing this motion to the Assembly and will very keenly watch to see what work the government does in improving tourism more broadly and particularly ecotourism in the territory going forward, bearing in mind that there are rich, fertile opportunities at our disposal in the territory to really grow our tourism industry and make it world leading.

**MS ORR** (Yerrabi) (6.05), in reply: In closing, I would like to thank members for what have been generally overall positive comments. I would like to address the comments on item 1(c), because I feel that the members opposite have taken an interesting interpretation of that particular point and in doing so misconstrued my words. I certainly do not think that all interaction with nature is a bad thing and I do not think all human interaction with nature has a negative impact. My words have been taken out of context because I was talking very much about farming or land clearing, larger impacts than simply going out into nature and taking your rubbish with you when you leave.

Within the context of farming and land clearing, we know that a big impact has been had. There is the experience of Mulligans Flat. We have all just stood here and said that is a great example of how we rehabilitate land and what we would like to see more of in the future. Apart from that one little point, I welcome all the other comments. I encourage everyone to continue to support this as we move forward, because we seem to be on quite a similar page.

Question resolved in the affirmative.

## **Executive business—precedence**

*Ordered that executive business be called on.*

## **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 22 August 2017.

### **Detail stage**

Schedule 1—Appropriations—Proposed expenditure.

Justice and Community Safety Directorate—1.15.

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

**MR HANSON** (Murrumbidgee) (6.07): There is no doubt that the JACS directorate is one of the most important parts of this government, notable for both its size and functions. We talk a lot about health and education in this place, and rightly so, but you can see the importance of the JACS directorate when things go wrong. We have seen some pretty horrific things happen in our suburbs of late as a result of OMCG crime. We have also seen some statistics in relation to crime going very much in the wrong direction. Mrs Jones will no doubt speak to that when she refers to the police, but that was the subject of a question today in question time.

It is very disappointing that the JACS directorate is being subjected to such significant cuts, labelled by some as an efficiency dividend and by others as efficiency measures—it does not really matter—ultimately what we are seeing are cuts. When you look at some of the spending initiatives of this government and some of the dodgy deals that we have seen go on and hundreds of millions being spent on trams, it is wrong—it is a simple word to use—to then be cutting so deeply into the JACS directorate which, as I said, has such important functions.

Just in this budget—noting that these cuts have been going on for some time—legislation policy and programs were cut by \$253,000: safer families; \$16,000; security and emergency management, \$41,000; crime prevention, \$12,000; Government Solicitor's office, \$172,000; Parliamentary Counsel's office, \$92,000; DPP—the subject of the motion we had in the Assembly today based on recommendations from Ms Le Couteur and others—cut by \$228,000; and the Human Rights Commission, \$166,000. Here is a government that will not implement anti-consorting laws, which are a very important measure, because they are so concerned about human rights, but on the other hand they cut the Human Rights Commission by \$166,000.

Corrective services, despite all the problems we are experiencing at the jail, has an efficiency dividend of \$240,000. The courts, which are under so much pressure, are subject to a \$400,000 efficiency dividend and the Emergency Services Agency, \$2,453,000. We know that that is on top of other cuts we have seen in important portfolio areas, such as the \$15 million that was cut a few years ago from police. To cut such important areas when we are seeing crime statistics, visible indications of the crimes through outlaw motorcycle crime activity and so on, going the wrong way, is a very poor decision. I note that this is not the first time. The directorate has achieved progressive savings and efficiencies since 2010-11, and in 2016-17 the cumulative total of these savings and efficiencies for the directorate was approximately \$21 million. That is \$21 million cut out of this important area. It is no wonder we are seeing so many problems across so many of the functional areas within the JACS directorate.

In this budget it is \$4.9 million of cuts. Where is it going to lead? We know that the community's safety is being put at risk. We know that violent crime against the person is up. But what about the staff themselves? What about job cuts? This concerns me, because when the estimates committee raised these issues the response from the government was that there may be some reductions in employee expenses and that, "At this stage we are still working through that." Where are the comrades now, Madam Speaker? Where are the comrades now looking after the workers? They are mute, because they are the ones doing the cutting. There may be a reclassification of positions in some instances. "Reclassification of positions" sounds like you are getting downgraded, does it not? So \$3.9 million for the CFMEU's building but, "We're going to reclassify positions across JACS because we don't have enough money. That's something we are working through with the unions in particular cases." The director-general noted the job cuts would be identified as the best way to achieve these efficiencies. I am very concerned that on top of the jobs that were cut from ACT Policing and real pressures across the JACS directorate we are going to see more pressures applied to the staff, particularly the frontline staff, in the JACS directorate.

