



Debates

WEEKLY HANSARD

Legislative Assembly for the ACT

NINTH ASSEMBLY

1 NOVEMBER 2017

www.hansard.act.gov.au

Wednesday, 1 November 2017

Domestic Animals (Dangerous Dogs) Legislation Amendment Bill 2017	4761
Visitors	4764
Crimes (Criminal Organisation Control) Bill 2017	4764
Government Procurement (Financial Integrity) Amendment Bill 2017	4770
Voluntary assisted dying	4778
ACT Policing—funding	4796
Questions without notice:	
Planning—lease variations	4805
Transport—bike-sharing scheme	4806
ACT public service—executive severance benefits	4807
ACT Health—aluminium cladding	4808
Children and young people—reportable conduct scheme	4809
Schools—aluminium cladding	4810
Trade unions—anti-Chinese campaign	4811
Transport—anti-smoking measures	4813
Aboriginals and Torres Strait Islanders—educational targets	4815
Aboriginals and Torres Strait Islanders—out of home care review	4818
Government—night-life safety measures	4819
Greyhound racing—inspections	4820
Government—firearms amnesty	4821
Environment—little eagle conservation	4822
Supplementary answer to question without notice:	
Aboriginals and Torres Strait Islanders—out of home care review	4824
ACT Policing—funding	4824
Clubs sector	4829
Housing affordability	4839
Access Canberra—shopfront service	4853
Adjournment:	
Aboriginals and Torres Strait Islanders—Uluru statement	4864
Clontarf Foundation	4865
ANU internship program	4867
Ginninderra District Girl Guides	4867
Schedule of amendments:	
Schedule 1: Government Procurement (Financial Integrity) Amendment Bill 2017	4869

Wednesday, 1 November 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.

Domestic Animals (Dangerous Dogs) Legislation Amendment Bill 2017

Mr Coe, pursuant to notice, presented the bill and its explanatory statement.

Title read by Clerk.

MR COE (Yerrabi—Leader of the Opposition) (10.01): I move:

That this bill be agreed to in principle.

I rise today to table a critical piece of legislation that is necessary due to the Labor-Greens government's inaction on dangerous dogs. One of the core functions of any government is public safety. The Labor-Greens government has failed on that count when it comes to dogs in our community. Despite its rhetoric and despite the minister promising that she would table legislation by the end of September, the government has continued to neglect and delay dealing with this serious issue. The government has allowed members of the public to be put at risk by dangerous dogs and, tragically, it has taken a fatality for action to be forthcoming.

My colleague Steve Doszpot has been extremely vocal in calling on the government to improve the Domestic Animals Act and he has worked closely with the victims of dog attacks to help shape this bill before us today. Some of them are present in the chamber today to show their support.

It is important to put this bill in perspective. There were 389 officially reported serious dog attacks in Canberra last year. This means that there is a serious attack reported in Canberra every day. This means that there is a serious attack reported time and time and time again in the ACT. There is anecdotal evidence to suggest that there are many more incidents that go unreported. In 2016, the latest year for which we have data, there were 155 presentations in hospital emergency departments due to dog attacks. In 2012 there were 100. In the same period there have been only two prosecutions for dangerous dogs. The legislation is obviously not working to protect Canberrans.

Unfortunately, the issues I raise today are not new. In 2010 Dr Paul Crowhurst of Hawker called for action after a dog attacked his son's throat and mauled his two small dogs. Days after the attack, the dogs were still roaming the streets. In 2014 Renee Dean had her two small dogs mauled to death in her locked backyard. She started a petition calling for an inquiry. Again there was no action. In 2015 dogs broke down a locked front screen door to a family home in Dunlop, killed the family's pet dogs and injured the home owner.

In 2016 there was public pressure mounted to deal with dangerous dogs and dog attacks, with calls to set up an independent inquiry. The directorate refused an independent review but convened a working group to advise on improvements that could be made. Despite being told that this group would provide feedback, no information has ever been made publicly available.

On 17 January this year, after the media reported a man losing part of his hand in a dog attack, Mr Doszpot called on the Canberra community to share with him their experiences or concerns about dangerous dogs. His office was inundated with horrifying messages. Graham from Dunlop reported the killing of a small dog and the mauling of its owner. In Wanniasa, Bob reported his small dog survived an attack from an unleashed dog. Two dogs escaped from a yard in Kambah and attacked Jenny's dog when she was with her two small children.

Mr Doszpot has been actively challenging the government on the handling of dangerous dog cases throughout this year. Unfortunately, none of Mr Doszpot's calls for action has been supported by the Labor Party or the Greens to date.

These stories are shocking. Canberrans are being forced to watch hopelessly as their beloved pets are mauled. People are frightened to leave their homes or to allow their children to play in their own backyards, and residents are justifiably concerned for the safety of themselves and their family.

The highly publicised Toscan case is yet another example of how the legislation is not fit for purpose. We need a change. Peter Toscan was taking his small dog, Buzz, for a walk around Amaroo when three large dogs mauled Buzz without provocation. Mr Toscan recounted the horrific encounter:

... one of the dogs lunged at Buzz taking him in his jaws dragging him away ... as he gave out a small yelp. The other two dogs immediately joined in the fray, ripping and tearing at him. I immediately dropped on top of the dogs, screaming and punching at them in an attempt to break their hold.

When the dogs were finally dragged away Buzz was left lifeless on the ground ripped open from his chin to his chest, skin and flesh from his neck missing. I was unashamedly sitting on the path sobbing in anguish having let my mate down ... not knowing how I was going to break the news to [his wife] ...

At the time, the attacking dogs were under the supervision of two dog walkers. The police fined each dog walker \$350 and the dogs were sent home. The owner was not fined. The dogs were not declared dangerous. In most other states or territories those dogs would at least have been declared dangerous and have had significant restrictions placed on them. They would probably have been put down. Instead, in the ACT they are sent home without restriction.

Last week a woman from Watson lost her life after being attacked by a dog in her own home—her own dog. The dog was known to authorities after previous attacks and investigation. How did the government respond? Unfortunately, there was very little by way of government action.

Since the Labor-Greens government has refused to take the concerns of the Canberra community seriously, the Canberra Liberals, through Steve Doszpot, have taken the first steps in closing the gaping holes in our legislation that allow dangerous dogs to remain on our streets. This bill toughens up the law to protect the public from dangerous dogs. It provides a clearer distinction on the handling of complaints about dog attacks and harassment by other dogs.

The spectrum of harassment, injury, serious injury and death of a person is addressed in section 53A to 53C of our proposed legislation. In each case the Registrar of Domestic Animal Services is given clear instructions to investigate complaints and to give written notice of decisions to the complainant, the keeper of the dog and, importantly, to neighbours as well.

The bill is about action. A dog must be seized and impounded during an investigation into complaints of injury, serious injury or death of a person. It must be seized. It must be impounded. In cases where it is found that a dog has attacked, causing serious injury or death, the registrar must destroy the dog.

For lower levels of injury to a person the registrar may destroy the dog or, if not, must issue a control order to the keeper of the dog. The registrar must also declare the dog to be dangerous. Applications for a dangerous dog licence will require the payment of a significant annual fee by the licence holder.

The registrar may also issue control orders in the case of harassment. Control orders can include secure fencing, fence inspections, training courses for the dog and keeper and any other conditions as the registrar considers appropriate. Exceptions to these actions are clearly prescribed in the legislation.

Comparable direction is given to the registrar for handling complaints about dog attacks causing serious injury or the death of an animal. Under this bill, a dog that causes the death of another dog must be destroyed.

The bill I present today is well constructed and a genuine attempt to stop dangerous dogs being released back into the community. This legislation has sound administration principles to ensure that justice is served. The owners of dangerous dogs need to be held accountable for the behaviour of their animals. These laws have become necessary due to the lack of action by the government under the present act and the consequent flouting of the law by an irresponsible minority of dog owners.

At its core this legislation is about rebalancing justice when it comes to dangerous dogs in the territory. We cannot continue to have a situation where dangerous dogs are allowed to roam our streets. We cannot have a situation where we have dogs in our community that have caused serious injury or have killed other dogs yet are released back into our neighbourhood. This legislation will change that.

Ownership laws must put safety first. They must put our community first. The time has come to put an end to the ACT's apparent policy of tolerance towards dangerous dogs. For too long we have had laws in the territory that have been geared in favour of

dangerous dogs and their owners rather than the community and the victims of dog attacks. This legislation will change that.

If Labor and the Greens are serious about protecting Canberrans they will support these essential amendments. They will support this legislation. This legislation will finally restore the balance in the ACT. This legislation will finally give victims their rightful place in our community and will finally get rid of dangerous dogs—dogs that are known to have caused serious injury; dogs that are known to have killed other dogs—off our streets. I call on the government and I call on the Greens to support the legislation.

Debate (on motion by **Ms Fitzharris**) adjourned to the next sitting.

Visitors

MADAM SPEAKER: I recognise that we have again in the gallery the Speaker and the Clerk of the parliament of Kiribati. I hope that you are enjoying your time in the ACT Assembly.

Crimes (Criminal Organisation Control) Bill 2017

Mr Hanson, pursuant to notice, presented the bill and its explanatory statement.

Title read by Clerk.

MR HANSON (Murrumbidgee) (10.17): I move:

That this bill be agreed to in principle.

In my speech today on this bill I will open by using the words of others. On the front page of the *Canberra Times* only a couple of days ago, “War zone” was the headline. The subheading was “Suburban violence”. The article stated that Kalgoorlie Crescent residents were left terrified after a man was shot in the groin and shoulder and two vehicles were torched on Tuesday night. The article continued:

Two young children were home at the time, and Taskforce Nemesis is now investigating any links to bikie gangs.

Sadly, that is not the only quote relating to this issue; far from it. ABC Online posted a time line of these recent attacks. This is not an exhaustive list, but these are some of the headlines. On 10 March this year: “Front lawn set alight at house next door to childcare centre”. On 6 July: “Three cars torched, shots fired in Kambah”. On 11 July: “Cars, house shot at with high-powered rifle in Waramanga”. On 18 July: “Bullets fired into home next to childcare centre”. In September: “Man shot twice in the leg in Kambah”. There was a heartbreaking report of a six-year-old girl trying to use a garden hose to put out a fire set on their property while an adult victim lay bleeding from gunshot wounds.

This is in Canberra, Madam Speaker. This is happening right now in Canberra, and this is something that we must stop. Those are just some of the headlines in the period since the Labor Party dropped their push for anti-consorting laws.

One of the saddest parts of this saga is the fact that these were not unexpected. I, the local police force, the New South Wales Police and many others have been warning of the risk of these tragic events since 2009. It was well known and well reported before any of the incidents I just referred to ever happened.

I will read some further headlines, to prove the point. "Outlaw bikie gangs heading to Canberra because of the ACT's soft laws on consorting". That is from the *Daily Telegraph* in January this year. "Bikies drawn to Canberra due to lack of anti-gang laws". That is from the ABC on 6 March this year. "Canberra becoming a Bikie Mecca". That is from the *Daily Telegraph* in May this year. "Calls for anti-consorting laws after Comancheros' Canberra run". That is from the *Canberra Times* in August this year. "ACT needs anti-consorting laws now before someone dies". That is from the *Sydney Morning Herald* in September this year.

It is not just the headlines; these calls were made by informed professionals. I quote from the *Daily Telegraph* in January this year, which reported:

NSW Police sources have revealed their exasperation at how the ACT situation is hampering their battle against the bikie menace. "A lot of clubhouses have been closed down and bikies are no longer roaming in packs in NSW, but it's frustrating that they can still operate freely in Canberra," a senior NSW officer said.

Australian Federal Police Association president, Angela Smith, stated:

I've been calling for these laws since I became president just over 18 months ago and I just don't understand the reticence of the ACT government. It doesn't make any sense. It is the last part of the suite of resources we need to battle outlaw motorcycle gangs.

I've been going on like a broken record. We're an island in NSW. We've become a safe place to operate.

For goodness' sake, bring these laws in.

That was from July this year. I quote from an editorial in the *Canberra Times* from July this year:

The latest outbreak of outlaw motorcycle club-related violence in the suburbs of Canberra has shocked the city and demands a strong response from authorities.

As matters stand Canberra is now viewed by some as a safe haven for these gun-wielding thugs who have fled across our border to avoid being persecuted elsewhere.

Pity the terrified residents of Canberra suburbs listening to assault rifles being fired meters from their homes.

That has to change and change now—these are not the signals we want to send to lawless individuals. This is not a problem the Barr government can leave in the “too hard” basket any longer”.

Of all the commentators we should be listening to, the most senior is our Chief Police Officer. She is on the record as saying:

I think the key benefit of anti-consorting laws, noting that’s not the only solution, is that it’s a preventative tool ... It’s about dismantling, disrupting and preventing rather than responding.

When she was the assistant commissioner, she agreed that Canberra’s lack of anti-consorting laws had made Canberra a haven for bikies. On the ABC on 6 March she said:

I believe that’s a factor in the decision to come here and undertake their activities.

Unfortunately, the Chief Police Officer is also on the record as saying that, while she would like to see anti-consorting laws in the ACT, it is now “off the table”. I and the Canberra Liberals team are here to put it back on the table. We have what we believe to be the best anti-gang legislation in the country to do it.

The legislation I am tabling today has gone through a long, thorough and detailed development process. An exposure draft was developed and placed on the legislation register on 31 July this year. The formal consultation period extended until the end of September, and we continued to receive submissions and have discussions until 27 October.

Feedback and submissions were received from many groups and stakeholders, including the Bar Association, the ACT Law Society, the Human Rights Commissioner, the Victims of Crime Commissioner, the Public Advocate and Children and Young People Commissioner, the Discrimination, Health Services and Disability and Community Services Commissioner, from the Canberra Liberals’ have your say website, on which we got a lot of responses, and also from conversations with victims who I have met and who are the victims of these horrific crimes in our suburbs. The bill as presented to the Assembly includes amendments made as a result of those consultations, particularly addressing human rights compatibility issues.

The bill seeks to introduce a criminal organisation control regime, adapted for use in the ACT, to prevent, disrupt and deter the operations of organised criminal organisations. Although the organisations that are most active at the time of tabling include those self-identified as outlaw motorcycle gangs, the legislation is aimed at any organised criminal organisation. As Mr Gentleman, the police minister, would know, this is not about motorbikes; this is about criminal organisations.

The exposure draft was modelled on the existing New South Wales legislation, as one of the key policy objectives is to remove the effect that the territory is seen as, and has become, a “safe haven” for organised criminal gangs within New South Wales.

Consultation with stakeholders, feedback from the operation of the legislation in other jurisdictions—in particular New South Wales—and consultation with the Human Rights Commission have led to numerous amendments which create a unique approach which will achieve the legitimate policy objective but do so in a way that is reasonable, necessary and proportionate.

I will briefly go through the key operational aspects of this bill. First, and very importantly, only the Chief Police Officer may apply for these laws to be used, and only the Supreme Court can rule on the Chief Police Officer's application. They can only be used when the court is satisfied that a person is a known member or associate of an organised gang, and the order will prevent or disrupt criminal activity.

If invoked, the laws are applied using the following process. Firstly, the Chief Police Officer applies to the Supreme Court for an organisation to be declared a criminal organisation. This has to be done with full court processes, including notification and rights to response and representation. Secondly, after considering the evidence and balancing factors, the Supreme Court will decide whether to support the application for an organisation to be declared a criminal organisation. If it does, the Chief Police Officer then identifies particular individuals within that organisation. Again, only the Chief Police Officer may apply and only the Supreme Court can consider the matter. There are rights to appeal by the people concerned, and only once all the evidence is collected and assessed by the court will a declaration be made.

Once specific members are declared, a control order may be issued, either interim or final, that specifies what activities are to be controlled, considering all the circumstances of the particular case. Only once all of these steps are satisfied, certain people within an organisation would be unable to contact or have dealings with other named members of that group.

The regime is balanced by a number of exceptions and defences, which have been carefully worked through, but they will no longer be able to meet or take part in any of the activities of the declared organisation. That is how we prevent and disrupt, rather than the approach we have seen from the government, which is simply to respond. Maximum penalties for convictions under these laws range from two years for first offences up to five years for repeat offences. That is consistent with what happens in New South Wales.

In submissions it was put that “by their nature, anti-consorting or control order regimes will limit various rights contained in the Human Rights Act”. There are a couple of points I would like to make in regard to human rights. First, the Human Rights Act and prior parliamentary decisions clearly show that there can be limitations where that limitation is reasonable, necessary and proportionate to the objective being sought. Any right has its limits; read the act and you will see that.

A joint submission from the Human Rights Commissioner and the Victims of Crime Commissioner, the Public Advocate and Children and Young People Commissioner and the Discrimination, Health Services and Disability and Community Services Commissioner on this bill stated:

... the Commission considers that preventing, disrupting and responding to serious and organised crime, including outlaw motorcycle gang (OMCG) activity, in order to protect public safety is clearly a legitimate objective.

This was from the Human Rights Commission, who said that it is “clearly a legitimate objective”. They went on to say:

In the context of this bill, we support its basic underlying principle that there is no right to associate for the purpose of criminal activities.

It is very clear that the Human Rights Commission believes that there is no underlying principle that there is a right to associate for the purpose of criminal activities. Legislation designed specifically to disrupt and prevent organised crime shows a clear, logical connection to the objective stated.

This legislation is targeted solely at identified members of identified groups, determined by the CPO and a Supreme Court judge, and only when they are satisfied that the making of a control order will be for the purpose of disrupting and preventing criminal activity. This is a measured, targeted approach to a clear, specific objective.

Opponents of this bill, including the Attorney-General, have raised effectiveness in other jurisdictions. In particular, an Ombudsman’s report into the operation of the New South Wales legislation has been cited. Let me address that. There are significant differences between the legislation proposed for the ACT and how other anti-consorting schemes operate in their home jurisdictions.

The Ombudsman’s report notes specifically that New South Wales Police prefer to use less cumbersome but more intrusive mechanisms available in that jurisdiction. Those mechanisms include a broad anti-consorting power—which we are not calling for—that allows police to issue directives without judicial oversight. This mechanism has received its own criticism for being too harshly applied, with reports of warnings being issued more than 8,500 times, often to groups with no direct links to organised crime.

We are not recommending this broad approach. That is not what we are doing here today. We are recommending a targeted approach which also addresses some of the other issues in the report. Therefore, in the environment that the ACT currently faces, and that we continue to face, this legislation is our only option.

This situation is acknowledged in the Human Rights Commission’s submission. I will quote from it again:

The Commission acknowledges that, in the absence of comparable alternative powers in the ACT, such as anti-consorting laws, it may be that the control order scheme would be more readily used.

This is the point. Because there is a broad-based scheme in New South Wales, which we do not have here and we are not calling for, that has been used 8,500 times; so the control orders they have in New South Wales have not been used. However, with the

introduction of them here today in the ACT, they would be used. They are the orders that we need.

Consultation with governments in other states indicates that, notwithstanding the issues that have been raised, no jurisdiction is entertaining the notion of repealing their legislation. So the situation of the safe haven in the ACT will remain. Without a legislative response, the ACT will be isolated as the only jurisdiction in our area without legislative protection, and the criminal activity will continue, based on advice from our Chief Police Officer.

This process shows that we have done everything possible to make this legislation human rights compliant. A very detailed submission was made by the Human Rights Commission outlining where the legislation could be improved to make the proposal human rights compliant, and every single one of the Human Rights Commission's recommendations was incorporated into this bill: every single recommendation. And may I say that it is a much improved bill as a result. I thank them very much for their input. Let me be clear, though: that said, I am less concerned with the rights of violent criminals than I am with the safety of innocent bystanders in our suburbs who will be killed or severely injured if we do not act.

In conclusion, the time for debate on the need for this legislation is long past. I have been through the arguments and opposition to this bill. I have shown that, through working with the Human Rights Commission and others, we can develop strong legislation that answers every recommendation of the Human Rights Commission.

I have shown that there is a very real and very present danger to our community right here and right now, and we are all aware of it. I have shown that you cannot hide behind reports on different laws in different jurisdictions which utterly fail to address the problems of laws in our territory.

If we fail to pass this bill, we will be failing the people of the ACT. If we fail, these events will become more and more violent. If we fail, there will be more shots ringing out in our suburbs, more firebombings and more terror. If we fail, the next headline will not be "War zone", it may be "Killing zone", if we fail in our most fundamental responsibility: to keep our people safe.

That is at the very core of this debate, Madam Speaker. Do you protect the rights of criminals or protect the innocent people of our suburbs? I and the Canberra Liberals will always protect the rights of women, children and innocent bystanders. It seems that the Labor Party and, as I understand it, the Greens, are more concerned with protecting the rights of violent criminals. I genuinely hope that the Labor Party and the Greens can see past whatever ideological issue they have with this bill, have a careful look at what we have tabled, engage with us, discuss these issues with the Human Rights Commission and see what they have to say about it, and join with me and the Canberra Liberals in standing up to these thugs and protecting the people of the ACT. I commend this bill to the Assembly.

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

Government Procurement (Financial Integrity) Amendment Bill 2017

Debate resumed from 20 September 2017, on motion by **Mr Coe**:

That this bill be agreed to in principle.

MR BARR (Kurrajong—Chief Minister, Treasurer, Minister for Economic Development and Minister for Tourism and Major Events) (10.36): The government will not be supporting Mr Coe's bill as it stands because it commits an unknown, but potentially significant, amount of money and resources to implement stringent requirements, whilst it remains unclear what issue the bill is actually attempting to resolve. The government's priority in determining the allocation of finite funds is always to prioritise funding of front-line services across health, education, transport, and municipal and community services.

The opposition leader's bill is unachievable in the proposed time frames and the opposition is simply silent on how it would be resourced. In a number of areas, significant resourcing increases and IT system changes would be needed, which would remove funding from a range of essential services.

Broadening the definition of a notifiable invoice to include property and reimbursements is a reasonable step to take, as it brings the scope better into line with Government Procurement Act definitions. Unlike other proposed amendments in the opposition's bill, this will not significantly add to the workload, time expended, and cost for government agencies that are better placed delivering services for the community.

The government will support the inclusion of reimbursements. These are already included on the notifiable invoices register where the relevant threshold is met as part of the overall invoice, which may include other costs incurred, for example, for services received.

The threshold for notifiable invoices is set at \$25,000 to coincide with other procurement thresholds: the value below which territory entities may seek a single oral quotation in making their purchases and the threshold for notification of contracts. Reducing the notifiable invoice threshold below \$25,000 would capture many invoices for which a single quote purchase was made and for which there may be no written contract.

Single quote purchases are more likely to be from small and medium enterprises and local businesses. These businesses are likely to be more concerned around a potential increase in cost and workload of reporting their transactions than would, say, a large corporation. Lowering the threshold below the current \$25,000 would require a major education exercise for hundreds, if not thousands, of current suppliers, costing them money and causing them disruption, as well as making potentially costly changes to the government's procurement systems and processes.

Currently, the territory publishes information on around 12,000 invoice payments a year. During the 2016-17 financial year, invoices were processed for a further 11,000 payments valued between \$12,500 and \$24,999. This means that in simple terms lowering the threshold would double the amount of invoices processed, double the amount of resources needed, and it would require significant reworking of government and private sector capabilities, potentially hitting small businesses in the territory the hardest.

The government supports in principle the closer linking of an invoice to a contract number and name or title, but this would require either significant additional resourcing or significant changes to the territory's invoice capture and processing systems. Automating the linking of invoices to contracts would be complex but could ultimately be feasible, although at an unknown cost and over a significant time frame.

It would also be potentially inconvenient and expensive for many suppliers, with new requirements leading to a change in systems to generate invoices with specific contract reference details. This would, again, likely potentially disadvantage small businesses.