Family violence is another area subject to the efficiency dividend from this government. We know from the DPP's annual report that the number of family violence matters commenced was 701 for the year, up a staggering 37 per cent on the year before, while the number completed was 637, up 46 per cent. The latest ABS crime offender report showed that for domestic violence offences in Canberra in 2015-16, assaults increased by 43 per cent, property damage was up by 41 per cent, sexual assault or related offences was up from 40 per cent to 66 per cent and breach of non-violence orders was up from 49 per cent to 68 per cent. There is plenty of money for other projects, including money for the CFMEU's building, but with all the statistics for family violence going up, funding for the JACS directorate is getting cut.

The DPP has stated the small increase for the family violence area of the office in the last budget was modest indeed and unfortunately will not compensate for the increase in work. One area for which a special levy was introduced was for safer families, and notwithstanding the pressures facing the community in family violence, that is subject to a cut as well.

Recommendation 70 of the report is that the government establish accountability targets for prevention and early intervention measures relating to family and personal violence, and the government agrees to that in part. Recommendation 71 is to provide detailed breakdowns of expenditures in the safer families package, and the government agrees in principle. So we know money is going into this area and we know cuts are being applied. The estimates committee is trying to find out where the money is going in terms of a detailed breakdown of expenditures, and it looks like the government is not going to provide that. It is very difficult for this Assembly to determine whether those measures are going to be effective if the government will not provide a response as to where that money is going. We support money going to these important areas, but we have a responsibility to assess whether that money is being applied effectively. I note when this initiative first came up the bulk of the money was being put into more bureaucrats as opposed to frontline services.

Turning to the DPP—this was the subject of my motion this afternoon, which was disappointingly watered down—I will not re-read all of the quotes from the DPP. They are disturbing, though, and I will read a couple of highlights from the DPP.

... as presently resourced we will not be able to fully meet the capacity.

And further that “the DPP must make compromises including selection of cases as well as compromises to the level of preparation and degree of expertise brought to cases.” Further:

If an appropriate level of resourcing is not given to my office, the standard of prosecutions will suffer.

The estimates report came up with some pretty good recommendations in this area. I was there for the evidence that was provided by the DPP. I was not there for the in camera evidence so I am not sure what was said, but I assume it was an extrapolation of those comments and providing further detail. The estimates committee came up with a number of well-considered, unanimous recommendations which have been largely ignored by the government; they have just been “noted.” (*Second speaking period taken.*)

It is bizarre in the extreme that, with the recommendations provided by Ms Le Couteur and by two Labor members, when I presented them to the Assembly, they were described by Mr Rattenbury as “Mr Hanson’s measures, Mr Hanson’s approach”, and Ms Le Couteur voted against her own recommendations. It is a strange old world we live in, isn’t it, when Ms Le Couteur, in committee and out there in the public, will be saying one thing, and then will come into this place and vote against her own recommendations.

It is disappointing in the extreme, and I think that is one of the reasons why members of the community say they have had enough. They hear enough from Ms Le Couteur about how she is going to stand up for this or stand up for that—strong words.

Coming into this place, Mr Rattenbury calls the shots, Ms Le Couteur falls into line and will vote against her own recommendations. That is what we saw this afternoon.

As a result, instead of those good recommendations from the committee's report being implemented by the government, we got, as I described before, wishy-washy weasel words. That is what they were from this government. As I said to the Attorney-General, we will be holding him to account. If we see in annual reports or in budget estimates next year a failure to resource the DPP then we will continue to litigate this issue, and we will turn up the volume on it.

Another area of concern is that of bail in the ACT. We know that this is an area of considerable concern to the community. For a number of years we have been calling for a bail review. I will turn to the tripartisan committee of the Assembly, and I will quote from a couple of their recommendations:

In light of calls from the Prime Minister for nationwide review, the Committee recommends that the ACT Government undertake a full review of the operation of bail laws in the ACT, and update the Assembly by the last sitting day in 2017.