Despite all of the challenges associated with this requirement, the government will undertake to assess the feasibility of improving systems and processes needed to implement this change and will report back to the Assembly on the outcomes of the assessment. I have given notice this morning that I will move an executive motion tomorrow committing to this assessment.

Act of grace payments are currently reported through directorates' annual financial statements and the Treasury-compiled consolidated annual financial statements. This bill seeks to establish an electronic register with reports of payments to be notified within 21 days of the end of the quarter in which the payment was made. Current reporting arrangements do not disclose the identity of the recipient unless they agree to the disclosure.

There are significant privacy concerns for individuals potentially affected through the increased amount of information this bill proposes to be published, particularly given that the authorisation and payment date will be closer to the publication date in many cases. The government has been advised that this bill presents a significant risk in publicly exposing the recipients' identities without their consent and therefore could impact on a person's right to privacy under the Human Rights Act 2004.

Any inferred public benefit afforded by the new provisions of this bill would be at the cost of an individual recipient's right to privacy, which is not something the government is willing to jeopardise to satisfy others' curiosity.

Madam Speaker, the government is committed to transparency and accountability, but we are not going to strip front-line services or the right to privacy of Canberrans to achieve it. We will also not be looking to impose onerous new requirements on businesses contracting with government when the problem that we are seeking to solve is unclear and the benefits of the proposed change so uncertain. In the detail

stage of the bill I will be moving a range of amendments. Those amendments have been circulated and I will speak to them in the detail stage.

In conclusion, the government will not be supporting the bill without the successful passage of our amendments. I encourage consideration of those amendments in the detail stage.

MS LE COUTEUR (Murrumbidgee) (10.43): I rise to outline the Greens' position on Mr Coe's government procurement bill. I start by acknowledging and supporting Mr Coe's focus on integrity. This is certainly something that needs to be at the heart of everything that we do in this place. It is something, of course, that the Greens have spoken about and acted upon for years.

As an aside, it was very good to see that the Liberal, ALP and Greens members of the integrity commission select committee got together with a unanimous position yesterday. The commission is something that the Greens have pushed for for years and we are very pleased that Liberal and Labor have come on board on this. I trust that it will make a very positive impact on integrity in the ACT.

Turning to Mr Coe's bill before us today, it has four elements. I will go through them one by one. Firstly, I will deal with the notifiable invoices. The bill seeks to broaden the notifiable invoices register to include acquisitions of property and reimbursements. This seems to be a good idea from Mr Coe and the Greens support it. We think that it is possible that reimbursements are often already covered in invoices, but there is no harm in clarifying that situation. We totally agree that acquisition of property is also something that makes sense and should be included.

The second element I wish to talk about is the creation of an act of grace payments register. The Greens support in principle the concept that act of grace payments should be transparent and reported on. However, as we flagged when Mr Coe tabled this bill, we also believe that privacy should be maintained for people who receive an act of grace compensation payment from the government. These people are usually already in a situation of considerable stress or they would not be getting such a payment.

We have spent a considerable amount of time working out how to balance these two objectives. The problem is that in many years there are not very many act of grace payments. They would be in the single digit numbers. The full detail that is proposed by Mr Coe is clearly unacceptable. Disclosing the date, the grounds, the amount and the directorate relating to each payment would make it very easy for high profile cases—potentially cases of any profile—to be identified.

We also looked at other options. One we explored was the quarterly reporting of the number of act of grace payments and total amount paid by directorate. However, most directorates in most quarters would have either none or one. Again, this is just not acceptable from a privacy perspective.

In the end, we have not been able to find a reporting option that is more transparent than what is already done but still meets the privacy test. Unfortunately, on that basis

the Greens will not be able to support this element of Mr Coe's bill and we have not been able to put forward an amendment for a workable alternative.

I turn to elements 3 and 4, the notifiable invoices threshold and the link to contracts. I will discuss these third and fourth elements of Mr Coe's bill together, because they raise similar issues. They are, firstly, lowering the threshold for including the invoices on the notifiable invoices register from \$25,000 to \$12,500 and, secondly, publishing the contract number and name of invoices on the notifiable invoices register.

Both of these proposals seem like a good idea in principle and the Greens obviously support Mr Coe's policy intent behind them. The problems come from the issues that the Chief Minister and Treasurer has talked about. It appears that, given the way the ACT government has structured its payment systems, and potentially its IT systems supporting them, it is not as easy as it should be.

I understand that the ACT government uses Oracle financials. I am well aware of what they are capable of doing. That database is capable of reporting on almost anything. I speak now of experience in my previous life as an IT manager. I certainly strongly support the motion that Mr Barr has foreshadowed to actually investigate this, because I think a decent investigation will find that this is definitely something that could well be done.

Mr Coe: Then vote for it, Caroline.

MS LE COUTEUR: The reason we will not be voting for it right now is because we are not sure how long it is going to take and how much money would be involved. That is what Mr Barr's motion tomorrow is all about. Lowering the threshold for reporting invoices means catching procurement that is at a lower procurement threshold under the Government Procurement Act. In respect of procurement under \$25,000, a large number of procurements currently do not involve raising invoices, as Mr Barr again said.

I understand that quite a lot of them are paid by credit card. This means one of the following: a misleading notifiable invoices register that excludes transactions not done by invoice; substantial manual processing with high staff cost and risk of error; or major systems changes within the government's financial systems, or potentially major systems changes, I should say.

Adding the contract name and number to invoices on the notifiable invoices register apparently has similar practical difficulties. Apparently, the contract numbers and the invoices are stored in different financial systems, and the government is not able to fix this quickly, as Mr Coe's bill would require.

As I said earlier, I really was surprised about this because payment of each invoice needs to be approved by a delegate. How does the delegate do this if they do not check that it is in accordance with a contract? Apparently, this is actually done manually. I have been told by someone with ACT government experience that they often print the invoice, paperclip it to the contract, put a little flag on the contract

pointing out which payment the invoice is for, and put this in the delegate's in-tray. This is very quaint and 1980s.

It is also risky from a financial control point of view. A good delegate will, of course, do the job diligently and check the invoice against the contract to make sure that everything is in order. The risk is that some delegates get too sloppy, busy or trusting of their staff. The result is potentially a wide open door for fraud. So, as I said before, we totally support the intent of Mr Coe's legislation here. This is why we will be supporting Mr Barr's motion tomorrow, because we need to work out how we can actually solve these problems. In respect of that one in particular, I suspect that in the long run it would be cheaper for the government to fix this particular systems issue.

I agree with Mr Barr's comments that there will be IT costs, there will be staff training and potentially communicating a series of changes to the businesses that supply the ACT government. As Mr Barr said, we need always to appreciate that there is a trade-off between spending money on frontline services and spending money on fixing the government's internal service systems.

But I do not think we should just say that it is too hard to link the invoices to contracts. It is not just a transparency issue. It is also a financial control issue. I really believe that if the government—not if, but when, because Mr Barr's motion will require them to—looks at this, they will work out that there are potential savings in staff time by getting rid of the manual processes.

The Greens therefore will reluctantly be supporting the Chief Minister's proposal that these elements are removed from the bill. But much more positively, we will be supporting the government's commitment to the Assembly that it will investigate the systems changes needed and report back to the Assembly in the middle of next year.

I also agree with the Chief Minister's decision to focus on the linking of invoices to contracts because of the broader issues this raises. I do believe that these changes are entirely doable and I do seriously thank Mr Coe for bringing this bill to the Assembly.

While unfortunately at this point in time it looks like only one of the four elements is going to be implemented, I think it is very useful that his bill has highlighted an important financial control issue. I am hopeful that in the not too far distant future the linking of contracts with invoices will be done and that Mr Barr's motion tomorrow will ensure that that is put in train.

MR COE (Yerrabi—Leader of the Opposition) (10.52), in reply: Well, we have heard it all; and we have also heard very little. We have heard every excuse in the book as to why this government should not make public more of their expenditure. What is more, from Ms Le Couteur we heard, "I believe these changes are entirely doable," but she is still not going to vote for it. For some reason, Ms Le Couteur, the IT whiz from a previous life, seems to think that it is impossible to change a query from \$25,000 to \$12,500. If Ms Le Couteur seriously believes it is impossible to change that query, then she should vote against amendment No 4. Amendment No 4 is very simple—it omits \$12,500 and substitutes the "prescribed amount". This is even worse than what it was before. Before it was \$25,000. Now they are proposing to scrap the \$25,000

and just trust the Chief Minister and Treasurer that he is going to put in the right figure.

How can Ms Le Couteur possibly support the elimination of \$25,000? How can she possibly not support a \$12,500 threshold? It is about changing one number in one query. That is all it takes, Ms Le Couteur. It is the same financial system for payments below \$25,000 as it is for payments above \$25,000. So it is not good enough for Ms Le Couteur to come into this place and say it cannot be done. It can be done, and it should be done.

What is more, the situation is going to be even worse as a result of what Mr Barr is proposing. He is moving to abolish the \$25,000 figure and putting in a “prescribed amount”. That is outrageous. A query can be changed to \$12,500 in one movement; that is all it takes. All that is happening at the moment is that every month they are running a query for all payments greater than \$25,000, exporting to a CSV and uploading it to data.act.gov.au. Exactly the same process is involved except it would involve a \$12,500 query rather than a \$25,000 query. That is all it takes.

I am willing to accept that perhaps they do not have the systems to synch the contracts with the payments. Quite frankly, I think that is why you have legislation like this—to make them do it—but I at least comprehend the argument there. However, I do not comprehend the argument that changing a query to \$12,500 is impossible. It is possible and, in fact, as Ms Le Couteur said, she believes they are entirely doable. It is doable, and it will be a disgrace if Ms Le Couteur does not backtrack on this right away. When it comes to amendment No 4 Ms Le Couteur must support this because otherwise she will be supporting the abolition of the \$25,000 threshold. We need to go further than that; we need to make it \$12,500. We need to have the guts to change that query and make that two-second change in that export, because that is all it takes.

As for the others, I am not surprised. We did not come into the chamber today with high hopes. We do not have high hopes for the consorting laws. We do not have high hopes for the dangerous dogs, and we certainly do not have high hopes when it comes to transparency legislation, because the Labor Party and Greens have form. They are running a protection racket for themselves. It is not good enough. I call on the individual members of the Labor Party and the Greens to reflect on this legislation. I imagine the vast majority of them have not even opened it up. I imagine the vast majority of them got the legislation and put it in the bin as soon as they got it and they are just trusting that the Treasurer is going to give them advice on whether to say yes or no at the right time. Well, that is not good enough when we are talking about transparency and integrity. It is that very apathy, that very complacency, that has led to all the problems in the LDA and throughout the ACT government with regard to cultural malaise.

It is a disgrace that Labor and the Greens are colluding to not only get rid of a \$25,000 threshold but, in effect, give the government far more scope to hide payments than ever before. This is outrageous, and I very much hope that Ms Le Couteur and the Labor Party reflect on this before we vote on the individual amendments.

Question resolved in the affirmative.

Bill agreed to in principle.

Detail stage

Clause 1 agreed to.

Clause 2.

MR BARR (Kurrajong—Chief Minister, Treasurer, Minister for Economic Development and Minister for Tourism and Major Events) (10.59): I move amendment No 2 circulated in my name and table a supplementary explanatory statement to the amendments [*see schedule 1 at page 4869*]. This is a relatively straightforward amendment that changes the commencement date from 1 January to 1 July to align with relevant financial reporting periods.

MR COE (Yerrabi—Leader of the Opposition) (10.59): So despite the fact that they are watering down this legislation to do absolutely nothing, they need six months to do it. It seems a bit odd that they cannot manage to do nothing by 1 January.

Amendment agreed to.

Clause 2, as amended, agreed to.

Clause 3.

MR BARR (Kurrajong—Chief Minister, Treasurer, Minister for Economic Development and Minister for Tourism and Major Events) (11.00): I move amendment No 3 circulated in my name [*see schedule 1 at page 4869*]. This is, again, a very simple amendment that omits the note which referenced the additional legislation to be amended.

Amendment agreed to.

Clause 3, as amended, agreed to.

Clause 4.

MR BARR (Kurrajong—Chief Minister, Treasurer, Minister for Economic Development and Minister for Tourism and Major Events) (11.01): I move amendment No 4 circulated in my name [*see schedule 1 at page 4869*]. This omits the specified dollar amount of \$12,500 to keep the setting of the value of a notifiable invoice to be the prescribed amount which, contrary to the accusations from Mr Coe, is currently set by the Government Procurement Regulation 2007—so it has been in place for a decade—at \$25,000, in line with other procurement thresholds. It is set by regulation; this is not removing the current \$25,000 limit. The suggestion from Mr Coe in his contribution at the close of the in-principle stage is not correct. It is currently set by the Government Procurement Regulation 2007. It has been in place for a decade in accordance with that procurement regulation, in line with other

procurement thresholds. It is not removing the \$25,000 threshold, as was implied by Mr Coe in his contribution.

Mr Coe has been actively misleading this place in those comments. The threshold of \$25,000 remains in place by the Government Procurement Regulation 2007. That is the fact of the matter. He can have alternative views, but he cannot have alternative facts. That is what he has been doing in this debate, and it is consistent with a pattern of behaviour by the opposition leader to make up his own facts. We will debate that more tomorrow but, in this instance, it is a straightforward amendment, and I commend it to the Assembly.

MR COE (Yerrabi—Leader of the Opposition) (11.03): The Chief Minister alleges that I have misled the chamber. That is, of course, a serious charge in this place. However, he is wrong because amendment No 4 clearly omits the amount and puts in a prescribed amount. As I said, this will give the government the ability to choose the figure. So we will be removing the \$25,000 from this legislation. It will not be in this legislation; it will then go to regulation, and the government controls the regulation. The Assembly controls the legislation, but the government controls the regulation. To that end I am absolutely right: the government is going to remove a figure and put in a prescribed amount; in effect, a reference to another document.

As I have already said, we should be leaving a figure in there and we should be changing that figure to \$12,500. It is a simple query that is involved and I would very much welcome Ms Le Couteur's contribution to this amendment to justify why she thinks that query cannot be done.

Question put:

That amendment No 4 be agreed to.

The Assembly voted—

Ayes 11

Noes 8

Mr Barr	Ms Le Couteur	Mr Coe	Mr Milligan
Ms Burch	Mr Pettersson	Mr Hanson	Mr Parton
Ms Cheyne	Mr Ramsay	Mrs Jones	
Ms Cody	Mr Rattenbury	Mrs Kikkert	
Ms Fitzharris	Ms Stephen-Smith	Ms Lawder	
Mr Gentleman		Ms Lee	

Question resolved in the affirmative.

Amendment agreed to.

Clause 4, as amended, agreed to.

Clause 5.

MR BARR (Kurrajong—Chief Minister, Treasurer, Minister for Economic Development and Minister for Tourism and Major Events) (11.09): The government will be opposing this clause for the reasons I outlined earlier around resourcing. But I flag the executive member's motion that I have on the notice paper that will address further work in this area over the next seven months.

Clause 5 negatived.

Schedule 1.

MR BARR (Kurrajong—Chief Minister, Treasurer, Minister for Economic Development and Minister for Tourism and Major Events) (11.10): I move amendment No 6 circulated in my name [*see schedule 1 at page 4869*]. This is, again, a straightforward amendment that omits all amendments to other legislation which related to the establishment of the act of grace payments register because of, as I outlined earlier in the debate, the significant privacy risks this would present.

Amendment agreed to.

Schedule 1, as amended, agreed to.

Title.

MR BARR (Kurrajong—Chief Minister, Treasurer, Minister for Economic Development and Minister for Tourism and Major Events) (11.10): I move amendment No 1 circulated in my name [*see schedule 1 at page 4869*]. This is an administrative amendment to omit from the title the words "and for other purposes" as amendment 6 has removed schedule 1, being the other purposes to which the title referred.

Amendment agreed to.

Title, as amended, agreed to.

Bill, as amended, agreed to.

Voluntary assisted dying

MS CHEYNE (Ginninderra) (11.11): I move:

That this Assembly:

(1) notes:

- (a) the fundamental requirement for dignified palliative care as part of the health care system, to ensure palliative patients have the opportunity to spend as much +quality time as possible with their loved ones;

- (b) the significant government and community support for palliative care in the Australian Capital Territory, and the dedicated doctors, nurses and support staff who care for palliative patients in our healthcare system; and
- (c) that while palliative care is the most appropriate and effective strategy in the majority of cases, in some cases palliative care is not enough to relieve extreme suffering;

(2) further notes:

- (a) the Australian community is interested in debating voluntary assisted dying, as demonstrated by a number of national surveys which consistently indicate strong support for voluntary assisted dying in circumstances where someone is terminally ill and is experiencing unbearable suffering, including:
 - (i) a 2017 Essential Media Communications survey, with 73 percent of respondents supporting assisted dying in those circumstances;
 - (ii) a 2015 Ipsos Mori survey, with 73 percent of respondents in support;
 - (iii) 2007, 2009 and 2012 Newspoll surveys, with an average of 82.5 percent of respondents in support; and
 - (iv) a 2012 Australia Institute survey, with 71 percent of respondents in support; and
- (b) parliamentary activity in nearly every State of Australia to research, discuss and debate the topics of voluntary assisted dying and voluntary euthanasia, in particular:
 - (i) the passing of the Voluntary Assisted Dying Bill in the Victorian Legislative Assembly on 20 October 2017, which is due to be debated in the Victorian Legislative Council this week;
 - (ii) the introduction of a Voluntary Assisted Dying Bill in the New South Wales Legislative Council in September 2017;
 - (iii) the announcement in August 2017 of a parliamentary inquiry into voluntary assisted dying in Western Australia; and
 - (iv) the introduction of Voluntary Assisted Dying Bills in South Australia and Tasmania in the last year, which were not supported at that time;

(3) acknowledges:

- (a) voluntary assisted dying and voluntary euthanasia involve complex health and legal issues which raise moral and ethical questions and, as such, should be open to debate by the community's elected representatives;
- (b) for the last 20 years, the Legislative Assembly has been precluded from legislating to allow any form of voluntary assisted dying or voluntary

euthanasia due to the Commonwealth Euthanasia Laws Act 1997, brought forward as a Private Member's bill and commonly referred to as the Kevin Andrews Bill; and

- (c) that the Canberra community and Assembly have grown and matured since 1997, with significant population growth, a stronger jurisdictional identity, and a higher expectation that elected, local representatives will be able to debate and decide upon key health and legal issues; and
- (4) calls on the ACT Government and each Member of the Legislative Assembly:
 - (a) to raise with Federal political colleagues and counterparts, as appropriate, the increasingly paternalistic and unreasonable curtailment of ACT Legislative Assembly legislative powers, and how poorly this reflects on the Commonwealth Parliament's understanding of the ACT's capacity to govern itself;
 - (b) to convey to the Commonwealth Government and Opposition, at every available and appropriate forum, the need to repeal the Euthanasia Laws Act 1997 and restore to the Territories the right to make laws in respect of voluntary euthanasia and voluntary assisted dying; and
 - (c) to consider as soon as practicable, upon the passage of a scheme in any Australian State to allow voluntary assisted dying, whether and how the ACT community can have input on a possible model for such a scheme in the ACT.

Twenty years ago the federal parliament introduced and passed paternalistic legislation. It passed legislation which reduced us as a jurisdiction. It passed legislation which rendered and renders the ACT and its residents second-class. By restricting the ACT's ability to consider, and potentially make, its own laws on voluntary assisted dying, the Euthanasia Laws Act 1997 patronises us and hamstring us.

The act's continued operation is disrespectful to the ACT and its citizens, and to the institution of this Assembly, made up of people our ACT citizens have elected to represent them. It is 20 years since the Euthanasia Laws Act came into force and it is 20 years too long.

Now, in 2017, the need for it to be abolished has never been greater. Victoria, New South Wales, Tasmania, South Australia, Western Australia: what do they all have in common? They are all actively researching, discussing and debating voluntary assisted dying. And what else do they have in common? They are states. They have the rights to make their own legislation.

In the context of all this, time and time again polls are showing Australians overwhelmingly support voluntary assisted dying. But, thanks to that federal legislation, while debate is occurring on a national scale, while it is in the news every single day, while in some states legislation is even potentially going to pass, we in the ACT cannot genuinely participate.

Citizens of the ACT are rightly asking: why is the ACT not actively considering voluntary assisted dying legislation? Citizens of the ACT recognise that we are a mature jurisdiction with a mature Assembly. In this place we debate plenty of very serious legislation, including legislation regarding other human rights and choices. The fact that we cannot have a genuine debate in this Assembly about end of life choices is repugnant and reprehensible.

Canberrans should not stand for it. Canberrans must not stand for it. We, as Canberrans' elected representatives, need to be doing everything in our power to restore our rights as a territory. Today I am calling on every single member of this chamber to raise, with their federal colleagues and counterparts at every opportunity, the need to overturn this legislation, to not let it continue any longer.

While we might not be able to have a genuine legislative debate in this chamber any time soon, given we are a mature jurisdiction, I am calling on the Assembly to consider how the ACT community can otherwise begin to have input on the possibility of a model, and then the possible model, for a voluntary assisted dying scheme in the ACT when an Australian state passes legislation establishing a scheme.

I first need to make very clear that any discussion about voluntary assisted dying is not a debate about the merits of it versus palliative care. The notion of voluntary assisted dying does not come at the cost of support or progress in the field of palliative care. The ACT government and Canberra community provide significant support to palliative care. In 2015-16 the government committed \$2.4 million to palliative care for the next four years. Last year we committed to palliative care services for children and young adults.

Palliative care is an integral aspect of our health care system, and provides physical and spiritual comfort to those battling terminal illnesses. In no way is voluntary assisted dying an alternative to palliative care; they are separate elements of a comprehensive health care system.

What we know is that palliative care is appropriate and effective in managing one's end of life for the vast majority of people. But it is widely acknowledged that in about five per cent of cases palliative care is not enough. In five per cent of cases of terminally ill people, there are people who are continuing to suffer, and they are continuing to suffer unbearably. Palliative care in these cases does not relieve the pain. Their deaths are incredibly painful and traumatic.

The suffering is not limited to the person with the terminal illness; it also reaches their loved ones who watch them and are with them. In some cases, the pain is so unbearable that these people are taking drastic action. Again there are significant ripple effects for those left behind. It is for these people that the concept of voluntary assisted dying exists, providing them with a choice to relieve themselves of their suffering.

While there is significant support nationally for voluntary assisted dying—while there is essentially a national conversation occurring; while parliaments are debating

schemes with one house of a state parliament even passing it—the ACT is operating in an environment where our powers to legislate have been stripped from us.

As I mentioned, two decades ago the commonwealth parliament passed the Euthanasia Laws Act 1997 to incapacitate this Assembly when it comes to making laws on voluntary assisted dying or voluntary euthanasia. The person who brought the bill—Kevin Andrews—did not, and does not, live in the ACT. He has never been an elected representative of the ACT. But he and other federal parliamentary colleagues—the vast majority, again, not from here—decided that, when it comes to considering the morality and ethics of voluntary assisted dying in the ACT, the commonwealth knows best. We need to change that, because we can speak for ourselves.

Since 1996 we have seen voluntary assisted dying legalised in a number of jurisdictions, including Switzerland, Germany, Japan, Canada and eight states in the USA. Euthanasia has been legalised in the Netherlands, Belgium, Colombia and Luxembourg. The floodgates have not opened in these jurisdictions. In fact, experience has shown that many people who are approved for voluntary assisted dying decide not to go through with it. But they consistently report that they find great comfort in simply having the choice. That is what this is about: choice.