The Committee recommends that the ACT Government start collecting information and statistics on offences committed by those who were subject to either bail or parole orders.

The response from the government is poor. With respect to the recommendation that there be a review, the government has "noted" that. We know that there is a problem with the application of bail. We know that the Prime Minister and other jurisdictions are acting. The Prime Minister has called for that review. I think that was supported by Mr Shorten in the federal parliament, and this government is sitting on its hands. That is a disappointing approach to that issue.

In terms of information collection, this was an issue raised by Mrs Dunne when she was shadow attorney-general, quite some time ago. The government does not collect information about who is committing offences whilst on bail. We have asked the government to collect this information for, I would say, six or seven years, and they still cannot provide that information. They have said they are going to start collecting that information if they can. They only agreed in principle.

How are this government able to tell us on the one hand that they will not do a review because the bail laws are working okay but on the other hand say, "We don't actually collect the information about what's happening to people on bail, so we don't know"? Again, we will continue to litigate this argument. I sincerely hope that when we come back to this place next year or in annual reports, the government is able to provide that important information, and start providing that to the community. When they do see that, we will then be able to have a much better view about whether bail laws are working properly. In my view, significant problems remain.

In conclusion, there was pretty good work done by the estimates committee, under the chairmanship of Mr Wall. I know that it was a tripartisan committee, and I commend the members of the committee for their approach. I think there were some very good

recommendations in that report across the board. But it is very disappointing and it is very frustrating when there are tripartisan recommendations to the Assembly and the government dismisses them by saying “We’ll look at that; noted in principle.”

We will continue to hold the government to account on these important issues. As I said at the beginning of my speech, sadly, we are seeing deterioration across the board when it comes to keeping our community safe. It could be to do with bail, outlaw motorcycle gangs or a number of the very disturbing statistics that were the subject of Mrs Jones’s question without notice in the Assembly today with regard to assaults and so on. So you need to do a lot better.

**MRS JONES** (Murrumbidgee) (6.23): I rise tonight to briefly speak about the emergency services, ACT Policing and the AMC. In the interests of time I will try to do it as quickly as possible.

I would like to put on notice that as part of the budget process we still do not have a time line for when the Bronto aerial pumper appliance will be available. We need some more information on that, given that the current Bronto has been out of action for 48 days since 1 July 2016 and not able to be used. We probably have situations where it is required and still cannot be used.

I also note that I am pleased to see that the government has agreed to the estimates recommendation that portaloos be available to firefighters wherever possible under circumstances where they are fighting fires for numbers of hours at a time. As people in this place well know, it is a basic requirement that we can fulfil people’s workplace requirements and that we should and can have portaloos available, particularly for women and their sanitary needs.

I note the answers from the Minister for Police and Emergency Services to estimates questions regarding operational staff. Perhaps we need to find new terminology, given that he has stretched the definition of “operational staff” to meaning everybody who works for the ESA. I think we can do better than that and be very clear about how many people put on a uniform and go out and fight fires compared to people who manage support roles and run the system back at the office.

I want to put on record the great work that our police and emergency services do. It is very demanding work. People suffer from their work in this field. People put themselves and their bodies on the line, and we need to continue to do more to support them.

On ACT Policing, I think the government knows the points that I have made about both this budget and previous budgets. If we simply go back over the past few years, we have seen inflation well outstrip the very minuscule increases to the ACT Policing contract. I think it behoves us to pay better attention to that, as the police clearly state to me that they are having to go for younger and younger and less and less experienced officers to do the same work. Yes, people go in and out of the federal AFP, and that is not always a bad thing. However, more needs to be done, given the rise in the population which we debated in this place today.

I will finish on policing by saying that the anti-consorting laws are needed in Canberra. I do not think it takes a rocket scientist to know that we have had an outbreak of violence associated with outlaw motorcycle gangs, and people are rightly worried. They are scared in their homes and there is much more that we should and can do. I know Minister Gentleman says it is a human rights issue. He clearly has not caught up with the talking points Mr Ramsay is using now, saying that they are ineffective laws. Nonetheless, ACT Policing and New South Wales policing both say that we have become a haven and there is no reason why we would not synchronise our laws with New South Wales.

When it comes to corrections, I will simply say again what I have said a great many times in this place, and will continue to say: that the women detainee accommodation has been mishandled by this government. I know the minister believes he could not possibly have known, but I wonder if he needs to put a little bit more time and effort into getting himself across the details of this portfolio. I know it is not simple; I accept that. But I find it amazing that we do not even have a plan for what will happen when and if we get to 50, 55 or 60 detainees in the next quarter of this year. It is actually feasible that it will happen, with the rate at which the numbers have been rising now.

I want to make it very clear that there is much more work to do on accommodation for women in the Alexander Maconochie Centre. I do not think it is acceptable that they are being housed all over the place. I know that the minister has made an effort to make sure those women are safe. However, that is not really good accommodation if it is not set up for the women and for the lives they need to live in there in order to come back out into the community and be functioning individuals. I think there is a great deal more that we need to do.

If we do not have a plan yet, what will we do when there are 60, 55 or 50 women in the prison in the near future? That is either a severe lack of transparency or disorganisation and an inability to plan for today's needs, let alone tomorrow's, or possibly a combination of all of those things.

**MS CODY** (Murrumbidgee) (6.28): In the consideration of this section of the budget, I would like to take two minutes of the Assembly's time to highlight the recent successes of ACT Policing. As members may have seen in the papers, a number of successful arrests have been made and charges laid in relation to criminal organisations in the territory. Whilst I in no way wish to take away anything from the hard work of the police who keep our community safe, I also wish to congratulate the minister, Mr Gentleman, and the Treasurer, Mr Barr, on making sure that front-line police have the resources they need to do the job.

As you may be aware, Madam Speaker, policing and crime is one of those areas where we often have debates in this place and in the pages of the *Canberra Times*. In all the testosterone-fuelled chest beating that we sometimes hear from the opposition, they miss the point that front-line police officers investigate crimes and arrest people, not slogans.

We can sit here behind our security guards, say we are tough on crime and pass special laws that regulate the way people dress; or we can fund front-line policing properly. I am glad to be supporting a government that has chosen the option that keeps our community safe, properly funding front-line police. Congratulations, Mick; congratulations, Andrew.

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

## **Adjournment**

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

That the Assembly do now adjourn.

## **Niu Oceania cultural centre**

**MRS KIKKERT** (Ginninderra) (6.31): Three weeks ago it was my privilege to be one of three participants on a panel discussion regarding women in leadership in the ACT's Pasifika community. Other panellists were Her Excellency Hinauri Petana, Samoan high commissioner to Australia, and Myjolyne Kim, a PhD candidate at ANU from the Micronesian island of Chuuk. The forum borrowed its theme from this year's International Women's Day—be bold for change—and was sponsored by a remarkable new organisation, the Niu Oceania cultural centre.

Niu Oceania was formally launched on 31 March 2017 at the ANU's Hedley Bull building. Its primary aim is to teach, disseminate and preserve the languages, arts, cultures and values of the Pacific Islands. One of the organisation's primary activities is language instruction. The centre provides basic adult language classes in Samoan, Tongan, Fijian and Tok Pisin. These classes are held each Thursday evening from 6 until 8 pm on the ANU campus, with languages alternating each week. Tomorrow evening, for example, there will be parallel sessions in Fijian and Tongan, and next week's classes will be held in Samoan and Tok Pisin.

These classes have been designed for learners who have little or no existing knowledge and are the perfect opportunity for anyone, islander or otherwise, to pick up a completely new language. The first hour of each session is a learning and sharing activity that focuses on themes and issues important to the ACT's Pasifika community. This helps fulfil the centre's mission of preserving and teaching culture and values.

In addition to these language classes, Niu Oceania holds weekly public forums also on Thursday evenings from 6 until 8 pm at the ANU. The topics of these forums are chosen to be relevant to Canberra's diverse islander communities, and the presenters come from these same communities. For example, the week before the panel discussion on women in leadership was a health and wellbeing workshop. Dr Roannie Ng Shiu, convenor of Pacific studies at the ANU, presented and was joined by two other Pacific Islander students, Teisa Holani, who is currently studying medicine and surgery at the ANU, and Fa'onetapu Takiari, who is currently studying for a degree in the field of sporting and exercise science at the University of Canberra.