Meanwhile, in the past 20 years, the population of the ACT has grown from around 300,000 people to over 400,000 people. Our sense of identity has changed from one of a public service town, focussed on federal issues, to a thriving city in our own right. We have matured as a jurisdiction. I can appreciate that in 1997 we had not had self-government for very long; our Assembly had not even reached its teenage years. But in 2017 we have self-governed for almost 30 years.

With our maturation has come an increased expectation that this Legislative Assembly will lead in the interests of the territory and reflect the socially progressive priorities of our community. That is exactly what we work hard to do every single day. It is extremely disappointing that not one of us here is able to effectively represent the people who elected us on the issues of voluntary assisted dying. The federal parliament allowing this act to continue to operate is utterly disrespectful. It is in the face of these challenges that we must ensure that the commonwealth hears us when we say that we want our powers back. Its paternalism is not needed here. The people of the ACT deserve the right to debate whether to have the choice of voluntary assisted dying in our jurisdiction.

I have started a petition to restore the ACT's right to determine our own laws regarding voluntary assisted dying. I am pleased that some of my other colleagues have been running with the same petition. It has received hundreds of signatures. I am aware that my Greens colleagues also have a similar petition running. I throw my full support behind their efforts too. But more than that is needed. As elected representatives here in the ACT where we are restricted, we must do everything we can. With this motion I urge every member to raise the need to repeal the commonwealth's Euthanasia Laws Act with federal counterparts and colleagues wherever possible and appropriate.

It has been raised with me that this is hard. It will be hard for us to get the federal parliament's attention, especially in current times. But just because something is hard does not mean we should not do it. I am also calling on the Assembly to consider how the ACT community can begin to have input on the possibility of a model—and then the possible model—for a voluntary assisted dying scheme in the ACT when an Australian state passes legislation establishing a scheme.

While we remain restricted on debating the issue seriously here in this chamber, we can begin to consider whether a model would be sensible for the ACT and how it could work through other means. In our circumstances, it is eminently sensible to be considering a scheme when a workable model has been agreed elsewhere in Australia.

It has the further effect of underlining to the federal parliament just how serious we are about this—that we are treating our citizens seriously and taking their views seriously—so they should be too, by giving us back our ability to make our own laws.

The purpose of this motion is not to advocate for or against voluntary assisted dying. My personal views on the topic are well publicised, but irrelevant to today's discussion. However, I have outlined why voluntary assisted dying is of genuine interest to the community and to Canberrans, and why we have the maturity to have a genuine debate in the community, especially in this chamber.

The paternalistic approach of the commonwealth is unwarranted and it is unnecessary. Times have changed. We are not second-class citizens. We should not stand for it. We deserve the same rights as the states. The commonwealth needs to give our rights back. And every member in this place needs to do what they can to ensure that it happens soon, and that indeed it happens.

MR COE (Yerrabi—Leader of the Opposition) (11.23): Euthanasia is complex and personal. The Canberra Liberals do not have an official party policy on euthanasia. Instead it is treated as an issue of conscience. To the best of my understanding, it is treated in that way across the other divisions of the Liberal Party as well.

For years our society has fought to defend life. The principle of “first do no harm” is central to our society, and euthanasia potentially rewrites this. There are concerns that the euthanasia criteria have the potential to be continually expanded. A number of high profile cases over recent years have highlighted how legislation has been extended to cover those who do not necessarily have terminal illnesses.

I know that there are many in the disability rights community, including here in Canberra, that strongly oppose euthanasia laws. Many believe that there is an inevitable risk of slippage and that perverse outcomes may occur if life is devalued. People with disabilities can be vulnerable to coercion and are at greater risk of acquiring secondary illnesses due to a lack of access to screening and preventative health. Therefore, many people with disabilities have shorter lifespans and there can be blurry lines between an illness and a disability. I also think that there is a lack of suicide prevention work amongst people with a disability.

I know that there are mixed views in our community on this issue. I personally have real concerns. The Canberra Liberals have concerns with the process that is underway in this motion. On one hand, we are hearing that it is about self-determination but, on the other hand, it is actually about euthanasia. It is clear that what is being proposed through this proxy debate of self-determination is meant to be a step in the direction towards euthanasia. That is clear in what Ms Cheyne has said.

For me, whilst federal legislation and self-determination are relevant, the underlying question is whether our community wants us to bring euthanasia closer to being a reality. That is what changing the federal legislation would do. It would make it closer to becoming a reality. To talk about self-determination and the federal legislation is therefore really a proxy debate for the core issue of euthanasia. I imagine that the vast majority of people who sign the petitions doing the rounds will be doing so because they support euthanasia, not because of this overwhelming sentiment for greater autonomy here in the ACT. People will be signing those petitions because it will be a step in the direction of euthanasia.

I believe that the move towards euthanasia, and potentially even a discussion about euthanasia—but there is still a place for that—can undermine the suicide prevention message. I am by no means making an allegation that that is what is happening here, but we have to be very careful that we do nothing that will undermine the great work done in our community to try to avoid suicide. For years we have fought hard against suicide. Regardless of whether we are talking about mental illnesses or physical illnesses, our society must be geared towards life.

Of course, there can be improvements to the health system and there can be improvements to palliative care. However, personally I do not believe that euthanasia is the answer to these issues nor is it the only option for a more comfortable, a more tolerable, death.

I know it is a tough issue. I am the first to admit to that. But we have to make sure that we are talking about the real issues here and not having a proxy debate. Whilst there are mixed views in the Canberra community, the Canberra Liberals have real concerns with the course of action being proposed in this motion today.

MS FITZHARRIS (Yerrabi—Minister for Health, Minister for Transport and City Services and Minister for Higher Education, Training and Research) (11.29): I too would like to thank Ms Cheyne very much for moving this motion today. I know that this is an issue close to her heart and I would like to take the opportunity to thank her for her work in the community in raising awareness on this topic and, of course, the work done prior to Ms Cheyne's election by Mary Porter as well.

This motion follows on from the historic passage of an assisted dying bill through the Victorian lower house late last month, which I understand will be debated in the Victorian upper house later this week. The Victorian bill follows many other examples across Australia where parliaments have introduced legislation to advance this issue. It is important to point out the debates that other parliaments are having in

this space because assisted dying is a right that has been denied to the parliament and citizens of the ACT.

As a government and here in the Assembly we are denied the right to consider legislation on behalf of our citizens. Surely it should be a matter of principle that, irrespective of the contention that often surrounds this particular issue, as elected representatives of the ACT community we should have the capability to debate legislation on this important and recognisably difficult issue. Sadly, this is not the case.

We are constrained because people who do not live here voted to impose their will on the citizens of the ACT and stripped our parliament of its right to decide the matter. At the time of the passage of the so-called Andrews bill back in 1996 both of the ACT's elected members of the House of Representatives voted to oppose the legislation.

Indeed in the debate, the then member for Canberra, Annette Ellis, remarked:

I find it a little bit paternalistic or maternalistic, whichever way you tend to view it, that this House now believes it needs to somehow protect the ACT.

The then member for Fraser, Bob McMullan, also noted:

The bill itself takes important rights away from Australians in three categories, those who live in the Capital Territory, those who live in the Northern Territory and those who live on Norfolk Island.

And this is the nub of it. The Andrews bill stripped ACT citizens and their representatives of the fundamental right to address a question important to them. This is a right that must be restored.

This Assembly is now in its third decade of existence. We have, I believe, proven ourselves to be a mature legislature capable of tackling difficult and important issues affecting our territory. We have an obligation as members of this Assembly to assert the rights of this parliament and the people of the ACT to self-determination on many matters, including this important matter, which is why I will be supporting Ms Cheyne's motion today.

Alongside this advocacy to restore the rights of this place, I would like to turn to the specific area that Ms Cheyne's private member's motion refers to and say that the ACT government will continue to support and invest in palliative care services for the ACT. We will not do this as an alternative to assisted dying but as a fundamental part of our healthcare system to support patients to spend quality time with family and friends and be cared for according to their individual needs. We have a strong and proud history of supporting palliative care. In 2015 we provided an additional \$2.4 million to increase the support of home-based palliative care packages as well as invest in more staff and education.

I was also especially pleased that as part of that budget a new paediatric palliative care service, the first ever in Canberra, to specifically address the palliative needs of

children and adolescents was funded. We believe there is a clear need to design palliative care services for children, as their needs and their family's needs are very different from those of adults. We need those services to be close to children and their families during enormously difficult times. I am very pleased to say that this better integrated, coordinated approach is much easier to access and greatly assists families to access the multiple services they need. It is very positive that we have been able to fill this gap and improve the lives of families in what can only be described as the most challenging of circumstances.

In addition to improving palliative care services for children and their families, the ACT government has also previously supported Clare Holland House and the palliative care volunteer program, as well as providing funding for research into palliative care in aged care settings. ACT Health will also be developing a specialty services plan for palliative care as part of the ongoing, territory-wide health services framework.

I acknowledge, as all members do, that assisted dying is indeed an emotive and difficult issue and, for some, a divisive issue. It is deeply personal for everyone, and many of us have been directly affected by the pain and difficulty of losing a loved one over prolonged or difficult circumstances. I acknowledge the stories shared by other members of this parliament and other parliaments, particularly in recent weeks.

Our Assembly is capable of tackling complex issues and not shying away from them. This has been demonstrated time and again and we are at our best when we tackle these complex and important issues. These are important issues to people who have elected us.

People on different sides of this debate feel strongly and I am saddened and disappointed by the opposition leader's assertion that because this is a difficult issue our Assembly should not have the right, unlike residents in New South Wales, Victoria, Queensland, Western Australia, South Australia and Tasmania, to debate this issue; that our residents somehow are second-class residents; that somehow, because it is difficult, we cannot reach agreement in this chamber on making that loud and clear to our counterparts on both sides of the debate. I am sure that there are members of the Liberal and National parties who strongly feel, in representing their citizens, that they should have the right democratically through their democratically elected representatives to have this debate. It is surprising; it is disappointing.

We all acknowledge that this is a difficult issue. It is one that our community looks to us to lead on; it is one our community looks to us to weigh up, as we have seen in Victoria, a process that has enabled a considered, thoughtful and respectful debate within the community about dying. It is something that affects us all. I believe strongly it is something that this Assembly should support and send a strong, united message to the federal government that we are a mature Assembly. It is disappointing indeed to have the opposition play into the hands of those who think that the ACT Assembly is nothing more than a council that should be restricted in what it has the power to debate and to legislate for, that it would deny that opportunity to members of this Assembly to potentially have this debate through our now highly effective committee system.

I thank Ms Cheyne very much for pursuing this very important fundamental right for ACT citizens and I look forward, irrespective of the outcome of this motion today—which I believe will be passed, sadly without the support of the opposition—to continue this important discussion in our community about dying.

MS LE COUTEUR (Murrumbidgee) (11.37): The Greens of course are very pleased to support Ms Cheyne's motion today because we support the right of people in the ACT to debate and legislate for themselves on everything, including this very important issue of voluntary assisted dying. The ACT Greens believe that the people of the ACT, just like all other Australians, should have the right to make choices about their own life and the manner of their death. At the end of their life, our citizens should have the right to die with dignity how and when they choose.

As Ms Cheyne's motion notes, the issue of voluntary assisted dying has gained increasing national attention over recent months, with bills tabled in both the Victorian and New South Wales parliaments this year. A couple of weeks ago the ACT Greens welcomed the passage of the Victorian bill through the lower house and we anxiously await the upper house's final consideration of this historic piece of legislation.

Here in the ACT of course our situation is completely different, because we are currently subject to the Euthanasia Laws Act 1997, a federal law. The federal government added a section to the Australian Capital Territory (Self-Government) Act 1988, commonly known as the Andrews bill, to specifically prevent the ACT making laws which would prohibit voluntary assisted dying. The question that Ms Cheyne has so rightly brought to this place today is: why are we, the citizens of the ACT, subject to different rules and restrictions than people in Victoria and New South Wales?

Whether you support voluntary assisted dying or not, the ACT was granted self-government in 1988, it has a properly elected democratic government and the territory should have the right to debate and legislate on this issue. The Andrews bill means that Canberrans are prevented from determining our own laws and we are subject to undemocratic and discriminatory restrictions that are not imposed on Australians in state jurisdictions.

It is simply arrogance on the part of the federal government that they have refused to remove this restriction. The ACT government and the Assembly have made repeated calls on the federal government to repeal the limitations imposed by the Euthanasia Laws Act 1997 but these calls have fallen on deaf ears. In September 2014 this Assembly passed a motion brought by my colleague Mr Rattenbury which asked the Speaker to write to the Prime Minister and the federal Minister for Health to make this request and restore the right of the ACT to consider laws on this issue. The federal government's response noted:

The Australian government does not support legislating voluntary euthanasia and does not propose to remove the restrictions on the Legislative Assembly.

The response also noted that euthanasia is unlawful in Australia in all states and territories and that, while state parliaments have been presented with proposals to legislate voluntary euthanasia, none has as yet succeeded.

I am very hopeful—maybe more I am wondering; I would very much like to believe—that the federal government will consider changing its position if either proposal currently before the Victorian and New South Wales parliaments was to pass into law. I note that there is an excellent chance that this will happen in New South Wales in the very near future.

Ultimately though of course this is an issue about the democratic rights of the people of the ACT. Currently we are treated as second-class citizens. I would hope that regardless of members' individual views on voluntary assisted dying there is broad agreement across the chamber that it is time for the ACT to be able to decide this issue for itself without federal intervention or restriction.

Of course the Greens appreciate that issues of life and death are deeply personal, meaningful and inevitably touch us all. I recognise there are moral and practical issues to work through. The issues of balance—the balance between people's dignity and the sanctity of human life—and the extent and safeguards for vulnerable people are important considerations in this debate. But it is worth noting that several countries have developed schemes for voluntary euthanasia that are working effectively as well.

I also note Ms Cheyne's comments that support for voluntary euthanasia is in no way saying that palliative care is not a good thing. It is something that we should all be striving for, better palliative care. One of the reasons that I am a supporter of this is that my mother had the misfortune to spend 11 years in a nursing home and you would not wish that existence on anybody.

It seems that the process undertaken by the Victorian government to develop their legislation provides a model of how this issue can be considered in a serious and mature way. The Victorian government established an advocacy panel chaired by the former head of the AMA, Dr Brian Owler, and included experts with backgrounds in nursing, health administration, law, palliative care and disability services.

The panel undertook extensive consultation and encouraged constructive and informative community conversations based on the principles that every human life has equal value and that a person's autonomy should be respected. Ultimately the panel presented an extensive report which outlined proposed eligibility criteria, the process for accessing voluntary assisted dying and details of 68 oversight measures to ensure that respect for autonomy is balanced with safeguarding individuals and vulnerable communities.

Under the Victorian legislation a person must be 18 years of age or older, be ordinarily resident in Victoria, have decision-making capacity, be diagnosed with a terminal illness and be in the last weeks or months of life, with a prognosis of no longer than 12 months. Their illness must also be causing suffering that cannot be relieved in a manner that the person deems tolerable. I understand the expectation is

that fewer than a hundred people a year in Victoria will take advantage of this legislation. I would also point out to those people who feel that we do not need to do something about it if Victoria and New South Wales are that the proposed legislation in both states includes provisions that the person must be ordinarily resident in Victoria and New South Wales, as applicable.

While this legislation, if passed, will provide valuable information as to how this legislation could work in practice—and I am sure it will be of considerable help to people in those communities—it is not something that will be of any practicable help to the people of the ACT.

The Greens and I believe that people should have the right to relieve their suffering at the end of their lives. Voluntary assisted dying is about giving people choice and control when they are faced with circumstances where so much control is taken away from them. This is why we support the creation of a compassionate, safe and workable scheme for voluntary assisted dying in the ACT.

Of course, if this issue were to be considered in the ACT it would involve very extensive community consultation, input from experts and no doubt vigorous debate in the Assembly—all the parliamentary and community engagement mechanisms which are appropriate in contemplating such an important change. An extensive process, similar to that seen in Victoria, would be needed to ensure that all voices are heard and that people are able to consider all aspects of any proposed scheme.

As Ms Cheyne's motion notes, support for a compassionate, safe and workable scheme for voluntary assisted dying has been consistently shown to sit between 70 and 85 per cent of the Australian community. I was pleased to attend, along with Ms Cheyne, a recent forum by Dying with Dignity ACT and see firsthand the frustration that exists within our community that a decision on this important issue is just out of our hands.

Are we truly to believe that members of the ACT community are somehow less able to have this conversation and consider this issue than our counterparts in Victoria and New South Wales? We are a modern and robust society that can ensure any voluntary assisted dying scheme is managed with the utmost, serious compassion and respect and with strong safeguards. Many places around the world have developed mature, workable schemes for voluntary euthanasia and these would help guide the development of any such scheme in the ACT.

The ACT government administers health, education, prisons, courts, criminal laws—all the regular state functions—in addition to administering local issues. Our grant of power allows us to make laws for the peace, order and good government of ACT residents. The one thing that sticks out like a sore thumb, the one that has been arbitrarily inserted in the self-government act, is the Andrews act, an unprincipled and ad hoc anomaly which diminishes the ACT's autonomy as a jurisdiction. Where does this leave the ACT and in particular where does this leave people in the ACT who may be dying or suffering and who, with their family, are considering their available end-of-life choices?

While I appreciate the intention of the clause in Ms Cheyne's motion which calls for this issue to be raised with our federal counterparts at every available and appropriate forum, I am afraid I hold little hope that formal requests from the ACT government will receive any more positive response than we have received so far. Rather, I suspect that change will depend on an upsurge of people power aimed at the federal government. Citizens in the ACT—both those who support voluntary assisted dying and those who more generally want ACT citizens to be treated equally—need to tell their federal representatives to undo the discriminatory restriction on the ACT's law-making powers. There needs to be a chorus of ACT voices loud enough that the federal government cannot ignore it.

Like Ms Cheyne, the ACT Greens have petitions along these lines and I urge everybody to sign these. I also urge you all to talk to your friends who live in other jurisdictions, because clearly the ACT has only four federal representatives and if we are to have change we have to get people from other jurisdictions on board. Hopefully once New South Wales and Victoria have passed their own legislation, their federal lawmakers will feel emboldened to support it in the federal chamber.

I thank Ms Cheyne for bringing this motion to the Assembly. It is an issue of great concern to many Canberrans and I know it is of personal significance to Ms Cheyne and many other members of this place. And it is my hope that with the current debate, as I said, occurring in other states, the ACT will soon be given the freedom to debate this important issue.

MR BARR (Kurrajong—Chief Minister, Treasurer, Minister for Economic Development and Minister for Tourism and Major Events) (11.49): I rise in support of Ms Cheyne's motion today. I do so because this Assembly is able to make sensible and balanced decisions in the interests of our community. The restrictions that were placed on the territories in relation to voluntary assisted dying by the federal parliament 20 years ago in the Andrews bill are unfair, outdated and frankly insulting to our community and indeed to all who live in Australia's territories.

Our community has consistently demonstrated that it wants to have a genuine discussion about this extremely important issue, and in most other jurisdictions around this country that discussion is occurring now. We are seeing legislation in various state parliaments across the country, and it would be absurd to continue with restrictions for territories if any Australian state passes legislation.

So today I call on my federal counterparts to repeal the Andrews bill and to allow for genuine community discussion and an appropriate process to be undertaken to develop a scheme and to introduce legislation for this Assembly to debate. Subject to a proper process and appropriate safeguards being in place, I would personally support a scheme and associated legislation to allow voluntary assisted dying.

Having said that, I acknowledge that this is not an easy topic. It is a question of deep moral and ethical debate which is extremely sensitive and personal to many Canberrans. But it is a discussion and a debate that we must be able to have in this territory. I thank Ms Cheyne for bringing this important and longstanding issue to the

attention of the Assembly today and hope that after 20 years the federal parliament can respect our maturity as a jurisdiction and the right of this territory to make its own laws.

MR RAMSAY (Ginninderra—Attorney-General, Minister for Regulatory Services, Minister for the Arts and Community Events and Minister for Veterans and Seniors) (11.52): I too rise to support this motion. As a community, we make decisions about a range of important rights and protections in our community. We enact laws to prevent discrimination. We make decisions about criminal sentences and rights to a fair trial. We are elected as members to make these decisions on behalf of the people of Canberra.

As we are a self-governing territory, members of this community have the right to participate in this process democratically. They vote and they seek to have us as members hear and represent their views. The fact that a topic is controversial and may be interesting to national politicians should never be cause to abrogate the rights and responsibilities inherent in self-government. Yet unfortunately this is exactly what has happened when it comes to the debate on voluntary assisted dying.

The commonwealth Euthanasia Laws Act 1997, widely known as the Andrews bill after the then federal Liberal backbencher Kevin Andrews who introduced the legislation, explicitly provided that the Northern Territory and the ACT “have no power to make laws permitting or having the effect of permitting ... euthanasia ... or the assisting of a person to terminate his or her life.” When the Commonwealth legislated for the territories on this issue, it foreclosed any meaningful political discussion by the lawmakers and therefore the voters most affected by the change.

Calling on our federal colleagues and counterparts is something that we as representatives of Canberra have a responsibility to do, no matter what our views may be on the matter of voluntary assisted dying. Just that an issue provides a convenient platform for commonwealth legislators to make a statement, presumably aimed at their own electors outside the ACT, is never justification to take away the rights of Canberrans.

There are more examples than just voluntary assisted dying. I note that most recently the Canberra Liberals sought to take advantage of federal powers in the territory by going directly to two federal Liberal ministers in the hope of shutting down a pill-testing trial. The ACT government had undertaken a thorough examination of the evidence on how pill testing could help minimise the harm of illegal drugs.

The evidence, the consultation and the community support behind that initiative did not seem to be relevant to the Canberra Liberals. Not only did they choose to ignore the evidence but also, more importantly, they chose to reject democracy and instead look for an alternative authority that they could turn to. For authority is what this boils down to. Canberrans are being told that, when it comes to issues that might attract national interest, there is always the risk that a federal parliamentarian will seek to deny them access to the democratic process. In contrast, this government has a long track record of advocating for the democratic rights of Canberrans. We believe in and

respect the rights of Canberrans. We acknowledge their interest in issues across the full breadth of society. We do not believe that they should be shut out.

There have been a number of attempts in the commonwealth parliament to restore the ability of the ACT and the Northern Territory to have the debate around voluntary assisted dying. Two bills have been brought forward in the commonwealth parliament over the past decade to restore the ability of the territories to legislate on voluntary assisted dying.

Former Chief Minister Jon Stanhope publicly supported those efforts by writing to all members of the Australian parliament, calling on them to support the democratic rights of the territories. If the capacity of the territory to make such laws were restored, any future legislative proposal would give the members of the Legislative Assembly an opportunity to examine all of the available information and vote according to their responsibility to the people of the ACT.

In June 2014 the Australian Senate considered an exposure draft of a bill to legalise euthanasia at a federal level. Both the then Chief Minister, Katy Gallagher, and Minister Rattenbury made submissions in response to that bill calling for the repeal of the Andrews bill so that the ACT community could consider the issue of euthanasia. The former Chief Minister submitted to the committee that there was no basis for the commonwealth to remove the power to legislate about euthanasia from the ACT Legislative Assembly. That support for democracy has carried through strongly to this term of government. In the first sitting days of the Ninth Assembly, Minister Rattenbury called the Andrews bill “an undemocratic and out-of-date limitation.” I agree with that assessment. The existence of the restriction on territory rights represented by the federal Euthanasia Laws Act remains a degradation of our fundamental democratic process.

While the views of Ms Cheyne on the matter of voluntary assisted dying are well known and public, I do not believe that the members who take an alternative view on the matter have grounds to oppose this motion. The concerns and the concepts that the Leader of the Opposition raised about voluntary assisted dying are important matters to be heard, and they should be heard. They should be heard, they should be debated and they should be considered along with other and competing views here on the floor of the Assembly, the chamber of the people who are elected to represent and govern the ACT.

At the heart of this motion it is about respecting the people of Canberra and being willing to take our responsibility as elected members seriously. I believe that it would be a sad reflection if members here did not trust this Assembly on important decisions such as this.

Accordingly, I hope that all members will recognise that, as representatives of Canberrans, we should be strident and unified in protecting the rights of the people in this city to be represented on issues that they care about. I commend the motion to the Assembly.

MR PETTERSSON (Yerrabi) (11.58): Death is an uncomfortable topic. Often we would rather not talk about it all. However, across the country, across Canberra, many people die in deep distress, with debilitating pain and without dignity. Assisted suicide or euthanasia would give these Canberrans the ability to make their own choice about their death.

With legislation to legalise assisted dying passing in the Victorian lower house, it is clear that across Australia local communities are ready for a sensible discussion on the issue. However, here in the ACT our ability to legislate on this issue has been removed by the commonwealth, and this must change.

Watching a loved one die is one of the hardest things a person can do. I know that many members in this place have gone through this traumatic experience with their own loved ones. I myself have seen my loved ones suffer unnecessarily. Across our community, in homes, care facilities and hospitals, families are watching someone they love die a long, traumatic death. Whilst death is never any easy process, for some people this is especially extended and difficult.

With terminal illness, there are circumstances where pain relief is not adequate. They must live with constant pain. In some circumstances, palliative care cannot adequately support a dying person. This can be the case for patients dying of cancer or even dementia. In circumstances where death is imminent, the final weeks can cause extreme discomfort and distress.

For many people the loss of dignity is especially confronting. Patients who cannot feed, clothe or bathe themselves and must rely on others for every need often experience this distress. This often causes added stress and embarrassment for the patient and their family. The lack of mobility can be particularly challenging for patients.

The compassionate response to suffering is to do our best to alleviate it. Assisted dying allows those people who choose it the dignity of making their own choices. In our society we value self-determination. In our society we help those suffering.

We have examples from afar to look to as well: other jurisdictions that have legalised assisted dying, including the US states of Oregon and Washington, and even Canada. The success of these jurisdictions' programs indicates that euthanasia legislation can be practically implemented. When legalised it remains a choice undertaken only by the terminally ill who are suffering, despite the claims of some who are opposed.

In Oregon, only 0.39 per cent of deaths in 2015 were as a result of assisted suicide. In the same year in Washington only 0.32 per cent of deaths were from euthanasia. In Oregon since the legalisation of euthanasia the use of palliative care has actually increased. Far from drastically changing the palliative care system, assisted dying is an option for the few members of our community whose needs cannot be met by the palliative care system.

Supporting assisted suicide does not mean that you do not support palliative care. It means you support members of our community making their own decisions about the end of their life. That may mean support through palliative care until a natural death, or it may mean choosing to end one's own life if one is unable to prevent suffering. It is the right thing to do to allow people who are suffering and are terminally ill the ability to choose to end their own life on their terms. We should not continue to let members of our community suffer in the last stages of their life unnecessarily.

I am far from alone in my support for assisted suicide. Assisted dying has widespread support across the Australian community. In a survey the ABC ran last year through Vote Compass, which I am assuming some of you tried yourselves, a massive three out of four Australians surveyed supported assisted suicide for a person with a terminal illness who is in pain.

Numerous other polls have similar findings. A 2012 Newspoll has support at 85 per cent. Almost all polls have support at at least 70 per cent. This support remains high across all sections of the community. A recent survey of 500 New South Wales doctors, just across the border, found that 60 per cent of them favoured changing the law in support of assisted dying. Consistently these polls are showing overwhelming community support.

Since 1995 there have been 40 bills introduced to parliaments across Australia with the intent of legalising euthanasia. Currently a bill to legalise euthanasia has passed in the Victorian lower house, and a similar bill exists in New South Wales. For both bills there is cross-party support. Party politics has no place on this issue.

In light of the community support, and the current legislation being developed in other jurisdictions, it is time that the ACT hold its own debate on the issue. Frustratingly the right to determine our own laws has been taken from us. We remain second-class citizens in Australian democracy.

Since the passing of the Andrews bill in 1997 quashing the Northern Territory's bid to legalise euthanasia, Australian territories have been unable to legislate on this issue. As democratically elected representatives of the ACT community, we should be able to legislate on our community's behalf. It is ridiculous that we are prevented from presenting legislation that has such widespread support amongst our own constituents.

Since the Andrews bill was passed, Canberra has grown and, conveniently, so has our Assembly. There is a wealth of knowledge and legislative experience in this government and in this chamber. It is time that we be able to determine our own laws in line with community expectations. Canberrans should not be subject to the decisions of federal MPs who do not represent them and who they have no democratic recourse against.

Members of the Assembly, whether or not you personally agree with assisted suicide is ultimately a separate issue. As representatives of our community, members of this chamber should have the right to debate and legislate on this issue. We are elected by the people of the ACT and we should be able to act for them. The current situation is

undemocratic and the people of Canberra deserve better. We must call on the federal government to repeal the Andrews bill and allow territorians the right to legislate for ourselves.

For the terminally ill in our community, the right to end their life is a choice that they should be able to make. To allow this choice is the most compassionate thing we can do for these members of our community. The suffering of a prolonged death is an extremely traumatic experience for all involved. The broader Australian community overwhelmingly supports legislative change.

As other states debate this issue, it is time that the ACT be allowed to as well. Canberra should not be a second-class jurisdiction. We should be able to determine our own laws. It is our right. And it is the right of people in our community to be able to end their life with dignity.

MS CHEYNE (Ginninderra) (12.05): I thank most of the members for their contributions today and support today. Currently, as we have heard, federal legislation exists that is outdated, is paternalistic and reduces us as a jurisdiction. It is repugnant and reprehensible that it continues to operate and that the federal parliament could be so disrespectful to ACT and the Northern Territory citizens by allowing it to continue to operate in 2017. I am grateful that the majority of members here today agree with me and spoke so passionately.

I particularly thank Minister Ramsay for his comments and for drawing attention to the heart of the motion. A member's personal views on voluntary assisted dying should not preclude them from supporting this motion.

I do not thank the opposition leader for intentionally misrepresenting the motion as a front for trying to stir fear and to put forward his own conservative views. This motion is about restoring territory rights and having a mature debate about something that is of significance to so many people. I am appalled, and we should all be appalled, that the opposition leader would support the continued restriction on our powers in this place. By doing so, Mr Coe is disrespecting this institution, the elected members, including those of the party he leads, and the citizens of the ACT. By doing so, Mr Coe has effectively said he does not trust the citizens of the ACT to have a genuine debate about the possibility of a voluntary assisted dying scheme. His disrespect is shameful and it should be widely condemned.

Knowing the views of some of the members on the other side, and the respect that I thought many of them had for this institution and for ACT citizens—although I did hear Mrs Jones laughing before—it is unfathomable to me, or at least it was unfathomable to me, that they supported this position, the position that Mr Coe put forward, in their party room.

While they are not the subject of this motion, I need to address two things Mr Coe raised. Mr Coe spoke about the sanctity of life. What is more sacred in our lives than the final decision, the final moments, in our lives? Why should someone's final moments be full of pain and undignified? What a way to leave this world!

Mr Coe tried to use a straw man argument by bringing up suicide. I know I can confidently speak for all members in this place in saying that we take suicide prevention seriously. But, given his specific comments on it, I need to reiterate something that he clearly missed in my speech. There are people right across Australia who are terminally ill, who are already suffering unbearably, and their families are suffering by watching them and being with them. And “unbearably” means that in some cases for these people their pain is so great that they are taking their own lives. This is a tragedy. They are doing so often without their loved ones around them, to ensure that their loved ones are not incriminated.

Let me say this again. People who are already suffering unbearably are taking their own lives alone. They feel they have no other option. Some are secretly hoarding medication and sending their family members away, not telling them of their intentions. Consider that scenario for a moment. Consider the flow-on effects for their loved ones.

The heart of this motion is about restoring territory rights and the rights of Canberrans. But if Mr Coe wants to use this place to bring up morals, I suggest he listen to the stories of so many, including so many ACT citizens—so many stories that should not have happened and that should not have had to happen—and that he adjust his moral compass. I commend this motion to the Assembly.

Question resolved in the affirmative.

ACT Policing—funding

MRS JONES (Murrumbidgee) (12.10): I move:

That this Assembly:

(1) notes:

- (a) that, between 2015-16 and 2016-17, demand for ACT police services has exceeded the rate of population growth, including:
 - (i) calls requiring policing services increased by 16.7 percent;
 - (ii) offences reported against the person increased 14.8 percent;
 - (iii) robbery increased 53.3 percent, including a 27.4 percent rise in armed robbery and a 96.5 percent rise in unarmed robbery;
 - (iv) motor vehicle theft increased 25.7 percent;
 - (v) arson increased 12.4 percent; and
 - (vi) drug driving offences increased 161.8 percent;
- (b) the ACT Government has struggled to address the scourge of Outlaw Motorcycle Gang violence, which includes shootings, assaults and vandalism in Farrer, Fisher, Isaacs, Isabella Plains, Kambah and Waramanga;

- (c) in 2011-12, ACT Policing was funded \$148 564 000, the population of Canberra at the time was 357 222, representing \$415.89 per capita;
 - (d) in 2016-17, ACT Policing was funded \$155 982 000, the population of Canberra at the time was 397 397, representing \$392.51 per capita;
 - (e) in the five years from 2011-12 to 2016-17, funding for ACT Policing increased by 4.99 percent, inflation grew by 8.20 percent, and population grew by 11.25 percent;
 - (f) in the five years from 2011-12 to 2016-17, ACT Policing funding decreased by \$23.38 per capita; and
 - (g) ACT Policing funding has not kept up with inflation, population growth or increasing workloads under the ACT Labor Government; and
- (2) calls on the Government to:
- (a) ensure that ACT Policing funding increases at the same rate as inflation;
 - (b) justify why ACT Policing is expected to undertake more work with fewer resources; and
 - (c) outline by the last sitting of 2017 the plans to address the lack of funding for ACT Policing.

I am pleased to stand to speak to this motion in my name on the notice paper. After 15 years in office I regret to inform the community that this tired old Labor government has lost sight of what truly matters, what the purpose of government is, and what are the basic responsibilities they have to the people of the ACT. The ACT government no longer prioritises the safety and security of Canberrans, which is evident in its lack of support for ACT Policing, amongst other things.

Six years ago the ACT government funded policing to the tune of \$148,600,000. According to the 2011 census, the population at that time was 357,222. This means that for every Canberran ACT Policing received just over \$415. Five years on, at the end of last financial year, ACT Policing was funded \$155,982,000 while the most recent census reveals Canberra's population as 397,400. That means that in 2016-17 ACT Policing received only \$392 for every Canberran, a fairly substantial decrease of \$23 per person in the ACT.

During that same period, inflation grew by 8.2 per cent, meaning that each dollar does not go as far. The population also grew strongly by 11.25 per cent. These figures are much higher than the five per cent growth in police funding. This comes as our police are expected to do more and more with the dwindling resources that they have. An example of increased workloads in just 12 months is that calls from the public requiring ACT Policing services increased by 16.7 per cent, an additional stress on the system. Regardless of whether all these additional calls required immediate or emergency attention, each call had to be appropriately processed and decisions made upon them, and that takes resources.

Reports of offences against the person are up by 14.8 per cent. A substantial proportion of this increase has to do with the increased reporting of domestic violence. As many of us in this chamber know, that is a good story as we can get the help to those who need it most more often than we have in the past. However, an increase in this reporting also means an increase in workload for police. Domestic violence and related offences require particular police attention and processing policies. They require longer interventions and, therefore, cannot be dealt with as quickly or as simply as some other categories of reported crime. An increase in the reporting of domestic violence has a huge impact on the amount of work our police undertake.

Robbery, both armed and unarmed, is on the rise. In just 12 months the number of robberies reported increased from 152 to 233, an increase of 53.3 per cent. That is an additional 81 robberies our police have had to investigate compared to only 12 months ago. Motor vehicle theft is up by 25.7 per cent, or an additional 265 reported cases. Arson is up 12.4 per cent, and drug-driving offences have increased by a whopping 161.8 per cent. It is concerning to think that well over 400 people have been caught on Canberra roads driving while under the influence of drugs. I note that it is good to see our police making inroads into catching and charging more people for drug driving, and I thank them for their work in this area. But I reiterate my concerns that with police catching more and more drug drivers more time and personnel resources are being used.

Additional calls to the call centre and increases in robbery, motor vehicle theft, offences reported against the person, arson and drug driving are just some of the examples of where our police are continually expected to do more. In fact, the ACT government funds its police at rate lower than everywhere else in the country: in Victoria the police receive \$435 per resident; Tasmania, \$452 per resident; South Australia, \$475 per resident; New South Wales, \$486 per resident; Queensland, \$503 per resident; Western Australia, \$563 per resident; and the Northern Territory, well over \$1,000. All these figures are much more substantial than the \$390 spent per person in the ACT.

The men and women who serve our city by protecting our citizens and property deserve more than what they are getting from this government. These men and women work so hard. They put their own bodies and their health on the line to protect others. They are each day expected to be more productive, and yet it would seem that the government does not follow through by supporting them appropriately. That is unjust. Perhaps after 16 years in office the government has lost touch with what matters here.

This week the government has devoted much of its legislative agenda to setting up a committee of experts to examine and determine whether or not a tree might be dead—yes, that is right. Meanwhile, ACT residents have had to endure at least eight bikie-related incidents just this year, including a father being shot in his doorway, cars being set alight in a front yard with a six-year-old girl reportedly trying to put out the burning cars with a garden hose while her dad lay on the ground bleeding. How is it that this government, this coalition, cannot see their priorities are out of whack with the community?

Many constituents have written to and met with me concerned that criminal behaviour is not a priority for the minister or for the government. Of particular note is the ongoing saga in Horbury Street and Kelvin Court in Phillip. I have met with constituents who are extremely rattled by the ongoing drug dealing, speeding, hooning, and burnouts occurring in the small townhouse complex and cul-de-sac in Phillip. I have been shown CCTV footage of what goes on in this area, and it is shocking to say the least.

I or my office have watched over 240 separate pieces of CCTV film and seen over 315 different images of some of the criminal behaviour that is occurring. I have seen what looks to be drug deals taking place late at night and sometimes in broad daylight. I have seen massive burnouts and speeding through the complex with passengers sitting out the window or hanging onto the roof. Elderly people, young children, and other vulnerable Canberrans are living in the area. I am advised that ACT housing has tenants in this area include a mother with a young child. I am also told that the bulk of this criminal behaviour is being perpetrated by one local tenant.

The constituents I have spoken to in the area say their interactions with police have varied from helpful to not so helpful and that the police seem completely stretched. The message constituents have received is that they are too short on time and resources to solve the issue. When will the ACT government get real and back the ACT police to be resourced enough to make moves to resolve such ongoing sagas? It is appalling that the government has allowed this issue to go on for so long.

Another issue reported to me is the tens of thousands of dollars of fuel being stolen from petrol stations each and every year in Canberra. I asked the minister and the Chief Police Officer about this issue during estimates and followed up during question time in this place. I was shocked to learn that of the 613 reported incidents of fuel theft in 2016-17 only 16 resulted in charges being laid. This means that 597 cases have resulted in no apprehension of an offender. The CPO is very clear that the reason these things are not followed up better is lack of resources.

These petty crimes have a huge cumulative effect on a small number of business owners and managers who deal with this on a daily and a weekly basis. It truly has a big impact on their lives, and it is not good enough that we do not resolve these issues for them where we can. I appreciate that it is difficult for perpetrators of this type of crime to be found and charged, but there is much more that can be done. There is a cost involved. Each incident of fuel theft might only be worth less than \$100, however, if you add up how many times one business has to deal with this it is a significant impact on them. Many fuel thieves are probably repeat offenders and finding them once might actually solve a host of crimes. They continue to do it because they continue to get away with it.

The CPO has been clear that it is difficult to keep up with current and ongoing funding constraints. She has to take a greater number of younger and younger and less and less experienced officers to do work that used to be done by people who had a little more experience. While it is commendable that she is making those efforts to fit in with the ACT government's demands on police, there will come a point where it is

no longer feasible to keep on running a force on less and less money. I have seen no change in the approach from the minister on this issue.

When it comes to serious bikie and gang-related crimes the ACT government has chosen to act around the edges. The Crimes (Police Powers and Firearms Offence) Amendment Bill 2017 tabled yesterday does not address the key issue. This bill is reactionary and not preventative. We know it is a desperate attempt by the government to make it look like they are doing something while avoiding the laws that will really work. The message from the government is: you will get to shoot people in the streets but you may go to prison afterwards. On organised crime gangs, people expect a lot more. While other states have preventative laws, we only have reactionary laws in the ACT. This leaves lives in our territory vulnerable. We cannot wait for a tragedy to happen before acting when prevention is available to us right now.

If the ACT were to have the high-level anti-consorting laws that are proven to stop those involved in gang activity from meeting they could stop gang violence before it happens and the police would be better off and the money being spent on Taskforce Nemesis could ultimately be spent on baseline policing in the ACT and criminal bikies would no longer be the enormously unsettling issue they are today.

If the Labor-Greens government is a responsible government that takes its role and responsibilities to the people of the ACT seriously and the contract between the people and government that they will not act to protect themselves because the government will do that for them—which is the basis of civilised, democratic government—then it will support this motion. It is evident that this government has lost its way. That is why I am calling on this government and this minister fix funding shortfalls, to commit to keeping ACT Policing funding at least up with inflation and to commit to keeping ACT Policing funding at a reasonable level. This will ensure that our police are not receiving, essentially, cuts in real terms to their funding.

I am calling on the ACT government to justify why it has shown such a lack of support for our police over the past five years, expecting them to achieve more while working for less. Finally, I am calling on the government to report back to the Assembly with its plan to resolve this lack of funding by the end of the 2017 sitting year. I commend my motion to the Assembly.

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) (12.23): I will not be able to support Mrs Jones's motion as it appears on the notice paper. It does not recognise the changes in reporting, nor does it recognise ACT Policing's ever-changing role, their ability to be agile and also the important work their front-line officers provide for the benefit of the whole ACT community. Accordingly, I move the amendment circulated in my name:

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

"(1) notes:

- (a) ACT Policing is adequately resourced to ensure Canberra remains one of the safest places to live and meet the demands of the community;
- (b) according to the most recent ACT Criminal Justice Statistical Profile, in the 12 months to March 2017 the total reported incidents and number of offences increased marginally by 0.4 per cent and 0.5 percent respectively, and the five-year trends demonstrate a stable picture for the overall number of reported incidents and offences;
- (c) the ACT is not immune to fluctuations in crime rates and the Government and ACT Policing continue to respond to changes in the crime environment as required;
- (d) the ACT Policing Annual Report 2016-17 highlights that while offences reported against property decreased by 7 per cent in 2016-17, offences reported against the person increased by 14.8 per cent;
- (e) the increase in offences against the person can mainly be attributed to the focus on family violence and the increase in reporting suggests growing confidence to report family violence incidents to police. The Government has provided funding to increase ACT Policing's capacity to respond to these demands, including:
 - (i) \$1.180 million over four years in the 2016-17 Safer Families package to employ two dedicated Order Liaison Officers to assist applicants in applying for Family Violence Orders; and
 - (ii) funding from May 2017 to May 2018 to employ a dedicated female Aboriginal Liaison Officer to support Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander families;
- (f) in response to increases in robbery and motor vehicle theft, ACT Policing established a taskforce to focus on volume crime and recidivist offenders. As at 30 June, 40 individuals had been arrested with 20 remanded, 268 charges laid, and over \$1.4m of stolen vehicles and property had been recovered;
- (g) to assist ACT Policing respond to criminal gang activity, the Government provided an additional \$6.4 million to increase the capacity of Taskforce Nemesis, purchase a range of physical and electronic capabilities, and is working with ACT Policing on practical, legislative and operational measures to assist police to target serious and organised crime; and
- (h) in addition to the funding provided to ACT Policing, the ACT Government owns and provides seven of the 10 facilities that house ACT Policing:
 - (i) the Productivity Commission's Report on Government Services 2017 reports the ACT expenditure on police services per person in 2015-16 was \$427, which is comparable to Tasmania at \$415 per person, South Australia at \$431 per person, and Victoria at \$433 per person; and

- (ii) in response to the growing ACT population and geographical footprint, the Government is investing in the future of ACT Policing with the 2017-18 Budget providing \$2 million to review current operating models and infrastructure to assist the Government and ACT Policing to make informed evidence-based decisions for policing in the ACT over the coming years; and
- (2) calls on the Government to continue to support ACT Policing as a well-resourced, highly trained and dedicated community policing organisation that serves the Canberra community well.”.

Canberra benefits from a hardworking, dedicated and innovative police force that the government funds to meet the needs of our community. The community can be assured that this government is committed to providing ACT Policing with the funding and resources it needs now and into the future to ensure that Canberra remains a safe place to live. Overall, the ACT experiences low crime rates compared to other jurisdictions. The community has ACT Policing to thank for playing the key role in keeping crime low.

In 2016-17, ACT Policing reported an increase in calls requiring a police response. This is something we will continue to monitor with ACT Policing. However, on balance, according to the most recent criminal justice statistical profile, in the 12 months to March 2017 the total reported incidents and number of offences has increased only marginally by 0.4 per cent and 0.5 per cent respectively.

The five-year trends in the ACT demonstrate a stable picture for the overall volume of reported incidents and offences. The ACT also has comparably lower victimisation rates across the personal crime categories than is the case in other jurisdictions.

Crime rates do fluctuate, though, with some crime rates increasing while others decrease. The ACT is not immune to spikes in crime. The government and the ACT police continue to monitor these changes and respond as required. For example, the ACT Policing annual report 2016-17 highlights that while overall property offences decreased by 1,507 offences, or seven per cent, in 2016-17, offences against the person increased by 484 offences, or 14.8 per cent.

The increase in offences against the person can mainly be attributed to the greater community and government focus on family violence. To illustrate, assaults reported in the home increased by 18.9 per cent in 2016-17. This increase is mirrored by an increase in family violence matters, the majority of which occur in the home, with 44.7 per cent of all assaults reported to ACT Policing being family violence related. The increase in reporting suggests that there is growing confidence to report family violence incidents to police. This is something we will continue to encourage as we bring family violence out of the shadows and ensure that those experiencing it get the help and support they need.

To address family violence, in the 2017-18 budget the total safer families package is \$23.5 million over four years for a range of initiatives. As part of this funding package, in 2016-17 the government provided \$1.18 million over four years to increase

ACT Policing's capacity to respond to the increasing demands, with two dedicated order liaison officers to assist applicants in applying for family violence orders.

This complements the changes ACT Policing had already implemented with the development of the family violence coordination unit in October 2015 to ensure that officers implemented best practice policies and procedures when responding to incidents of family violence. In addition to this, the government has committed funds as part of the justice reinvestment trial to employ a dedicated female Aboriginal liaison officer with ACT Policing to support Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander families.

Motor vehicle theft is another area where we have seen recent increases after seeing significant reductions of 27.2 per cent from a 2010 baseline under the previous property crime reduction strategy 2012-2015. Motor vehicle theft is again a key focus of the property crime prevention strategy 2016-2020. The government is working in collaboration with ACT Policing to reduce the number of motor vehicle thefts so they are at or below the national rate.

An example of ACT Policing's ability to remain agile and to respond to increases in crime within existing resources is the task force it established in early 2017 to address robbery and motor vehicle theft by focusing on volume crime and recidivist offenders. The task force has achieved a number of successes. As at 30 June, 40 individuals have been arrested, with 20 individuals remanded, and 268 charges were laid by ACT Policing, with further charges likely pending as operational results and forensic information are received. Nine search warrants were executed and more than \$1.4 million worth of stolen vehicles and property recovered, the majority of which has been returned to the owners.