People of Pacific Islander background currently constitute only 1.3 per cent of the Australian population, slightly less in the ACT, but the Pasifika community is growing rapidly and will reach three per cent in the coming decades. Dr Ng Shiu's PhD research focused on health and education inequalities for Pacific communities in New Zealand and those inequities are replicated here in Australia. For example, data from the ABS indicates that life expectancy for Pasifika people living in Australia is as low as it is for Indigenous Australians, and young islanders are far less likely than the general population to pursue university education.

This is what makes the work of the Niu Oceania cultural centre so vital. In its few months it has become an important virtual space for Canberra's diverse islander population to meet together, to learn, to share, to highlight the excellent work being done by many in the territory's Pasifika community and to provide easy to access pathways forward for those who wish to excel as well. And it is doing so whilst at the same time showcasing and preserving language, culture, arts and values in a vibrant and exciting way.

I congratulate all those involved with Niu Oceania and wish them my very best for much success in the coming months and years.

### **Cooyong Street mural**

**MS CHEYNE** (Ginninderra) (6.35): Public art plays a critical role in how we inhabit and characterise our urban spaces. It brings me a lot of joy to walk through the city and see kids laughing as they climb all over the sheep sculptures or exclaiming they have found their favourite comic book character on the walls of Tocumwal Lane. The streets of Canberra are coming alive as local artists build a strong street art scene, injecting colour and flair into otherwise unused spaces.

In June I was proud to represent the ACT government at the opening of our newest mural in the city, painted at the Cooyong Street skate park. For those of you who have not had a chance to see the mural, it is simply bursting with life. It is beautiful, energetic and intriguing in equal measure, teeming with colour and incorporating local flora and fauna. A call for mural designs was put out and was answered by artists from around the country. It is important that public art reflect the values and character of a local community. The community should feel a sense of ownership of public art and embrace its new place in their daily lives.

With this in mind, it was the community that decided what their mural would be. A panel of community members was created to make a shortlist of mural designs. The panel included local youth workers, skaters, In the City Canberra, the Canberra Centre and the ACT government. It was great to see that all the three shortlisted designs included work by Canberra artists. This shortlist was then subject to a public vote. There was a great response from the public, and around 2,400 votes were cast on In the City's Facebook page, reflecting the pride Canberrans take in shaping what our city looks like.

George Rose and Phibs won the competition with their design depicting royal bluebell, northern corroboree frogs, bogong moths and eucalypts. Since the mural is part of the skate park, they wanted to incorporate aspects of BMX and skate culture. In their submission, they explained that their abstract strokes represent the flow and energy of someone moving around the skate park.

George Rose grew up in Canberra and studied graphic design at the University of Canberra. Since graduating she has painted murals across Australia and the world. Sydney, Brisbane, Melbourne and Tasmania are all home to her art, as well as Indonesia, Mexico and European countries. George continues to contribute to Canberra street art with her work displayed in Art, Not Apart and at last year's Spilt Milk festival. George collaborated with Phibs, a Sydney based artist, who is quite famous and who has painted murals in Melbourne, Sydney and internationally. You can also see some of his work at the National Gallery of Australia.

The ACT government recognises the importance of street art as a creative outlet and the role of graffiti artists in creating important works of art. We have 24 legal graffiti sites around Canberra where anyone can paint, spray or tag. These designated walls provide a valuable space for artists to practise their craft and learn from other local artists. One of these sites is at the Cooyong skate park, right next to George and Phibs's mural. These dedicated sites have been successful in deterring vandalism of our public spaces. They provide a safe space for artists to share their works, while respecting our city and community. I can say I had a bit of a go that day, and I am no good. The graffiti spaces are constantly evolving and exhibit some of our emerging artists. I am definitely not one of them.

I encourage everyone to head over to the Cooyong Street skate park to admire the new mural and the graffiti walls next to it. The mural is stunning, and the graffiti walls are always in a state of flux as new works are constantly created and reworked.

### **National Health Co-op**

**MR MILLIGAN** (Yerrabi) (6.39): It was a great pleasure for me to be invited last week to visit the premises of the National Health Co-op to find out more about this exciting initiative. I was met by the chair of the board, Brian Frith, and Blake Wilson, general manager and deputy CEO. On first impression, it gives the appearance of being just another doctors surgery, but I was sincerely impressed when I was taken on a tour of the premises as Brian and Blake explained more of the initiative.