As we are all aware, in recent times a number of motorcycle gang incidents have been reported. To assist ACT Policing to respond to this criminal gang activity, the government has invested an extra \$6.4 million to further boost Taskforce Nemesis and purchase a range of physical and electronic capabilities.

Taskforce Nemesis has been very effective. There are currently seven ACT outlaw motorcycle gang members remanded in the ACT and one member remanded in New South Wales. Recent successes of the task force include a known motorcycle gang associate arrested and charged with two offences; the Nomads motorcycle gang president being arrested and charged with several offences; and a former high-ranking office holder of the Rebels being arrested and charged with multiple offences.

Most recently, during September this year a number of search warrants were conducted in relation to motorcycle gang activity, members and associates. Results from the search warrants include: a high ranking member of the Comancheros being summonsed for tax offences; a high ranking member of the Nomads being arrested for several offences; and multiple seizures of drugs, prohibited weapons, ammunition and firearms.

In addition to investing in increasing the capacity of Taskforce Nemesis, the government is working with ACT Policing on practical legislative and operational

measures to assist police target serious and organised crime. The government is committed to ensuring that our police have the necessary tools at their disposal to effectively deal with serious and organised crime entities and wherever possible to confiscate their criminal assets and put offenders before the courts.

ACT Policing is clearly a highly effective police force. It is agile and responsive and it works collaboratively with the government to address changes in the crime environment. When assessing funding levels for policing, it is important to look at a range of factors. Those include geographic footprint, urban sprawl, population, and the evolving crime environment, including crime rates and government and community expectations.

In the ACT we also need to consider the arrangements we have with the Australian Federal Police to support ACT Policing, which provide economies of scale and shared or enabling services. When looking at the expenditure per capita in the ACT, we also need to consider that in addition to the appropriation funding provided to ACT Policing, the ACT government owns and provides seven of the 10 facilities that house ACT Policing.

Contrary to Mrs Jones's claims, the Productivity Commission's *Report on government services* is the best place to get a comparative view on how much the ACT spends overall on policing services. The 2017 report shows that ACT expenditure on police services per person in 2015-16 was \$427. This is \$32 below the national rate of \$459. However, it is comparable with Tasmania at \$415 per person, South Australia at \$431 per person and Victoria \$433 per person.

When we look at this over time between 2011-12 and 2013-14, the ACT was above the national rate and, up until 2014-15, above most other states. As part of the range of saving initiatives across the ACT government, from the 2013-14 budget to the 2015-16 budget, for the first time a modest general savings measure of one per cent was applied to the territorial appropriation for ACT Policing. This has slowed the growth in expenditure per capita. However, the ACT remains consistently comparable with other states, apart from WA and NT, which have the highest expenditure per capita and some of the biggest geographical areas to cover.

Performance and community perception are other indicators of adequate funding levels. When we look at the Productivity Commission *Report on government services* for 2017, ACT Policing performed highly against all perceptions of crime indicators compared to other jurisdictions.

To add to this, ACT Policing consistently performs well against the targets set in the purchase agreement. In 2016-17 it achieved 18 of the 21 performance measures and 14 of the 17 indicators of effectiveness. Two of the three indicators of effectiveness not achieved were within one per cent of the target. The other was a percentage of persons who self-report to driving 10 kilometres per hour or more over the speed limit, which was 4.2 per cent above the national average and is an ongoing challenge for ACT Policing and government.

In 2017-18 the ACT government has demonstrated its continued commitment to investing in ACT Policing through funding over the next four years for the following initiatives: \$5.3 million for enhanced protective security measures for policing; \$2.1 million to plan for the future of policing in the ACT; \$4.9 million for an additional six police officers for extra patrols to support safer night-life precincts; a new maritime facility for ACT water police; and funding for ACT enterprise agreement increases.

This year we can expect to see three recruit courses for ACT Policing. The first course started on 30 October with 25 recruits and two further courses will be held in January and April next year. While I have demonstrated that ACT Policing is adequately resourced and a high-performing police force, I do acknowledge that the ACT is growing and changing, and with that the government and the community's expectations of ACT police will continue to evolve.

That is why the government is investing in the future of ACT Policing, with \$2.1 million to review current operating models and infrastructure in light of the growing ACT population and geographical footprint. This will assist the government and ACT Policing to make informed, evidence-based decisions on policing in the ACT over the coming years.

On 30 March the CPO, Justine Saunders, launched ACT Policing's future "Policing for tomorrow's ACT" program. The program is a direct outcome of Assistant Commissioner Saunders's visits to ACT police stations and having open and honest conversations with members about ACT Policing's strengths, challenges and ideas for improvements.

The CPO has my full support for this program and I commend ACT Policing's continued focus on technology and innovation to develop agile policing capabilities that are able to respond to increasing complex and emerging crime. As I have demonstrated today, ACT Policing is an adequately resourced, highly trained and dedicated community policing organisation that serves the Canberra community well.

I thank each and every police officer and staff member of ACT Policing for the excellent work they do. The government is committed to ensuring that ACT Policing has the resources it needs to continue to perform well and keep our community safe, now and into the 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 12.36 to 2.30 pm.

Questions without notice

Planning—lease variations

MR COE: My question is to the Minister for Planning and Land Management. Minister, will you table by the close of business today how much the Woden Tradies and, separately, the Dickson Tradies paid to deconcessionalise their leases?

MR GENTLEMAN: I thank Mr Coe for the question. I can certainly ask the directorate to look into how much information we can provide on that matter and provide that information to the Assembly as soon as possible. I am not sure if we will be able to do it by the end of today.

MR COE: Have these two clubs paid to vary their leases? If so, how much did each club pay and what was the percentage of the waiver? If you do not happen to have that information on you, will you also take that on notice as well.

MR GENTLEMAN: I will take the detail of that on notice and provide the information to the Assembly.

MR PARTON: Minister, when did each club apply for and receive, if applicable, lease variations or deconcessionalisation of their leases? Again, I understand it might be a take on notice scenario.

MR GENTLEMAN: Yes, certainly; I do not have the details of that to hand but I will take it on notice and provide what information I can back to the Assembly.

Transport—bike-sharing scheme

MS LE COUTEUR: My question is to the Minister for Transport and City Services. It relates to the announcement that dockless bike schemes are expected to start operating in Canberra soon. Has the government given consideration to establishing a docked bike-sharing scheme like Melbourne's blue bikes or Brisbane's CityCycle?

MS FITZHARRIS: I thank Ms Le Couteur for the question. Her question probably came in part from an article in the *Canberra Times* very recently about bike share coming to Canberra. I have stated and the government's intention is to look very closely at the type of bike share scheme that could be established here in Canberra. Not long after my return from a trip to North America, where we saw numerous bike share schemes in operation, we started the process here of exploring what kind of bike share scheme could work for Canberra.

We have done a lot of analysis of schemes around the country and around the world about what types of bike share schemes are working and what specific types of schemes work under specific criteria. We also undertook quite extensive community consultation asking Canberrans (1) if they were interested in a bike share scheme for Canberra and (2) if they were, whether they would use it and where they would use it—where they would go to and from. We have gathered some very useful information about that.

Our intention was to effectively test the market to see what sorts of operators would be interested in establishing in Canberra. We have principally looked at docked bike share schemes like the one Ms Le Couteur mentioned, which are in operation around the country. But more recently we have seen dockless bike share. The government has not sought expressions of interest from any bike share operator but we have been

approached over the past month or so by three dockless bike share companies seeking to establish a scheme here in Canberra.

We are working very closely within government and with the National Capital Authority about what sorts of regulations would govern a bike share scheme, particularly a dockless bike share scheme such as has been the subject of much public debate, which remains ongoing. To my knowledge there is no imminent arrival of a dockless bike share scheme.

MS LE COUTEUR: Minister, how will the government ensure that any companies, particularly ones that have dockless schemes, take responsibility for bikes and ensure that they do not all end up in our waterways and the lake?

MS FITZHARRIS: That is precisely the question that is before us now, as it is before city councils around the country. Currently we are also working with the National Capital Authority because it is reasonable to expect that any bike share scheme that would work in Canberra would inevitably include land that is regulated and controlled by the National Capital Authority.

We are exploring our options. TCCS in particular has been open with those organisations that have approached the government to say that we are developing some guidelines, which I expect will be finalised within the next few weeks, to give guidance to bike share schemes that wish to set themselves up in Canberra.

As we have seen around the country, there are very mixed views about whether or not a dockless bike share scheme could work. We have obviously seen where bikes have been dumped in waterways and in rivers. That has caused some community consternation. Equally, there are people on the other side that say that it is the first step toward introducing bike share which really does help lift the number of people riding bikes, which is obviously a good thing as well. We will continue to explore it and be open with those proponents seeking to establish a scheme in Canberra.

ACT public service—executive severance benefits

MS LEE: My question is to the Chief Minister and is about disallowable instrument 246 relating to early termination severance benefits under the Public Sector Management Act. Currently early termination severance payments for a long service executive are only available under section 38(e) for operational reasons. This disallowable instrument allows early termination severance benefits to be made available under section 38(f) in the interests of the service. The explanatory statement says that this change is being made to address when relationships between governing boards and CEOs or between ministers and directors-general have become unworkable. Chief Minister, how often in the past five years have relationships between governing boards and CEOs or between ministers and directors-general become unworkable?

MR BARR: I cannot think of a contemporary example, but over the past 20 years I can think of a few.

MS LEE: Chief Minister, will a person who is or has been both the long-term CEO of an agency and director-general of a directorate be entitled to two separate severance payments under disallowable instrument 246?

MR BARR: I do not believe so, no.

MR COE: Minister, will you table details of every recipient of this new termination severance package?

MR BARR: The government does regularly report on executive contracts and if it is appropriate to do so and does not breach any privacy provisions then I have no problem with that. But I will take some advice in relation to that matter.

ACT Health—aluminium cladding

MS LAWDER: My question is to the Minister for Health and Wellbeing. Minister, on 17 August 2017, you advised the Assembly:

I would like to take this opportunity to reiterate that, in addition to these recent findings at the Centenary hospital, ACT Health has thoroughly investigated any other potential impacts across ACT Health facilities.

On 26 October, your colleague Mr Gentleman provided a report that “outlines that ACT Health has identified five additional buildings for further investigations and that there are other government buildings that do have ACPs”. Minister, how thorough was your directorate's first investigation?

MS FITZHARRIS: As I indicated and has been spoken about in the Assembly, the first investigation, Stage 1, was a comprehensive desktop audit. The findings of that desktop audit were tabled in the chamber last week. The desktop audit revealed that the Centenary Hospital for Women and Children contained a small proportion of the aluminium composite panels that contain a flammable core.

Subsequent to that, and in conjunction with a whole-of-government effort to then look further across all ACT government assets—beyond the desktop audit—an additional five buildings were identified as well as other buildings and assets that the government owns. I am very confident that ACT Health, as part of its own investigations and the whole-of-government investigations, is being extremely thorough on this matter. They have community safety and the safety of their staff at the forefront of their mind.

MS LAWDER: Minister, when did you first become aware that an additional five buildings in ACT Health had flammable cladding?

MS FITZHARRIS: I will take the specific date on notice, but it was at the completion of the second round of assessments done by ACT Health, following the first stage, which was the desktop audit.

MRS JONES: Minister, why did you not advise the Assembly about the flammable cladding on ACT Health buildings when you made a ministerial statement on 26 October rather than leaving it to the minister for planning?

MS FITZHARRIS: Because I was aware that the minister for planning was tabling information requested by the Assembly on the following day outlining the whole-of-government effort on progress on the whole-of-government audit. I certainly know I could have spoken, as all ministers could have, at much greater length in their statements of one year achievements, but, of course, we are time restricted in this place.

Children and young people—reportable conduct scheme

MS CHEYNE: My question is to the Chief Minister. Chief Minister, could you please provide an update to the Assembly on the progress of the reportable conduct scheme?

MR BARR: I thank Ms Cheyne for the question. I am pleased to advise members of the successful commencement of the reportable conduct scheme, which commenced operation on 1 July. The scheme ensures that organisations that provide care to children respond appropriately to allegations or suspicions of abuse by their employees and volunteers. It also supports organisations to develop and operate policies and practices that promote child safety. The core of the scheme is structured to help prevent vile attacks on children like those that we have heard about through the royal commission.

Organisations captured by the scheme will no longer be able to sweep child abuse allegations under the carpet. The scheme has been very well received by the Canberra community. Over 750 people from the child service sector attended 31 information sessions run by the ACT Ombudsman in the lead-up to the commencement. The ACT Ombudsman runs the scheme. The Ombudsman's independence ensures that organisations are compelled to examine and respond to employee behaviour.

Allegations of reportable conduct have already been made and are being examined. Whilst I emphasise these are just allegations at this stage, it shows the immediate impact of the scheme. We will keep reviewing and improving the effectiveness of the scheme and that is why we are shortly introducing a bill to make some technical amendments to improve information-sharing about child safety.

MS CHEYNE: Chief Minister, what is the role of the ACT government in developing a nationally consistent scheme?

MR BARR: I have taken a proposal to harmonise reportable conduct schemes across the country to the Council of Australian Governments, and COAG fully supported the ACT's push to close potential gaps across jurisdictions. This is a big step forward for child safety and protection in our country. It has as its origins the work and advocacy of child protection advocate Damian De Marco.

In the ACT we are working to align our scheme as closely as possible with both the New South Wales and Victorian schemes. The royal commission has found systemic failings by institutions to prevent and report child abuse or neglect. By harmonising schemes and by sharing information between oversight bodies, based on the final recommendations of the royal commission, we will be better placed to stop abusers exploiting gaps and loopholes by moving from jurisdiction to jurisdiction.

Nationally consistent schemes will also help to restore public confidence in the organisations that we trust to look after children every day. The ACT will continue to lead collaboration at the national level on the development and implementation of a consistent scheme, so that we can better protect children across the country from the risk of abuse.

MS ORR: Chief Minister, is the government considering the need to expand the reportable conduct scheme to incorporate other entities and institutions?

MR BARR: I thank Ms Orr for the supplementary question. Yes, we are already working to assess how best to expand the scheme to capture more organisations. Our current scheme is deliberately similar to that in New South Wales in its coverage of organisations, many of which are religiously affiliated. These include schools, providers of childcare services, health services and out of home care services.

All funded activities that faith-based organisations currently operate, such as educational institutions and other services to children, are already within the scope of the scheme. But there is more that we can do. Today I announced the release of a discussion paper to expand the scheme to capture more organisations that have responsibility for children, and where there is potential for children to be at risk.

These include churches and parishes, some of which have already volunteered to join the scheme. We will consult with these organisations over coming weeks to make sure that they are able to comply with the requirements of the scheme. We will also need to take into account the royal commission's anticipated specific recommendations relating to reportable conduct schemes.

A firm aim is to introduce further legislation to expand the scope of the scheme early in 2018. We need to keep moving while we wait for the release of the royal commission's recommendations. There is much that we can do right now to have the strongest protections in place as quickly as possible.

Schools—aluminium cladding

MR WALL: My questions is to the Minister for Planning and Land Management. Minister, on 27 October 2017 you tabled a report on aluminium composite cladding advising that a desktop audit had been carried out on all ACT government schools. This desktop audit identified 46 school sites as having a building or buildings with some form of aluminium composite panels, with the type of cladding yet to be determined. How many schools have had aluminium composite panels added in

refurbishments or included in their build since 2009 when the ACT government commenced monitoring the use of these materials?

MR GENTLEMAN: I thank Mr Wall for his question. The detail that I have on the timing does not show when the panels were put on. My understanding is that a lot of them were done during the building the education revolution. During that period a lot of school halls were built across the territory, and ACPs were used as a decorative component to those. I am not sure at this stage the detail of how many ACPs are around egress points and access points for those particular buildings, but as soon as we get more information I am happy to report back to the Assembly.

MR WALL: Minister, what is the government's time frame to determine the type of aluminium composite panels used at the already identified 46 school sites and for taking the necessary action to remediate?

MR GENTLEMAN: I cannot give a definitive time line. It is a matter for the team to do the investigation and report back.

MS LAWDER: Minister, when did you brief ACT Fire & Rescue on the findings of the desktop audit relating to schools, and have the schools and their P&Cs been informed?

MR GENTLEMAN: All directorates were involved in this audit, so both Fire & Rescue and the Education Directorate were involved.

Trade unions—anti-Chinese campaign

MR HANSON: My question is to the Chief Minister. Chief Minister, following the recent attack on Chinese students at the Woden bus interchange, the president of the Chinese Community Council of Australia has called for measures that would prevent these racist attacks, saying, "It would appear that extreme views have become the norm which provides the impetus for a young person to commit racial crimes." Recently the CFMEU robocalled over 50,000 Canberrans from a person calling themselves "a mother of three and concerned wife" talking about the troubling issue that Chinese workers were coming and companies would not offer jobs to Aussies. A CFMEU television campaign stated:

[They're] letting Chinese companies bring in their own workers. Sorry, but you won't even get a look in, son.

Chief Minister, what measures will you put in place to prevent explicitly xenophobic campaigns such as these run by the CFMEU running in the ACT?

MR BARR: I think the question seeks a little bit of overreach in terms of the ACT's constitutional powers to limit advertising freedom of speech in various campaigns. That said, I think it is regrettable that any organisation would seek to run campaigns based on the race of any particular individual and I think it is extremely regrettable that a small group of Chinese students was the subject of an unwarranted attack at the Woden bus interchange in our city in recent times.

It is not reflective of this community's feelings. It is an isolated and very unfortunate incident that I condemn. I think we should be above this as a community and I think we should be able to enjoy the wonderful diversity that multiculturalism in this country and in this city affords us. It is regrettable that any organisation would conduct such a campaign, noting of course that it is not the first time in Australian history that either organised labour or business organisations have run campaigns based on a xenophobic premise.

MR HANSON: Chief Minister, will you publicly condemn the CFMEU for running their xenophobic campaign and stop taking their money, as proof that you actually do not approve of their conduct?

MR BARR: I would refer Mr Hanson to my previous statement in relation to this matter. I do not think that those sorts of campaigns are particularly helpful in the public debate. I am very clear in my support for both the Chinese community—

Mr Hanson: A point of order.

MADAM SPEAKER: Resume your seat. Is there a point of order?

Mr Hanson: Although the Chief Minister has addressed part of the question, the second part of the question was as to whether he would now stop taking money from the CFMEU, having now acknowledged that they were running a xenophobic campaign that he condemns.

MADAM SPEAKER: Thank you, Mr Hanson. I can only direct the minister to the question—you admitted that he had answered it in part—in the time left.

MR BARR: As I was saying, I think we as a community can do better than to resort to those sorts of campaigns. We can do better, and we should do better. I reiterate the points that I have made. Whilst there are indeed legitimate debates to be had about the level of immigration into our country and the skilled workforce programs—

Mr Hanson interjecting—

MADAM SPEAKER: Mr Hanson, please.

MR BARR: While there are legitimate debates to be had on those questions, I think bringing race into any immigration or labour force debate is unfortunate, and I do not support it.

MR WALL: Chief Minister, will you rule out accepting further donations from the CFMEU, given that you have attempted to take a principled stand on banning property developer donations without any basis?

MR BARR: No, I am not contemplating changing our policy in that regard.

Members interjecting—

Transport—anti-smoking measures

MADAM SPEAKER: Members, please! Ms Orr has the floor.

MS ORR: My question—

Ms Berry: Point of order.

MADAM SPEAKER: Ms Orr, would you resume your seat. Ms Berry on a point of order.

Ms Berry: Mr Hanson just called out a word across the chamber which is unparliamentary and he should be made to withdraw.

MADAM SPEAKER: If your language was unparliamentary, although I did not hear it, Mr Hanson, I ask you to withdraw.

Mr Hanson: The word I interjected with was “grubby”. I will allow you to determine that it was not aimed at a member; I was not calling an individual member grubby. I was referring to the action of the xenophobic CFMEU giving money to the Labor Party.

MADAM SPEAKER: Resume your seat, Mr Hanson. A point of order is not a debate and we have had a debate about various bits of language in this place; sometimes the same language has been ruled in and out. I am not going to prosecute that argument again but I will remind you, Mr Hanson: you are a serial interjector; you are serially offensive across the chamber. Consider yourself warned.

MS ORR: My question is to the Minister for Transport and City Services. Minister, how is the government protecting public transport users from the effects of second-hand smoke?

MS FITZHARRIS: I thank Ms Orr for the question. As she is a very regular public transport user herself, it is a very good question. The ACT government is committed to protecting the community from exposure to second-hand smoke, which is why from 1 October the government banned smoking and the use of smoking products such as electronic cigarettes in all public transport waiting areas across the ACT. These include bus interchanges and stops, taxi ranks, train stations and, soon, light rail stops.

Public transport is often used by large groups of people, including school-aged children, and is relied upon by many Canberrans to participate in daily life. Users need to stay close to transport stops and stations to effectively use these services. It can therefore be difficult to avoid exposure to second-hand smoke, which we know can cause a range of serious adverse health effects in adults and children, including lung cancer, heart disease and asthma. Although tobacco smoke does tend to dissipate more quickly outdoors, bystanders can still be exposed to harmful levels of smoke, particularly when in close proximity to the smoker.

Earlier this year a public consultation showed widespread support of the proposal to establish five-metre smoke-free areas around ACT public transport waiting areas. The community is incredibly supportive of new smoke-free areas at places frequently used by children and their families.

It is through this initiative that we aim to further protect the health of the community and ensure that all Canberrans can enjoy our public amenities without exposure to second-hand smoke.

MS ORR: Minister, what impact can second-hand smoke have on a non-smoker in a confined space like a bus shelter?

MS FITZHARRIS: It is widely accepted that there is no safe level of exposure to tobacco smoke. Studies have shown that in certain situations outdoor exposure to tobacco smoke can be substantial and air quality levels can reach levels comparable to smoking in enclosed spaces. People smoking at outdoor locations such as bus stops can affect their surroundings with second-hand smoke, and when someone is smoking at a bus stop other passengers are subjected to a mixture of thousands of chemical substances released in the form of second-hand smoke when tobacco products are burned. Second-hand smoke has been shown to cause coronary heart disease and lung cancer and has also been shown to cause respiratory problems in infants, children and adults.

The primary goal of a comprehensive tobacco control strategy is to reduce the prevalence of smoking and, as a result, reduce the eventual health impacts caused. Currently in the ACT we are proud to have the lowest proportion of smokers of any state or territory with only 9.9 per cent of people reporting that they smoke daily. Creating non-smoking zones within five metres of any public transport waiting area is another step towards strengthening our strategy and is further evidence of the government's commitment to ensuring that those in the community who have made the decision not to smoke are not subjected to the dangers of second-hand smoke.

MR PETTERSSON: Minister, how will the government monitor and enforce the new laws which will ban smoking in Canberra's public transport waiting areas?

MS FITZHARRIS: In addition to the new regulations, the government has introduced a public education campaign to generate awareness and understanding of the new smoke-free public transport waiting areas. Public messaging about the ban includes advertising on buses, posters and information pamphlets, and the installation of signage at bus stops and interchanges and at future light rail stops.

To further help Canberrans understand the impact of smoke-free areas, the government has erected temporary signage at the 100 most commonly used bus stops for the implementation period, to make sure that Canberrans are aware of the smoke-free areas and possible penalties.

Most Australian jurisdictions have also legislated to make smoking in public transport areas an offence. It is therefore a reasonable assumption that a person visiting the

ACT would be aware of the community expectation that smoking in public transport waiting areas is prohibited.

Enforcement of the law is the responsibility of authorised Access Canberra officers, who will undertake compliance activities relating to smoke-free legislation. They favour an educative approach in preventing smoking in public transport waiting areas. Officers will retain their discretion to issue an infringement notice to people found to be smoking. A minimum fine of \$110 may be issued to people found smoking in a smoke-free area.

Evaluation studies of the implementation of smoke-free legislation overwhelmingly report that compliance is high and that these laws are effective in improving air quality and reducing community exposure to second-hand smoke. The creation of smoke-free transport waiting areas aligns with the national tobacco strategy 2012 to 2018 and assists to improve the health of all Australians by reducing the prevalence of smoking and its associated health and social costs.

Aboriginals and Torres Strait Islanders—educational targets

MR MILLIGAN: My question is to Minister for Education and Early Childhood Development Minister, the recent report into Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander outcomes in Canberra schools shows that Indigenous students continue to be two-to-three years behind their peers in NAPLAN, with little improvement recorded in reading or numeracy since the standardised test was introduced in 2008. It notes that the ACT will likely also fail to meet the COAG Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander student attendance target of 90 per cent and its own target of 92 per cent. Minister, when can the ACT expect to see Indigenous students' attendance meet the targets?

MS BERRY: As the Assembly will know, the ACT government is embarking right now on a conversation with the community on the future of education. Already, over 2,500 individuals have contributed to that conversation, including the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community, to address the issues around inequity and inequality within schools in the ACT.

The independent schools and the Catholic schools have also been part of that conversation. We want to make sure that as a community the outcomes for all students, regardless of their backgrounds, where they come from or their family circumstances do not hold them back from having the same opportunities as every other student in the ACT.

With regard to NAPLAN, one of the themes that has been coming up through the future of education conversation is that the community needs to consider whether schools should continue to be places of assessment and whether the focus should be on schools being places of learning.

Mr Wall: Point of order, Madam Speaker.

MADAM SPEAKER: Point of order.

Mr Wall: Madam Speaker, I ask if you could call on the minister to be directly relevant. The question was: when can the ACT expect to see Indigenous students' attendance meeting targets? A community conversation is not going to achieve that and I would like her to be directly relevant.

MADAM SPEAKER: Minister, in the time left can you be more concise to that issue.

MS BERRY: The whole purpose of the conversation with the community around the future of education is to ensure that students, regardless of their background, get the same opportunities. That includes Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students. So to say that the community should not have a say in how every child in the ACT should get the best possible educational outcomes shows that there is clearly no expectation from those opposite to listen to the community and consider the experts in those schools—the students, the teachers, the parents and the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community organisations. *(Time expired.)*

Mrs Kikkert: This is from someone who shut down a petition from the public. Wow, hypocrisy.

Ms Berry: Madam Speaker, point of order. I just heard Mrs Kikkert call out “hypocrisy” across the chamber. That is unparliamentary. She should be asked to withdraw.

Mr Hanson: Is it?

MADAM SPEAKER: Mr Hanson, do you have a response on the point of order?

Mr Hanson: Yes I do. Calling Ms Berry a hypocrite would be unparliamentary. But calling the actions or an issue hypocrisy, I would not consider to be unparliamentary.

MADAM SPEAKER: There is no point of order. We can go through a list and we can find a whole series of words that have been ruled out of order. But as I, and those before me, have said in this place many a time, it is around context and activity. If I called out every bit of poor language and offensive language from across the chamber, we would not progress very far in a day. I remind members to have regard and respect for each and every one of us in this place.

MR MILLIGAN: Minister, when can the Indigenous community expect to see their children achieving at the same levels as their peers?

MS BERRY: When the ACT government delivers a strategy for the next 10 years on the future of education, following the detailed and very serious conversations that we have been having with the community, in particular the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community, and drawing on expert advice from people like Chris Sarra, ensuring that Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children—all children, regardless of their backgrounds or circumstances—get the best possible learning outcomes in our schools.

MR WALL: Minister, when will you take decisive action to implement the changes needed to address the lack of Indigenous attendance in ACT schools and close the gap once and for all?

MS BERRY: I am taking decisive action. This is the first time the ACT community has been—

Mr Wall: Having a conversation. Having a chat about it.

Mr Gentleman: A point of order, Madam Speaker, the minister is less than a few seconds into her answer and interjections are flowing across the chamber already.

Mr Coe: You're interrupting her now!

MADAM SPEAKER: Thank you, Mr Gentleman. We do not need that commentary, Mr Coe. As I keep saying, oftentimes ministers are on their feet and within seconds you are interjecting and disturbing proceedings. Minister, please continue.

MS BERRY: Thank you, Madam Speaker. The opposition just cannot stand the fact that we are going out to the community, to the students, to the teachers, to the schools and to the parents to talk about a strategy for the next 10 years to improve on all the work the ACT government has done within ACT schools over the past decade. In addition, we are faced with uncertainty from the federal Liberal government continuing to cut funding from the ACT schools, which will make a difference to every child's learning, including Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students in the ACT.

Mr Wall: Public education just got a massive boost. There is an increase in funding from the commonwealth government and you know it.

MS BERRY: The fact is that there is a decrease in funding in ACT schools—

Mr Wall: You are misleading the house.

MS BERRY: Madam Speaker, a point of order.

MADAM SPEAKER: Mr Wall, you either put that—

Mr Wall: I withdraw.

MADAM SPEAKER: Thank you.

Mr Gentleman: A point of order, Madam Speaker, after you warned Mr Wall he interjected in the minister's response four times.

MADAM SPEAKER: Mr Wall has not been warned. Thank you, Mr Gentleman. Minister.

MS BERRY: To finish in the couple of seconds I have left I refer to the federal government and the lack of true consultation from the federal government around these kinds of issues: informing a board that will be put together by a bill made by the federal government which described consultation in a way that imposes people on the education community. *(Time expired.)*

Aboriginals and Torres Strait Islanders—out of home care review

MRS KIKKERT: My question is to the Minister for Disability, Children and Youth. Minister, in a radio interview on 2 October you stated that the steering committee that has direct oversight of the review into the over-representation of Indigenous children and young people in out of home care will “include, absolutely, representation of local Aboriginal community-controlled organisations”. You said that the positions on this committee should all be filled very soon. Minister, has the membership of this steering committee now been finalised and, if not, why not?

MS STEPHEN-SMITH: The steering committee met for the first time last week and I can confirm that there was, indeed, representation from local Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community organisations including, importantly, Gugan Gulwan and Winnunga Nimmityjah.

MRS KIKKERT: Minister, what local Aboriginal community-controlled organisations have been invited to be on the steering committee?

MS STEPHEN-SMITH: I thank Mrs Kikkert for her supplementary question. I just named two. There are a number of other Aboriginal organisations participating in this review. The review is premised on ensuring that we give full effect to the Aboriginal placement principle which was developed by SNAICC, the national Aboriginal early childhood organisation. They are closely involved in the review. We have also got participation from the National Congress of Australia’s First Peoples, and Mr Rod Little has accepted to represent the congress on the review steering committee. I understand that he was also represented in the meeting last week.

MR MILLIGAN: Will the framework for this review be released by Christmas so that we can move forward?

MS STEPHEN-SMITH: I thank Mr Milligan for his supplementary question. We have committed from the start to a co-design process for this review. That was what the steering committee met to do. We have some parameters around what we intend the review to do, but we are very committed to ensuring that the review process is co-designed with the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community and with providers in the sector. We want to ensure that that process is given full time to take effect. I hope that we will see an outcome by the end of the year, but I also do not want to rush that steering committee into an outcome. I am very committed to co-design for this process.

Government—night-life safety measures

MR PETTERSSON: My question is to the Minister for Regulatory Services. As the weather gets a little bit warmer, as people get a little bit more festive, how are we going to keep people safe on a night out?

MR RAMSAY: I thank Mr Pettersson for his question. The liquor reform package that we have rolled out during 2017 has not only reduced red tape for Canberra businesses; it has done a lot to ensure that our city has a safe and vibrant night-time economy. Through targeted fee reductions for small venues, red tape reduction across the industry and funding for six more police officers to patrol night precincts, we are delivering better conditions for small businesses and a safer environment for people enjoying a night out.

Licensees now have a statutory power to evict or refuse entry to intoxicated, violent or disorderly patrons. This legislated ability to exclude people who pose a risk to themselves and others means that licensees and staff are able to deal more confidently with these situations.

We have also given the Commissioner for Fair Trading an explicit power to require a licensee to install CCTV cameras if, for example, a pattern of incidents in a venue means that the presence of CCTV cameras will help prevent and investigate incidents of violence. Alongside legislative changes, we have funded new police resources to patrol and monitor the most active night venues in Canberra. It is a direct investment in ensuring the safety of Canberrans who enjoy a night out.

MR PETTERSSON: Minister, what has the government done to increase protection for individuals?

MR RAMSAY: An important part of having a good night out is to ensure that everyone can have a good time and be safe while they are out. To assist with this, earlier this year, with tripartisan support, we legislated for better criminal laws to target drink spiking. These reforms target behaviour that is often part of violence against women and that this community absolutely will not tolerate.

The new laws to criminalise drink and food spiking make it an offence to give someone food or drink that contains an intoxicating substance that they are not aware of or more of an intoxicating substance than the person expects. The offender must also intend to cause harm, although the harm does not have to have actually occurred for an offence to be committed. Offenders are liable for a fine of up to \$75,000 or five years in jail.

These laws send a strong message that drink spiking is unacceptable behaviour. It says that spiking as a malicious prank or as an attempt to instigate a sexual assault will not be tolerated. Everyone out enjoying our city's increasingly diverse and vibrant nightlife should be free to have a good night without the fear of having their drinks interfered with and their personal safety compromised.

MS CODY: I don't think I will be able to ask it as well as Mr Pettersson, but can the minister advise the Assembly what measures the government has taken to assist individuals who may have enjoyed their night out a little too much?

MR RAMSAY: I thank Ms Cody for the question, which was asked extremely well. Having exciting, diverse venue offerings for a good night out is just one part of the picture. The other is to ensure that Canberrans are safe during a night out. In addition to the eviction powers and the extra police patrols that I have mentioned, the government is funding a 12-month trial of the CBR NightCrew program. The NightCrew program operates between 10 pm and 4 am on Fridays and Saturdays, next to platform 8 at the city bus station on Mort Street, and also has teams roving around the city centre to assist where necessary.

At the NightCrew tent, late-night revellers can sit down and rest, rehydrate and receive basic first aid if needed. They can wait safely for public transport and charge their mobile phone if needed, so that they can reconnect with their friends or arrange a lift home. With their distinctive uniforms and backpacks and non-judgemental attitude, the NightCrew teams have become a well-loved and much-valued fixture of Canberra's late-night scene.

It is a simple and effective way that the government is helping Canberrans to enjoy a night out in our ever-evolving, exciting city. I would like to place on record my thanks to every person who volunteers or contributes in any way to the CBR NightCrew. Not everyone can or will do what they do, but I commend them for their commitment to making our city a safe and fun place.

Greyhound racing—inspections

MR PARTON: My question is to the Minister for Regulatory Services. Minister, over the past six months the Gambling and Racing Commission has increased the frequency of its inspections of the Canberra Greyhound Racing Club tenfold. This has led to staff and members of the club feeling as though the Gambling and Racing Commission is targeting and harassing them. Minister, will you advise the Assembly of every single animal welfare breach on animals owned and trained in the ACT discovered by this regulatory crackdown?

MR RAMSAY: I will take that on notice.

MR PARTON: Minister, why has there been such a dramatic increase in the frequency of Gambling and Racing Commission inspections of the Canberra Greyhound Racing Club over the past six months?

MR RAMSAY: The Gambling and Racing Commission is working not only in this particular area but also right across Canberra in a range of areas. I am pleased to see that the GRC takes its responsibilities to oversee gambling in this jurisdiction very seriously.

Mr Parton: Point of order, Madam Speaker.

MADAM SPEAKER: Point of order, Mr Parton?

Mr Parton: The question was specifically about why there has been such a dramatic increase in the frequency of Gambling and Racing Commission inspections at the Canberra Greyhound Racing Club.

MADAM SPEAKER: In response to that, maybe be more concise in the time you have left, minister.

MR RAMSAY: I have nothing more to add.

MS LEE: Minister, did you or your office or your directorate direct the Gambling and Racing Commission to increase the frequency of inspections?

MR RAMSAY: No, I did not. No, my office did not. I will take on notice if there was any communication from the directorate.

Government—firearms amnesty

MRS JONES: My question is to the Minister for Police and Emergency Services. Minister, in your answer to question on notice 665, you advised that ACT legislation requires firearms to be surrendered exclusively to a police officer during an amnesty, and that this process is contrary to the system in New South Wales. You stated that “in New South Wales, all firearms, firearm parts, ammunition and prohibited weapons could have been surrendered to a participating firearms dealer”.

Minister, given that the ACT is completely surrounded by New South Wales and that the ACT government is often seeking to harmonise firearms laws with New South Wales, have you sought to amend the ACT legislation so that, should we have another firearms amnesty, people can hand their un-needed or unregistered weapons in to firearms dealers as well?

MR GENTLEMAN: I thank Mrs Jones for her question. It was a very successful amnesty this year, as I have reported to the Assembly. In relation to where people can hand firearms in during an amnesty, we did quite a bit of work with ACT Policing, with firearms dealers in the ACT and with the Firearms Consultative Committee and came up with the advice that it would be better if there were a single point of handover, and that was the ACT Firearms Registry in Mitchell. Some of the reasons for that were that it would be a salient place to deliver the weapons as a safe measure and also that it is a bit out of the way and less embarrassing for some people who have found firearms, perhaps from family inheritances and so on, and do not want to go directly to a public place.

With regard to New South Wales, of course they have different sets of opportunities there. People from the ACT could drive to New South Wales and hand over to dealers if they wanted to. But we said to people in the ACT that the point of repository would be the ACT Firearms Registry, and that is appropriate at this time. If we do another

amnesty in the future, I am happy to take the advice of the Firearms Consultative Committee, ACT Policing and any other stakeholders on that.

MRS JONES: Minister, given the feedback that some people drove away from the firearms dealer rather than handing in at the police because of their level of comfort, would you consider making changes for the next amnesty so we get more weapons handed in than we did?

MR GENTLEMAN: I have not received that sort of feedback at all from ACT Policing. However, I will take Mrs Jones's comments on board. As we think about any future amnesties we will have a look at that.

MR HANSON: Do you have any evidence that you can provide that shows that precluding firearms dealers from the ACT gun amnesty would be more successful than including them?

MR GENTLEMAN: No. As I said, when we were proposing a drop-off point for firearms we engaged with stakeholders across the ACT, including ACT Police, the firearms consultative committee and key stakeholders. That was a decision on the policy matter.

Environment—little eagle conservation

MS CODY: My question is to the Minister for the Environment and Heritage. Can the minister update the Assembly on the ACT's little eagle population?

MR GENTLEMAN: I thank Ms Cody for her question and her interest in the environment right across the ACT. The little eagle is a medium-sized raptor endemic to Australia. It is found in open grassland and woodland habitats across most of the mainland. Since capturing the public's imagination last year with its long-distance commute home to Canberra, one little eagle has spurred interest in the species and those that live and breed in Canberra.

This particular little eagle flew more than 3,300 kilometres back to the capital city after wintering in the Daly Waters region of the Northern Territory. This far-travelling little eagle made its home range in the ACT. The range itself extended from south of Strathnairn, to east of the Murrumbidgee River, across to Wallaroo in the north and the CSIRO lands in the east, and encompassed two known nesting sites at Strathnairn and CSIRO.

The ACT is lucky to play host to four breeding pairs of little eagles, two of which last year produced a fledgling each. The year before, a breeding pair also raised a fledgling on the CSIRO Ginninderra site. Unfortunately the little eagle is listed as a vulnerable species in both the ACT and New South Wales, but not nationally, due to competition with other birds of prey such as wedge-tails; secondary poisoning from Pindone, a rabbit control measure; and with loss and fragmentation of habitat.

However, the ACT government remains committed to preserving and expanding the population of little eagles in the territory. In 2013, a new nest site was found and

reported to the ACT government. The breeding pair, known as the lower Molonglo pair, successfully raised a chick in a pine tree immediately to the south of the Strathnairn homestead.

Through careful study and monitoring, the government has found that our population of little eagles predominantly resides in open woodlands of the Canberra region and that its diet consists mainly of rabbits. For the Strathnairn pair, we now know that rabbits make up more than 50 per cent of their diet, with medium sized birds— (*Time expired.*)

MS CODY: Minister, what is the ACT government doing to conserve and protect the little eagle population in the ACT?

MR GENTLEMAN: The government remains committed to preserving the little eagle population in our region. To inform further planning and conservation and to identify the protected areas of importance to little eagles, researchers are working hard to gain a better understanding of the species. This includes investigating how they move through their environment, their range and their nesting habits.

The government is part of a joint research project involving the Institute of Applied Ecology at the University of Canberra, the CSIRO and Ginninderry joint venture. The project has enabled cameras to be set up at the west Belconnen nesting site, which will provide information on diet, breeding times and breeding successes.

While the little eagles do not breed successfully every year, this presents a great opportunity to observe the eagles' behaviour early in the breeding season. We are hopeful that this is one of the successful years that produces a fledging little eagle.

We still do not know as much as we would like about these birds. This research, combined with leg banding and satellite tracking, will help fill these knowledge gaps and inform conservation work into the future.

Further additional study allows the ACT government to make plans and regulations regarding development in known nesting areas to ensure that the little eagle populations are considered and appropriately protected at all times. By plotting mating habits, movement and breeding locations the ACT government is able to build around the requirements of the species and help improve their numbers.

MS CHEYNE: Minister, how can the public be involved and view the little eagle?

MR GENTLEMAN: I thank Ms Cheyne as well for her interest in the environment. As part of the joint research project I just mentioned, the ACT government is working with the CSIRO, the University of Canberra and the Ginninderry joint venture to both track and film the little eagles in their natural habitat. The public can now get a fascinating look at our little eagle population through the livestreaming video of a nesting site in West Belconnen. This livestream will provide information on the diet as well as the breeding timing and success of the little eagles. You can find the link to the livestream by googling "Belconnen little eagle".

The joint project will allow for anybody to spy on and marvel at one of our most engaging species in the ACT. Based on early information, during the current nesting season the little eagles are most likely to be visiting the nest between 8 am and 10 am. You can also track the progress of the nest building and see any additions the eagle is making to the nest.

The new video technology allows both researchers and the public to be engaged in this research. The eagles are cautious birds and will easily abandon a nesting site if disturbed so the camera presents a great opportunity. This is particularly prevalent at the early stages of nesting prior to a chick so having this non-intrusive video streaming provides both researchers and the public with a disturbance-free form of access to the bird.

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

Supplementary answer to question without notice Aboriginals and Torres Strait Islanders—out of home care review

MS STEPHEN-SMITH: In one of my responses today I indicated that the first meeting of the steering committee of the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander over-representation review had occurred last week. It was, in fact, yesterday.

ACT Policing—funding

Debate resumed.

MR RATTENBURY (Kurrajong) (3.26): While I appreciate and agree with the general thrust of what Mrs Jones is saying, or at least what I understand she is saying in her motion—that is, that police perform a very important role in our city and that they need to be adequately resourced—I think that we need to put this motion into perspective and in its proper context. Just as the agencies for which I am responsible have been subject to savings over time, I think it is reasonable that the police, as a government agency, also are required to find efficiencies. I do not think there is any reason to expect that the police cannot make efforts to find efficiencies or improve the efficacy of their operations.

In some obvious ways, police are different to other agencies. They have a front-line enforcement and protection role but, like other agencies, they also run offices and management structures, training and travel and a whole host of functions typical of government or government-funded agencies. Of course, efficiency drives apply at the federal level as well, as members would know, and it is worth noting that they also apply to agencies that receive government appropriations, such as the Australian Federal Police.

I do note that Minister Gentleman's amendment indicates that, in response to the growing ACT population and geographical footprint, in the 2017-18 budget the government has invested \$2 million to review current operating models and infrastructure to assist the government and ACT Policing to make informed,

evidence-based decisions for policing in the ACT over the coming years. My suggestion would be that, for now, the Assembly should not interfere in the process that is currently underway and that we actually await the outcomes of that process.

I certainly agree, and the Greens do, that the police need to be adequately resourced. They perform an incredibly important job in keeping our community safe in what, at times, can be extremely difficult circumstances. I would like to acknowledge and thank ACT Policing for their service to the community. However, in order to reduce crime and to assist police in performing their duties, we also need to be making a range of other investments, be they educational programs or social programs or justice programs. That is something that the Greens think is an important part of this discussion because, if our objective is to make the community safe, simply giving more money to the police is not the sole or only pathway to do that.

Mrs Jones interjecting—

MADAM SPEAKER: Mrs Jones, please. Mr Rattenbury, can you continue?

MR RATTENBURY: Right across government there are a range of ways we need to make investments to make the community safer and to reduce crime. I think that notion of safety is quite a broad one. I think we need to be mindful of those who are the victims of crime, the ripple effect that crimes in our community can have and to some extent those who are involved in crime themselves, who often end up involved in poor decision-making, perhaps inadvertently. There are those who simply do the wrong thing, but I think there are others who get caught up for the wrong reasons.

The point I want to make here is that in some ways the nature of Mrs Jones's motion does not recognise the choices that have to be made, and there are a range of choices that do have to be made when it comes to government expenditure. I want to make the observation that the Greens believe that simply giving more money to the police is not the only way to fix safety issues in our community. The notion of justice reinvestment, that idea that spending money up-front can in fact avoid a lot of costs down the line, is a really important part of what we think can be done when it comes to making our community safer. Members have heard me speak a number of times in this place about the value of justice reinvestment and why I believe it is a good idea. I do not intend to go on about it at length today, but I think it is important in this conversation.

Mrs Jones has made a number of interjections now, despite the fact that I listened to her speech in silence, even though I disagreed with a number of the points that she made. She said that was not the point she was making. She can make the point she wants to make. The point I would like to add to the conversation—and I think I am entitled to do so—is that when we are talking about community safety there are a number of elements that we need to talk to. When it comes to talking about budget allocation there are a number of choices that have to be made. The more money that goes to ACT Policing the less money there is for some of these other matters, because the budget is a finite thing. That is simply the observation I am seeking to make in this debate, and I think it is one that is worth making.

I would like to talk about the important issue of family and domestic violence in this context of policing. Domestic violence remains a terrible problem in Australia. Of course we are not immune from that here in the ACT. We know that women continue to be subject to physical and sexual violence, and the statistics which we have had cited in this place many times are dismaying—figures such as the fact that one in three women will be subject to violence in their lifetime. There are many other examples. Again we know that domestic and family violence ripples through the community in substantial ways. As a community we need to work hard to change and shape the underlying community values that shape the social context in which domestic and family violence occurs. We have already acknowledged that the rates of family violence are not dropping, and that it is something that is pervasive in our community.

It is pleasing to see that the government has provided funding to increase ACT Policing's capacity to respond to an increase in the reporting of family and domestic violence incidents. This increase in reporting, I think, is widely accepted. It partly reflects the growing focus in family violence at both a national level and a local level. The government is investing \$1.18 million over four years in the 2016-17 safer families package to employ two dedicated order liaison officers, or OLOs, to assist applicants applying for family violence orders. There is also funding to employ a dedicated female Aboriginal liaison officer to support Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander families.

When we look at the underlying drivers of domestic violence we know that our attitudes to women must change if we are to ensure that women can live safely, and those attitudes are not changing fast enough. The ACT Greens are extremely pleased to see additional resources being given to police to address this critically important issue.