The National Health Co-op is a not-for-profit member-owned cooperative. It provides affordable medical and healthcare services to communities where it operates. Their goal is to provide access to affordable health care to all Australians. This will help to significantly reduce instances of preventable diseases and lessen the personal and societal impact of chronic conditions.

The National Health Co-op has a very unusual pricing structure. Once you have signed up for membership, you have unlimited access to bulk-billed doctors of your

choice at any of their eight clinics here in the ACT. I was surprised at how low the membership costs were. But for those on concession cards, this is lowered by 50 per cent and those who can demonstrate hardship can get access to free membership. All appointments are bulk-billed. The co-op's concept to bulk-bill is in response to the low number of doctors who bulk-bill in the ACT, which makes it very difficult for patients from low income families.

The ACT has the lowest number of doctors who bulk-bill. According to the federal Department of Health, 83.7 per cent of GP visits across Australia in the 2015 financial year were bulk-billed. In the ACT 55.6 per cent were bulk-billed. Initiated in 2004, the co-op was formed in response to the lack of GPs in the north-western suburbs of Canberra. A committee was established and with capital funding from the federal government, the first GP clinic was opened in 2010. They now have eight clinics employing more than 90 medical staff. This includes GPs, nurses, nurse practitioners, dietitians, exercise physiologists, pharmacists and obstetricians.

Perhaps their greatest achievement is the focus on health education. Using data analytics, the National Health Co-op actively monitors and targets outreach for 10 different health conditions. These include asthma, childhood obesity, heart health and diabetes. Patients identified with these health conditions or with potential problems are encouraged to attend health education sessions, such as the National Health Co-op's nationally recognised lifestyle modification program, which provides individuals with tools to help manage chronic disease and maintain a healthy lifestyle.

The success of the National Health Co-op is due to the positioning of its clinics in the areas of greatest need. More than 33,000 people have taken up the membership from all across Canberra and the region. The National Health Co-op is looking to expand its business over the border into other areas across the country.

The National Health Co-op has a strong commitment to innovation, clinical experience, excellence and patient outcomes. It was a pleasure to meet the CEO and general manager. I look forward to hearing more of their expansion into the future.

### **Giralang playground—anti-Semitic graffiti**

**MR PETTERSSON** (Yerrabi) (6.42): It is with a heavy heart that I rise today to bring attention to the disgusting display of anti-Semitism and bigotry that was left at a playground in Giralang. Spray-paint markings of a swastika were noticed by the local community in May. Most concerning is that the park is located just a few hundred metres from a synagogue. In addition to that, many members of the Jewish community live in the nearby area and use the park.

This sort of graffiti is put there for only one purpose: to intimidate members of our Jewish community. Local Rabbi Shmueli Feldman's comments on the impact of this graffiti are worth repeating. Rabbi Feldman said in his comments to the ABC:

Swastikas represent hate; that was the symbol of the Nazis, and having Holocaust survivors in our community as well—this is something that can send shock waves of fear throughout the community.

I want to assure Rabbi Feldman and the Jewish community that this sort of bigotry reflects only a tiny portion of Canberra—small yet still unacceptable. Overwhelmingly, Canberrans warmly embrace our Jewish community and appreciate the contribution they make to our city.

I personally witnessed the closeness and vibrancy of the Jewish community on display at the end of last year when I attended Chabad ACT's Hanukkah celebration. I, the relevant minister, Rachel Stephen-Smith, the shadow minister, Elizabeth Kikkert, and MLAs from all parties greatly appreciated the traditional food, drinks, music and, of course, the Menorah lighting.

I have also enjoyed attending other Jewish community events in recent months. I enjoyed meeting Jewish students visiting Canberra for the Australasian Union of Jewish Students conference just last week and a cocktail party hosted at the end of last year by Rabbi Meltzer.

I also acknowledge and would like to thank the Chief Minister for his comments earlier today noting that the government would examine the administrative processes that led to the delay in the graffiti being removed. I want to encourage anyone who sees offensive graffiti such as this to contact the ACT government graffiti hotline on 132281. Offensive graffiti of this nature should be removed within 24 hours.

I would like to finish by reiterating that these bigoted and anti-Semitic actions are completely out of step with the beliefs of the Canberra community. Once again, I assure the Jewish community that I and every person in this chamber—I hope—support the Jewish community and welcome their ongoing contribution to our great city.

Question resolved in the affirmative.

**The Assembly adjourned at 6.45 pm**