To conclude, whilst I do not agree with the way Mrs Jones's motion has been expressed today, I do, as I say, underline the important role that police play in community safety in the territory. I do not think the motion accurately reflects what is occurring through the budget or the ongoing discussions between ACT Policing and other parts of government about the best way to structure the organisation and to realise savings and efficiencies. I do not think it is reasonable to come into this place and suggest one particular agency, above all others, should be immune from the requirement to find efficiencies where they can be made. As Mr Gentleman's amendment has indicated, there is currently a funded and detailed process going on to examine those issues. On that broad basis, the Greens will be supporting the amendment moved by Mr Gentleman today.

MRS JONES (Murrumbidgee) (3.34): I thank the government for their amendment. However, given that it essentially takes out the need for the government to respond and come back to this place and explain why ACT Policing is expected to undertake more work with fewer resources, the government should ensure that funding at least keeps up with inflation, which, despite what Mr Rattenbury wants to make out, is not a request for more money. Ask the union movement how they maintain their wage

rates. This is not a request for more money. This is asking the government to keep up with inflation. That is all that has been asked for in this motion.

Mr Rattenbury accused me of interjecting on him where I disagreed with his point. The only point I was disagreeing with—and he is smart enough to know—is that it is not a request for more money; it is asking the government to at least keep up with inflation and also for the government to come back with plans on how they are going to address this issue of shortfall in funding over a period of years. We will not be supporting the amendment.

I think it is also hilarious that the minister's amendment says that ACT Policing is adequately resourced to ensure that Canberra remains one of the safest places to live. What, compared to Detroit? Mogadishu? Frankly, I think the people of Waramanga only see here a minister standing on his little pedestal fiddling while Waramanga burns, while six-year-olds have to try to put out with the garden hose a fire in their car while their father bleeds to death on the front lawn. It is a disgrace and it is embarrassing.

It is embarrassing that the government should try to amend my motion to say that this is one of the safest places to live. This is clearly not one of the safest places to live. Ask the Chinese community; ask the residents of Kambah, Waramanga and Fisher; ask the residents whose children have been involved in these incidents, whose mothers and fathers have been involved in incidents. This is clearly not the safest place to live in the country even. Sixty-four per cent of women claim to feel unsafe in Woden after dark, and the minister gives no indication of how that is going to be improved. All he does is stand here and say, "No problem here. There's no problem here. No problems."

Minister Rattenbury came in here and said, "Oh, well, there is no need for Mrs Jones to ask that policing funding be kept even in line with inflation because there are other calls on the budget." That is a perfectly ridiculous argument, because of course we should be maintaining baseline police funding across the board. The ACT government has not kept police funding in line with inflation, population or workloads. That is clear.

Minister Rattenbury talked about domestic violence, as the minister for policing did. On domestic violence, obviously we are succeeding in some ways in this space but there is no doubt that each individual call-out of police to a domestic violence incident is taking them longer. That is what the men and women of the police force on the ground are telling me. That is their daily experience. They want to do that work well and it takes longer than previous incidents that they have been involved in.

Funding has only increased by five per cent, while inflation has increased by over eight per cent and the population has gone up by over 11 per cent. The government was constantly telling us in the last election how the population is increasing at such a fast pace—and I acknowledge and am glad to hear that there are a couple of million dollars being spent on a review of where we are going to go in the future with this—but it does not mean that there has not been a historical problem or that there should not be any action taken now.

Even if we just look at the built form, the Civic police station is dilapidated. There are meeting rooms where water gets in when it rains. The Gungahlin police station is the smallest police station I have ever visited and yet that region would have to be rivalling Belconnen in population now. There is plenty more that this government needs to be doing. But all I am asking them to do is to consider keeping up with inflation in the funding for this organisation, which is intended to keep us safe, which is a basic part of state government, a very basic function.

Calls demanding police resources are up by 16 per cent, robberies are up by 53 per cent, offences against a person are up by 14.8 per cent, drug-driving is up by 160 per cent, and arson is up by 12.5 per cent. On a total funding per capita basis, the ACT government's baseline police funding is lower than the baseline anywhere else in Australia. Many constituents have spoken with me about how they feel the government is not serious about crime. These constituents feel that the police are held back by their lack of funding and their scarce resources. They get the same comment when they call on the police: that they are under massive pressure.

The ACT government, to date, has not even considered our anti-consorting laws. I hope things are about to change. Despite the Chief Police Officer's support for them and calls for them which say that this is what is absolutely required in order for her to be able to do her job and for her organisation to do their job, the ACT government is somehow compromised and thinks that it knows better than the police who are on the ground dealing with bikies and other criminals every day. If the ACT were able to have preventative laws like other states do, the territory would not be as vulnerable to bikie gang violence as it is today. We already have a problem with overcrowding in the AMC. We do not need more crimes committed so that we can lock more people up.

We need to stop severe organised crime, serious organised crime, occurring. My family came to Australia from Italy to avoid living like this because in their towns and in their places people could not stand up to the mafia and could not stand up to the camorra. We need to stop these things happening before the six-year-old is not trying to put out the fire with the garden hose but is lying dead on the pavement.

The government should support this motion and should show police and the people of Canberra that it supports them. The police are under increasing pressure; the funding has not kept up. It is the most basic service that a state government should provide and I am disappointed that the minister tries to paint the picture that there is nothing wrong in this territory while the place falls apart.

Question put:

That the amendment be agreed to.

The Assembly voted—

Ayes 12

Noes 9

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

Question resolved in the affirmative.

Amendment agreed to.

Original question, as amended, resolved in the affirmative.

Clubs sector

MR PARTON (Brindabella) (3.44): I move:

That this Assembly:

- (1) notes the important contribution made by clubs in the ACT, such as:
 - (a) a social contribution of \$39 million through community donations, subsidised access to facilities and volunteering;
 - (b) an investment of over \$140 million in local sport teams and sporting infrastructure since 2000;
 - (c) employment of over 1745 people which is on average per club more than any other State or Territory; and
 - (d) that clubs maintain and operate the vast majority of the ACT's sport and recreational infrastructure, over 400 hectares;
- (2) further notes that in 2016, a tripartisan committee, including Ms Fitzharris MLA, Mr Rattenbury MLA and Ms Lawder MLA, included the following recommendations:
 - (a) the Committee recommends that a taskforce be established "to develop an action plan for problem gambling" with an initial focus, "to reduce the duration of gambling problems when they arise in individuals using targeted approaches";
 - (b) the Committee recommends that the Government not apply a Lease Variation Charge when clubs seek to vary their leases at the clubs premises to assist in diversifying their revenue base; and
 - (c) the Committee recommends that the Government consider how best to devise a water subsidy scheme for eligible clubs;

- (3) further notes that there are a number of other recommendations yet to be implemented by the Government despite tripartisan support; and
- (4) calls on the ACT Government to:
 - (a) actively engage with all clubs and all representative bodies;
 - (b) provide certainty to the sector by not frequently changing regulations; and
 - (c) commit to a moratorium of any technological change to electronic gaming machines for this term of Government, noting it is significantly reducing the number of machines in the Territory.

I do not understand why there is such contention in this space. Seriously, I do not understand why we are fighting so much in this area, and I think it is time to cease. It is high time that we had a serious conversation about our community clubs in this chamber, to call time out and to allow us to have some certainty for this very important part of our community. I call upon this government to stop moving the goalposts for our clubs, to provide some certainty and to stop treating our community clubs with contempt. Additionally, I would like to believe that this Assembly can fully embrace the important social and economic contribution that clubs make to Canberra, because it is important.

Over the last decade our clubs have faced a whirlpool of ever-changing rules, regulations, taxes and charges that have forced, among other things, the closure or the merging of more than a dozen clubs. West Belconnen Leagues Club was swallowed up by the Raiders; the Southern Cross Club took over Wests at Jamison; the Hellenic Club took over the Canberra RSL. We have seen the closure of the Southern Cross Club at Kaleen; we have seen the merger of the Canberra Club and the Canberra Services Club, with the merged entity operating at the old RUC site at Barton.

The Braddon Club has closed; the Tuggeranong Valley Leagues Club has closed; the Sports Club at Kaleen was very close to going into administration and is now part of the Eastlake group; the Southern Cross Club at Turner has become the RUC at Turner, with the RUC now just operating one site; the Yamba Sports Club has permanently closed; the Magpies City Club has permanently closed; the Serbian Club has permanently closed; the West Deakin Hellenic Bowling Club has permanently closed. In recent months we have seen movement to bring the Magpies at Belconnen from two locations down to one. During this time we have also seen the Vikings Group sell the Capital Golf Club because it was not viable, and it is a similar story with the Ainslie Group and the Canberra City Bowling Club.

I do not know if you are noticing a pattern here, Madam Assistant Speaker. It is no wonder that our clubs have felt the pinch after a decade of costly regulatory changes, including multiple tax increases, the introduction of the problem gambling fund levy, an increase to the community contribution level, ATM bans, EFTPOS restrictions and a reduction in the total number of electronic gaming machines. The liquor fees are astronomically higher than over the border in New South Wales, as are the water charges.

What we have also seen in recent times is this extreme focus on poker machines. I understand that there is a very vocal, extremist minority that is hell-bent on closing the clubs industry and, indeed, on completely removing poker machines from Australia. For many, this has become an obsession. That obsession is being entertained particularly by Greens elected members around the country. In jurisdictions like this one, where the Labor Party requires Greens support to survive, we are also entertaining this obsession here. This is despite the fact that electronic gaming of this nature is a declining form of gambling. At a meeting involving most gambling ministers earlier in the year, the federal Minister for Human Services, Mr Alan Tudge, said:

Online gambling is growing faster than any other form of gambling ...

I repeat: "Online gambling is growing faster than any other form of gambling." He continued:

... and the incidence of problem gambling is higher.

The minister went on to say:

The gambling problems of the future will all come from the online space ...

Why we are continuing to focus on this very narrow gambling space—poker machines—is beyond me. Let us talk about the amazing contribution that our clubs make to the ACT. Our clubs are not-for-profit organisations. I still think this is one of the biggest reasons that we have the lowest problem gambling rates in the country. We are not talking about multinational entities that are focused entirely on profit.

The ACT clubs industry remains a massive contributor to our city. They provide an amazingly diverse range of services. The level of infrastructure is so impressive—20 bowling greens, a tennis facility, a hockey centre, a basketball stadium, three cricket fields, a yacht club, a race track, a BMX track and five football fields. I recall having a conversation in a committee hearing where the sports and rec area were asked if it would be possible for the government to jump in and maintain these sort of facilities if the clubs sector was not doing it. The answer was categorically no.

This stuff is really important to the community. According to the KPMG national clubs census, our clubs provide \$39 million in social contribution, employ 1,745 people, have 327,000 members across the territory and pay \$73 million in taxes. As a group of elected members, I understand that we have some differing positions in the gambling space. I get that, and I understand that we will be debating some of those when we deal with another matter tomorrow. Leaving all of that aside, can we genuinely embrace what our clubs have done and what they are doing for the ACT?

Is it too much to ask for the government to just let bygones be bygones and genuinely engage with the peak body representing the vast bulk of our clubs? Despite all of the noise that is being created on the extreme edges of this debate, can we not create some breathing space and some certainty in this space by committing to a moratorium on

any technological changes to electronic gaming machines at least for the term of this government? There are less than three years left. We have heard the long list of the wreckage in this sector; we have heard the long list of club closures and mergers. It is very clear that these not-for-profit community organisations are in some instances under severe stress. Can we just press pause and allow our clubs to serve their communities in the way that they have been doing for years? That is pretty much the gist of it.

MR RAMSAY (Ginninderra—Attorney-General, Minister for Regulatory Services, Minister for the Arts and Community Events and Minister for Veterans and Seniors) (3.51): The government will not be supporting the motion, although there are some matters raised by Mr Parton in his speech which I will refer to and which we are happy to note and to appreciate as well.

It is important for the Assembly to know that Mr Parton is operating on not only out-of-date and inaccurate information but, in a sense, with his head in the sand. It seems that now his self-appointed role is as shadow minister for poker machines, and that has become of concern to me. One of the few things that he and I do agree on in this motion is that the clubs have a significant place in the ACT community. Clubs support several hundred community groups and provide places for social and recreational activity. That is something on which I and the government congratulate them and thank them for.

I acknowledge their contribution and I also agree that we are living in a world where there are a number of significant changes, the most important of which are the market force changes in a changing economy. I note that the clubs are the first to admit that demographic changes mean that club patronage is declining. That is one of the reasons why the government is assisting them to diversify their business and to move away from a reliance on electronic gaming machines.

As has also been noted in this space, I have worked closely with ministers from other states and the territory, and the federal government, to address the growing pressure of online gambling. But a motion in this place deserves to be based on official and accurate data, and I refer Mr Parton to the official data on community contributions that is self-reported by the clubs and is published annually by the Gambling and Racing Commission.

The commission's 2015-16 report on gaming machines licensees' community contributions found that clubs in the ACT made financial contributions of close to \$11,736,000. Of this, \$8,753,000 was monetary and \$2,983,000 was in kind. The vast majority of community contributions—just under \$6,610,000—goes to support sport and recreation; although I do note, disappointingly, that, of this, only around \$350,000 goes to women's sport.

It should not be up to a member to correct the inaccuracies of another, but it is important for this discussion to be based on facts and not on misunderstanding. I note that the 2016 committee recommendations that the motion refers to are in fact from a public accounts committee that reported in 2015, and the matters that Mr Parton raises were addressed in the corresponding government response, also delivered in 2015.

Of the 45 recommendations in that report—or 46, if we note that recommendation 35 was split into two—the government agreed or agreed in principle with 25 of them, noted 10 of them and did not agree with 11 of them. Contrary to Mr Parton’s assertion in the motion that a number of recommendations in the report are yet to be implemented, by my count all of those that were agreed to or agreed in principle have been addressed, superseded or are being addressed in the current work of the government in multiple portfolio areas, including our work to further reduce the harm caused to the community from gambling.

I do not know whether there has been a little more focus on the next selfie stick video rather than on checking the facts; we might see that later. Maybe it would be advisable at times for Mr Parton to spend more time paying attention to what the government is doing rather than planning the next media stunt, because three days before he first sought to lodge this motion, on 18 September, I had already convened a landmark gambling harm minimisation round table with representation from all of the clubs’ representative groups—all of them—as well as expert academics, people with lived experience of gambling harm and community sector organisations that help to deal with the social impact of gambling harm.

That round table discussed how to develop a better evidence base for minimising the harm from problem gambling. The participants considered a broad range of options for improved harm minimisation, including the sharing of best practice between venues, ensuring appropriate staff training and self-exclusion rules. That group, comprising all of the club representative bodies, agreed that new measures, like precommitments and other technological solutions, should be explored.

My office and I are engaging, and do engage, with all clubs and their representative bodies. The constant assertions that we do not engage with ClubsACT are simply incorrect. ClubsACT was at the round table a month ago and was a meaningful contributor to the conversations that day about gambling harm reduction. My office has been meeting with member clubs of ClubsACT, when requested, on matters in relation to gambling reform. So it is particularly disappointing that Mr Parton continues to spout inaccuracies, especially when the evidence is very clear.

Indeed, if he had paid attention to what was reported on that day, he would have had photographic proof from that day of my engagement with the clubs sector, including with ClubsACT. Maybe a bit more time is being devoted to the latest syndicate; I do not know whether the latest syndicate will be formed to buy a poker machine and run it in the ACT. Considering Mr Parton’s comments in the *Canberra Times* back in May this year that gambling addiction was no more serious than having a proclivity for chocolate, I am not surprised that he seems little interested in being up to date on what actually is happening, including the government’s partnership with the clubs sector.

I do note that this week is Gambling Harm Awareness Week. We are yet to hear from Mr Parton about the importance of this initiative in reducing the harm caused by gambling. I was pleased on Monday this week to launch the Gambling and Racing Commission’s latest harm reduction venue support kit, with the motto of “Don’t play it down”. I have some of the resources here, if Mr Parton would like take them back to

his office or to his favourite clubs. Incidentally, ClubsACT was part of that event too.

Unlike Mr Parton, who seems to want to lessen the steps that we are taking regarding the impact of problem gambling, this government is absolutely committed to reducing the impact of problem gambling on this community. We do not play it down. We have been clear in our election policies, in our commitment to the parliamentary agreement and in our strong track record over the past year. We are committed to reducing the number of electronic gaming machines to 4,000 by 2020.

We are continually consulting and looking at the evidence to build the best framework that will balance the importance of the role of many clubs in their community, supporting community groups and providing sporting infrastructure and a social and recreational hub in their neighbourhood, against ensuring that this work is not funded by problem gamblers whose addiction affects not only them but their families, their colleagues, their friends and their broader community.

Earlier in this place we all agreed to a bill that had the effect of limiting EFTPOS withdrawals in clubs to \$200 per transaction, from a single point and with trained staff interaction. This has been a simple but practical measure in the suite of measures that we need to address gambling harm in our community, while not inhibiting the social and recreational offering of clubs. In addition to the industry round table that I hosted in September, I have also had advice from an expert panel of academics on harm minimisation research, and I will soon be convening a round table to specifically hear from the workers in the clubs sector, as staff are a key part of any harm minimisation approach.

Canberrans have made it clear that they expect this government to treat harm minimisation as a priority, and to deliver robust and effective reforms. Problem gambling has a devastating set of consequences for individuals and for families. Courageous individuals, including Professor Laurie Brown, have come forward and shared detailed and personal accounts of the effects of problem gambling, and their examples show us why it is critical to keep working towards a stronger harm minimisation framework.

The government will not be supporting Mr Parton's motion. It is out of date, it is built on a false premise and it rejects the importance of reducing the harm caused to individuals and to our community by problem gambling.

MR RATTENBURY (Kurrajong) (4.00): The Greens will not be supporting this motion today. While we agree with Mr Parton that community clubs provide significant value to our community, we do not accept that the good work clubs do means that they have a right not to be subject to scrutiny. We believe that the social licence for clubs to be reliant on poker machine revenue has expired, and we support the government working with clubs to help them diversify their revenue streams.

The Greens believe that clubs make a significant social and economic contribution to the Canberra community. The history of the clubs is very interesting. Many of the clubs were initially established in Canberra as places for like-minded communities to come together. That is best underlined by the very nature of the clubs. Some of them

were ethnic based. A number of them were sporting based. Those clubs have become very different operations over the last few decades. They have become large-scale poker machine venues. That is quite a different thing. To come here and simply talk generically about clubs ignores the reality of what is out there, and it is why we need to be having a real discussion about what these clubs are, what role they play in our community and what their future is.

I certainly accept the point Mr Parton makes in the first part of his motion: that the contribution of clubs can be measured in a number of ways, including employment, training, supporting local organisations, social connection—I do not think that one was in there but I will add it—and providing facilities, including sporting grounds. However, I question why Mr Parton felt the need to use inflated figures from the clubs industry rather than quoting from the figures from the independent Gambling and Racing Commission, which were, after all, self-reported by the clubs in the territory. I think it shows that Mr Parton and those in the industry, as we have seen a lot in the last 12 months, are not interested in having a genuine debate based on the facts. I do not think this helps the cause of the clubs.

The future of our clubs is a serious issue and it will need to be considered regardless of whether the government actively pursues a harm minimisation agenda. It has been reflected here today. Mr Parton made reference to it in his comments. The demographics are changing. What people want when they go out is changing. We see that all the time in the way restaurants come up, do well for a while and then close in this city. It is a tough business in this town, hospitality, and you can see it from the number of restaurants that come and go in this place. I do not know whether that is because Canberra restaurant goes or people who go out are fickle or whether they are just captured by the new thing. But people's preferences do change, and that is the industry the clubs are operating in. So there is a real discussion there about what their offering is to the community. Is it up to date? How can they remain relevant to people's changing consumption patterns of entertainment and the like?

It has been acknowledged today that the number of people playing poker machines continues to decrease. The Greens are committed to working with clubs to diversify and move away from what is an unsustainable reliance on poker machines and pokie revenue.

I think the essence of Mr Parton's motion is: "We just want to stand still." That is not the reality. That is the reality for nobody in this industry. It is not the reality for the consumers who go to these clubs. What we actually need to do is think about what the future is going to look like. To be fair, I know that the clubs industry is thinking about that, from the conversations I am having with them. They know that we cannot just stand still. So the only people who seem to be out of touch in this discussion are those who are saying, "Let's just stand still."

We accept that the transition away from a reliance on poker machine revenue will be challenging for some clubs. Again, I have had that conversation. I know it is not easy, which is why the reduction in the number of machines will be staged over several years and why the government is seeking to work with clubs to help identify alternative income streams.

From the Greens point of view, at the last election we put forward a transition plan for clubs and we remain committed to those measures. Our ideas included tax rebates for clubs with improved harm minimisation measures; water subsidies for sporting ovals and greens; reduced liquor-licensing fees for low-risk venues; and business and financial support for diversification proposals. Despite the very personal and targeted nature of the campaign that some of the clubs waged against the Greens at the last election, nonetheless we continue to meet with them and discuss with them what the future is going to look like, because we know it is important for this city. Despite those very direct and personal threats that I and my colleagues received, we are stepping beyond that because we understand the importance of this for our community.

I have always said that we may not agree on every issue but my door is always open to have those conversations. Going back in history, I think it was on the weekend after I was elected in 2008 that I drove to Bateman's Bay to attend the ClubsACT conference that they were having outside Canberra. I spent two hours in the car the weekend after a fierce election campaign to go and talk to them because we wanted to establish that connection, recognising the role they play in our community.

I am pleased that Mr Parton has raised the issue of the 2015 clubs inquiry, which provided an important framework for considering the future of our community clubs. While Mr Parton has quoted a number of important recommendations from the report, his motion, sadly and disappointingly, did not mention any of the additional comments that I provided as a member of that committee. In my additional comments I made mention of the fundamental dilemma that lies at the heart of this issue: that much of the benefit delivered by clubs is derived from poker machine revenue. Our community recognises the inherent harms arising from problem gambling and has a strong desire to see those harms minimised.

I made a number of alternative recommendations in that report which recognise that harm minimisation must be part of the conversation about the future of our clubs. These recommendations include retaining the \$250 ATM withdrawal limit, which was proposed to be removed by the rest of the committee; introducing a \$250 EFTPOS withdrawal limit, which I am pleased to see and was very happy the minister moved on earlier this year; retaining two per cent of the community contributions to be held and distributed by an independent community fund; and increasing the problem gambling assistance fund levy to one per cent. It is currently at 0.75 per cent of gaming machine revenue. That is an increase and it is welcome. And, as people know, we recommended introducing a \$1 maximum bet limit and a maximum loss rate of \$120 per hour on all class C poker machines.

I raise these recommendations from the report because I think it is important that we consider harm minimisation alongside ways that we can support our clubs. These two issues should go hand in hand. I note that the government did respond to this report, as the attorney has outlined today, and agreed in principle with 25 of the 46 recommendations. It is my understanding that, as the minister said in his remarks, all those recommendations have been or are being addressed.

The Greens are pleased to be working with the government to reduce the number of poker machines in the territory, improve harm minimisation and reduce the impact of gambling harm in our community. The public conversation we have had over recent months, led by people with lived experience of gambling harm, has helped our community come a long way in understanding just how addictive and destructive poker machines can be. As a result, most of us are no longer willing to dismiss this as a minor issue that should be left up to each individual to deal with.

In 2014-15 people in the ACT spent nearly \$168 million on the pokies. Almost 20 per cent of ACT adults played the pokies at least once in that period, with losses totalling \$37½ million. Of these losses, 63 per cent came from people with at least some problem gambling symptoms. Twenty-eight per cent of losses came from people at moderate risk or people identified as problem gamblers. That means that \$10.59 million was lost by people with some level of gambling addiction.

Anyone can develop a gambling problem. It does not depend on age, gender, income, education or ethnic background. For people experiencing mental or physical health problems, stress, social isolation, or loss and grief, the risk of problem gambling developing is greater. The evidence shows that poker machines are addictive and manipulative and are designed that way so that people lose money. The damage they are inflicting upon families and our community is real.

I am conscious that we often debate issues in this place where we talk about how tough it is for people and about cost of living issues and some of the financial pressures that people are under. But we are talking here about figures of \$37½ million lost on the pokies and more than \$10½ million of that coming from people with some level of gambling addiction. I find it discordant that those issues are not connected by some people in the way they discuss issues in this place.

The Greens are committed to responding to the issue of the way poker machines are designed and their very purpose of ensuring that people lose money. We have secured a number of commitments which will reduce gambling harm across the territory, and I have touched on that. They include a decrease in the number of poker machines in the ACT, down to 4,000 this term and a 20 per cent reduction by 2020. The fact is that Canberra has too many poker machines. With one of the highest rates of pokies per capita across all states and territories, this is not an issue we can continue to ignore.

We are also looking at other ways that we can reduce gambling harm in the territory. As I mentioned earlier, we have already increased the problem gambling assistance fund by \$250,000 for additional research on gambling harm and to support local groups to address problem gambling right here in our community. I welcome the government's commitment to undertake a review of the community contribution scheme in the coming months. The Greens would like to see the contribution rate increase to a minimum of 10 per cent and a proportion directed into a centralised community fund to be distributed by an independent board.

The figures the minister just gave about the spend on sport and how \$6.6 million goes towards supporting community sport and recreation and yet only \$350,000 goes to

women's sport are, I think, really good evidence as to why we need to think about putting some of this money into an independent fund. I do not think the contributions scheme is working in the way that it should be.

Other key items are the exploration of mandatory precommitments and bet limits for poker machines in the territory. We know that the intentionally addictive features of poker machines make it harder for people to make informed and rational choices about their spending. The Productivity Commission found that around 70 per cent of poker machine players report exceeding their spending limits sometimes, while 12 per cent exceed those limits often or always. Higher risk gamblers exceed their limits more often and report greater harm when they do. Mandatory precommitment aims to help high-risk gamblers control their spending and ensure that those limits are not exceeded.

In relation to bet limits, all poker machines across the ACT currently allow players to bet up to \$10 per spin, which can lead to losses of up to \$1,200 per hour. We support the Productivity Commission's finding that a bet limit of \$2 or less is needed to make some useful inroads into reducing harms, and we have been public in saying that we think that \$1 per spin is best practice. Research has found that recreational and non-problem gamblers usually bet at a lower denomination, with 80 per cent making bets at or below \$1. Therefore, we believe that lower bet limits should not impact on recreational gamblers but would provide strong protections for those at risk of gambling harm.

The Greens acknowledge the important contribution that clubs make to our community. We want to work with clubs and their representative bodies to help them have diversified and sustainable business models into the future. We do not support Mr Parton's motion because it does not recognise the need to improve harm minimisation and address gambling harm, which is inherently linked to the issue of clubs being reliant on poker machine revenue.

Mr Parton gave us the "reasonable bloke" speech and talked about people at the extremes of this debate. The reality is that, unfortunately, some either representing the industry or in the industry have also taken extreme positions in recent times. They have simply said, "We will never shift on the number of poker machines and harm minimisation issues in this territory." That is not helpful either. That discussion does not get us very far either.

Every person in this place knows that the future of clubs is a live question. We have to try to find ways to work on it together. We have heard today the suggestion of a moratorium on tech change. I am not sure that that is actually what the clubs are arguing for either, because some of the clubs are lobbying me for new types of technology to come into clubs. If we are going to have a moratorium on tech change, that has to cut both ways. I do not think that is where the clubs are at either. And I do not think we want to be there, because we want to think about what they can be doing to make themselves viable going forward.

We do want to let the clubs serve our community, but it does not serve our community to be overly reliant on poker machine revenue and revenue from problem gamblers.

Our commitment is to continue doing all we can to better support addicted gamblers and their families at the same time as supporting our clubs to survive and flourish, especially those committed to reducing their reliance on revenue from pokies and problem gambling. Again, I know they are out there because I have had interesting conversations with people who know that things need to change. That is the space we need to be in: having that deep and meaningful conversation about how we protect the future of our clubs and protect our community from gambling harm.

MR PARTON (Brindabella) (4.15), in reply: In response to comments made by Mr Ramsay and Mr Rattenbury, the report that I referred to was from KPMG, from 2015. If Mr Ramsay had paid attention, he would know that I specifically referred to the KPMG report in my speech. I have a copy of that report in my office, should he wish to read it. That figure of \$39 million of social contribution broadens the scope to include \$25 million in subsidised facilities. When we are looking at what the clubs provide the ACT community, the real money that it costs to keep these facilities and to run them for the community just cannot be dismissed. It includes that. It also includes volunteering, at \$5 million, and the remainder is community contributions. That is from the KPMG report from 2015.

I thank the minister for boosting my social media reach. I reject the assertion that was made regarding the spending on women's sport because, again, what that suggests is that the 20 bowling greens, the tennis facility, the hockey centre, the basketball stadium, the three cricket fields, the yacht club, the racetrack, the BMX track and the five football fields are used exclusively by men, and very clearly they are not. That is all I have got for you at this stage.

Question put:

That the motion be agreed to.

The Assembly voted—

Ayes 9

Mr Coe	Mr Milligan
Mr Hanson	Mr Parton
Mrs Jones	Mr Wall
Mrs Kikkert	
Ms Lawder	
Ms Lee	

Noes 12

Ms Berry	Ms Le Couteur
Ms Burch	Ms Orr
Ms Cheyne	Mr Pettersson
Ms Cody	Mr Ramsay
Ms Fitzharris	Mr Rattenbury
Mr Gentleman	Ms Stephen-Smith

Question resolved in the negative.

Housing affordability

MS ORR (Yerrabi) (4.21): I move:

That this Assembly:

(1) notes:

- (a) the first ACT Housing and Homelessness Summit was held on 17 October 2017, bringing together 200 people representing 82 organisations covering the full spectrum of housing and homelessness services and industry expertise;
- (b) the summit was informed by input from extensive expert and community consultation covering 26 workshops with 125 organisations and almost 340 individual contributions; and
- (c) the positive response to the summit from those who attended;

(2) further notes:

- (a) the outcomes of the summit will be key to the development of a new housing strategy, a commitment made by the Government at the 2016 election;
- (b) the new ACT housing strategy will follow on from the ACT Government's Affordable Housing Action Plan which since 2007 has been directing carefully planned efforts to respond to housing demand and moderate house prices and rent increases; and
- (c) that the ACT community, through the Government, invests extensively in housing and homelessness services and maintains both the lowest rough sleeping rate and the highest social housing ratio of any Australian jurisdiction; and

(3) calls on the ACT Government to:

- (a) collate the feedback received at the ACT Housing and Homelessness Summit and throughout the extensive community consultation process in developing a new ACT housing strategy, and provide this report to the Assembly;
- (b) implement announcements made at the summit in cooperation with housing and homelessness experts and community members;
- (c) identify opportunities for innovative and collaborative partnerships in the housing sector that deliver wider benefits to the community;
- (d) ensure new initiatives to improve housing affordability build on existing policies around housing supply, planning and tax reform; and
- (e) continue to advocate for national policy change to improve housing affordability and make homelessness funding more secure.

In starting, it is worth noting that, in the same week that this Assembly turned one, ACT Labor entered its 17th year of government. After 17 years it would be easy to look at those areas of public policy we have already made reforms in and say that we have addressed the problem. The motion I move today in my name acknowledges that,

despite the fact that this government is approaching two decades in government, we are always working on making things better. This motion speaks to where we have accepted that things change and, as those things change, policy must respond.

Over the last three months the ACT government has been in an in-depth discussion with Canberrans on housing and homelessness in the territory. Having spent the last 10 years implementing the 63 initiatives recommended in the affordable housing action plan, we have asked the question: “What has worked well?” We asked people what can be done to improve the current situation here in the ACT. While a lot of feedback was supportive of the work that has already been done, there were some clear opportunities raised for improvement. This is how this government, now in its fifth term, will move forward: by working with the community and asking these questions in order to learn what needs to be improved and updated. The ACT housing and homelessness summit does not just tick a box on the parliamentary agreement; it sets the tone for this government’s commitment to continued improvements in public policy.

In 2007 the ACT government developed the affordable housing action plan. Ten years on, recognising the need to revisit our approach, we are in the process of reviewing the plan and developing the ACT housing strategy, which will set out our reform agenda in housing and homelessness for the next 10 years. This is not the only example of our undertaking periodic review of our policy settings. Approaches in other areas such as education and family violence are also being re-examined. I thank the Deputy Chief Minister for showing leadership and foresight in engaging the community and stakeholders in all these policy debates.

The process followed in developing the ACT housing strategy also highlights our commitment not just to consultation but also to engagement. The housing and homelessness summit was the first of its kind in Canberra, marking the innovative nature of this government in carrying on public discourse. Perhaps more impressive was the lead-up to the summit. On 28 July 2017 the minister began community consultation with the release of the *Towards a new housing strategy: an ACT community conversation* discussion paper. This started a seven-week period of intensive engagement with a range of community groups, stakeholders and members of the public.

Over this period there were 2,399 visits to the ACT government’s your say website. People visiting the website stayed for an average of four minutes and 30 seconds. There were 3,350 social media views and 166 online surveys completed. Across 26 community workshops, 337 participants representing some 125 different organisations were involved. The six community drop-in sessions held across Canberra hosted 129 attendees. The consultation received seven online comments, 38 one-on-one or small group interview submissions and 36 formal submissions. All of these numbers are impressive but mean nothing if we do not learn what we need to learn from them and produce a culmination of those lessons in mapping out the path ahead. So the ACT government hosted the first ACT housing and homelessness summit on 17 October this year. The summit drew on the extensive consultation which preceded it.

The discussion paper which framed this conversation identified four goals for a housing strategy: reducing homelessness, strengthening social housing assistance, increasing affordable rental housing, and increasing affordable home ownership. Through participation in the workshops, online surveys and submission period, a number of consistent areas of concern or opportunities for improvement for each of these goals were established. These included increasing the supply and resourcing of homelessness services and accommodation; greater volume of well-designed social housing, with diversity mirroring our community's expectations; providing longer leases and greater security of tenure to low income households; and pursuing planning changes to allow greater diversity and quality of housing choices. These, and many other suggestions, were explored at the summit.

Bringing together all the participants taking part in the discussion and all of the ideas they contributed, the summit sought to collate the options available in a way that will inform the ACT housing strategy's recommendations to the government. The government deliberately did not put specific proposals to the summit but rather sought to continue the conversation we had already been having with participants to further develop these ideas in a collaborative environment that supports the co-design of proposals.

With the release of the discussion paper, the minister challenged the community to generate these ideas for discussion at the summit. The community were asked to be creative and inventive in challenging the status quo with the housing sector and to consider how things might be done differently. It is important for any government to ask this question of itself and its electorate to ensure that we are not simply doing things a certain way because it is how we have done them in the past. The consultation process leading to the development of the ACT housing strategy has reached out to the community and stakeholders to raise awareness of the issues involved and encourage ownership of those challenges and opportunities for improvement. The process has been a true collaboration of government, business, the community sector and individuals.

I have spoken many times already in this chamber of the work being done in delivering a community park to the people of Giralang. A key reason for my insistence on discussing this project is a genuine commitment not just to public consultation but also to public engagement. While this may seem like an exercise in semantics, it always amazes me how a change in language can lead to a change in attitude. The process of community engagement followed in developing the ACT housing strategy is a shining example of what can be achieved when we actively encourage community involvement in the policy discussion. One only has to go to the your say website to see the lengths we have gone to in listening to the various interest groups involved.

The website contains extensive summaries of consultation undertaken with community sector groups such as ACT Shelter and ACTCOSS; academics from the ANU and University of Canberra; peak body groups such as the Planning Institute of Australia, the Real Estate Institute of the ACT and even the Master Builders Association; cultural groups representing those providing services to the Aboriginal

and Torres Strait Islander community; and members of the community representing those experiencing homelessness, people with a disability and renters.

This comprehensive consultation was assisted by the affordable housing advisory group. A group set up in early 2017, the advisory group includes representatives involved in organisations such as ACT Shelter, the ACT property council, Luton Properties, Migrant and Refugee Settlement Services, Woden Community Services, the University of Canberra, Havelock Housing Association and the ACT chapter of the Australian Institute of Architects. Each of these representatives played an active role in the community engagement leading up to the summit.

At the summit, the minister announced new initiatives we are already taking as a result of community consultation. The ACT government is establishing a housing innovation fund of \$1 million. This will provide seed funding to facilitate new affordable housing projects around Canberra. Initially three projects—HomeGround affordable rental, Homeshare and the Nightingale Housing model—will be piloted. These projects were commitments made in the parliamentary agreement. Expressions of interest are being sought from organisations to lead these pilots. However, the ideas taken away from the summit will also assist in identifying future initiatives that the fund can assist.

The government has also taken the step of announcing its first annual target on affordable, public and community housing supply. This target was set under the recently passed land development and city renewal legislation. Before the end of the financial year, 530 sites will be released for affordable home purchase and public and community housing. This marks an increase of 240 sites on what would have otherwise been delivered this year. The new annual target underpins a broader approach to affordable housing options across all sectors and cements our commitment to working with community housing providers, builders, estate planners and our own public housing authority in growing these targets in the future.

We also announced a new affordable housing purchase database. The Canberra community provides a large subsidy for each discounted block, so it is vital that we ensure that these blocks are available to those who need them most by ensuring that the release of affordable land is fair and equitable. The affordable home purchase database will be used to ensure these blocks are made available only to households who have pre-registered.

The key takeaways from the community engagement and summit will be summarised in a document to be made available shortly. These will then be used to design the strategy that will underpin the ACT government's approach to housing and homelessness into the foreseeable future. I very much look forward to the results from this process, as I am certain it will lead to significant improvements in the services we provide to the people of Canberra. I applaud the minister for once again showing the way forward on policy and community engagement. I commend this motion to the Assembly.

MR PARTON (Brindabella) (4.31): Government members are displaying their narcissistic intent to give each other a pat on the back for carrying out the most basic

obligations of an elected government. In saying that, can I say that the minister's housing and homelessness summit was a major exercise, and she is to be commended for such an inclusionary effort. It is a combative theatrical space down here and I have more faith in the minister than she thinks I do. I also have faith in the wonderful people in that directorate; there are some wonderful, innovative, forward-thinking, switched-on, smart people.

This is a very, very tough problem. It must be said that while the summit was proceeding almost 2,000 people were on the social housing waiting list. I know I am not telling you anything you do not know, but it is my job to stand up and say that this winter just gone we saw an unprecedented pressure on overnight and emergency shelters, particularly around inner Canberra. We have a mini crisis going on here, and it is not our doing. I know there are some outside influences affecting other parts of the country as well, but you cannot get away from the fact that ACT Labor has been in power either on its own or with others assisting it for a long time.

Evidence of the need for action is not only stark but timely and pressing. The summit pulled together the best expertise and advice the territory could muster, including policy experts, practitioners who have had to deal with those experiencing homelessness and some who are experiencing homelessness or are precariously balanced on the verge of falling into it. No doubt the expectations from such an extensive process and expert inputs would be extremely high.

Some of the minister's responses to the summit—and I say "some" because I know there are more to come—were announced on the same day as the summit itself. We got a housing innovation fund with \$1 million allocated to it to progress government commitments to pilot programs obligated by the Greens-Labor parliamentary agreement. We would be led to believe that this massive consultation exercise has produced the unanimous endorsement of measures the government was already obligated to do.

The minister's commitment to an increased land supply target is a useful and positive measure, potentially one of the most significant means for remedying homelessness and affordable housing pressures. The provision of an additional 530 sites is welcomed. I suspect that a previous Chief Minister might also welcome this contribution, but it does not go far enough. The aforementioned former Chief Minister has stated that the government is manipulating the ACT land supply in favour of windfall profits to the government but at the detriment of affordable housing and public housing available for the homeless. This is not coming from the MBA; it is not coming from someone out on the right; it is coming from the most decorated Labor leader this territory has seen.

As we can see from the minister's statement, the summit was an exercise less about genuine altruism and innovation to resolve a major social problem and, as she said, more about fulfilling the Labor-Greens parliamentary agreement commitment to hold a summit on housing and homelessness in 2017. We can all now rest easy in the knowledge that the Greens-Labor Party agreement has been fulfilled. I am sure that those sleeping rough, those waiting in the queue for social housing or those families

who are forced to decide between paying their mortgage or rent instalment or paying their rates, gas and electricity bills can rest easy.

This government really would not want to think about them, and it is obvious from this motion that neither does Ms Orr. What is invisible in Ms Orr's motion and just as opaque in the minister's statement on summit outcomes is any evidence of doing something about the here and now: doing something about the emergency shelters that are stretched to their limit; doing something about a seemingly static waiting list that hovers around the 2,000 mark; doing something about the predatory approach to lease variation charges on multi-dwelling developments to deliberately throttle land supply and to compel those hoping to start a family to have to do so in a cramped apartment dwelling; and doing something about unprecedented levels of rates, taxes, charges, levies and other imposts that must slowly and inevitably tip families across the divide between affordable and unaffordable living in Canberra.

It is great to see Ms Orr giving her government a pat on the back, but it would be even better for Ms Orr to have a serious look at our current circumstance in the ACT and at what this government is doing to potentially increase the risk of unaffordable housing and the risk of homelessness.

In closing, I hope the minister will be forthcoming with genuine initiatives to rein in the current threats and pressures. I also hope that these initiatives are well-articulated, with specific outcomes and measurable program milestones for which the government can willingly be held to account. The government owes the Canberra community this much at the very least.

MS LE COUTEUR (Murrumbidgee) (4.37): I rise to speak to the motion and to move an amendment to this motion which has been circulated. Therefore, I move:

Omit all words after paragraph (1), substitute:

“(2) further notes:

- (a) the outcomes of the summit will be key to the development of a new housing strategy, a commitment made in the Parliamentary Agreement;
- (b) the new ACT Housing Strategy will follow on from the ACT Government's Affordable Housing Action Plan which, since 2007, has been directing carefully planned efforts to respond to housing demand and moderate house prices and rent increases; and
- (c) that the ACT community, through the Government, invests extensively in housing and homelessness services and maintains both the lowest rough sleeping rate and the highest social housing ratio of any Australian jurisdiction; and

(3) calls on the ACT Government to:

- (a) collate the feedback received at the ACT Housing and Homelessness Summit and throughout the extensive community consultation process in developing a new ACT housing strategy, and provide this report to the Assembly and to participants in the process to date;

- (b) further consult on the draft Housing Strategy prior to finalisation;
- (c) implement announcements made at the Summit such as the innovation fund, an item in the Parliamentary Agreement in cooperation with housing and homelessness experts and community members;
- (d) implement opportunities for innovative and collaborative partnerships in the housing sector that deliver wider benefits to the community, as identified at the Summit and preceding workshops;
- (e) ensure new initiatives to improve housing affordability, consider existing policies around housing supply, planning and tax reform, including facilitating planning innovation coming from the Housing Inquiry and the demonstration housing project in the future; and
- (f) continue to advocate for national policy change to improve housing affordability and make homelessness funding more secure, such as:
 - (i) National Housing and Homelessness Agreement funding levels;
 - (ii) changes to capital gains tax concessions;
 - (iii) reform of negative gearing; and
 - (iv) assessing impacts of Centrelink treatments and their links to housing.”.

My amendments are not major but they speak to the need for greater transparency in the process to develop the housing strategy and call for the report on the collated feedback to be provided to the participants in the consultation process as well as to the Assembly. The Greens believe it is really important to close the feedback loop and ensure that citizens who engage in consultative processes feel they have been heard and can see that their ideas have been considered and, hopefully, in many cases, implemented. That is why I have asked for more consultation on the draft housing strategy before it is finalised.

I must echo the comments of Ms Orr—I think the consultation to date on this has been one of the ACT government’s better consultation exercises. I was pleased and privileged to attend the whole day of the housing summit. I have to say that it was really interesting and one of the reasons why I am so keen that everyone who was there gets to see the output of our collective work for the day. It was hard work. The coming together of ideas and a range of stakeholders from different domains was a positive sign that the people of Canberra care and are concerned about affordable housing and ensuring support for those who are homeless.

While this summit was, as Ms Orr mentioned, an item in the parliamentary agreement between ACT Labor and ACT Greens, both of us specifically agreed that improving housing affordability and accessibility is essential to ensuring secure accommodation for all Canberrans. As we all know, without a roof over your head it is really difficult to get on with your life. The ACT Greens believe all people should have housing that

suits their needs, circumstances and wishes and be able to live with dignity, choice and autonomy. The consultation beforehand, as Ms Orr commented, was considerable and focused, which meant the summit was coming from a significant base and did not start from scratch. I commend the housing minister for ensuring that she heard not just from the experts in the sectors but also from small community groups, tenants and individuals.

We know this is an issue that the community is interested in. As Ms Orr said, there were 340 participants from 125 different organisations in 26 workshops and 2,236 visits to the ACT government's your say website. We have now done some really good consultation. The challenge now, as Mr Parton mentioned, is to make sure that we get real and tangible solutions that will lead to a stronger focus in the new affordable housing strategy or the boarding housing strategy. But all of this requires significant investment, commitment and action.

Whilst the motion notes that we have the lowest rough sleeping rate in the nation, it is important to emphasise that we also have the second highest rate of homelessness. This is an ongoing concern to me as I have often heard reports about women and children fleeing domestic violence and sleeping in their cars. I understand from numerous discussions that they are not being counted as rough sleepers. Options for these women and their children remain slim. Refuges are almost constantly full and there is a lack of exit points for them to transition to more permanent living arrangements. This is an area where we need to do better.

We know there is not one simple solution to solving housing stress. People in the community have different needs, aspirations and circumstances, and there need to be a range of options for them. We are committed to helping first home owners enter the market, supporting low income earners find sustainable and secure tenancies and ensuring that vulnerable members of our community have somewhere safe and secure to live. The Greens, of course, are aware that many of the key levers are in the federal domain, especially negative gearing and capital gains settings. That is why my amendment includes a call for some of the things that the ACT government needs to advocate strongly for with federal colleagues. We need national policy change if we are going to improve housing affordability and accessibility and make homelessness funding more secure.

I understand that the commonwealth is stipulating that jurisdictions must develop a housing strategy if they are to get funding from the commonwealth. However, the responsibility for the commonwealth to contribute to solutions remains. The Greens believe we should be strongly advocating for changes in capital gains tax and reductions in the incredibly generous negative gearing provisions. These have been discussed at some length but, unfortunately, action has not been taken. There is a limit to what the ACT can do when these policy settings are wrong.

A couple of sitting weeks ago I talked about a limit to what the ACT can do with regard to unsustainable population growth, which contributes to the increasing need for housing and other services. Unfortunately, neither Liberal nor Labor seem focused on this, given the response to my amendment a couple of weeks ago. We have housing to house people. Population growth is a key driver of the need for more

housing and it is something we need to consider from a local point of view, an Australian point of view and a global point of view if we are to address this issue.

Another issue I hear more and more about from speaking to older members of the community in particular is the current treatment by Centrelink of the family home as a privileged asset. That leads to some people making decisions that are possibly not in the best long-term interests of Canberra but in the best long-term interests of those people due to the strange treatment of their assets.

While the motion notes that we have the highest social housing ratio in the nation, we also have the third highest private rental and purchase prices. While many consider that we live in an affluent city—and, of course, we do overall—we need to remember that for those on low incomes who are paying more than 30 per cent of their income on rent or mortgage it is a struggle. The recent work ACTCOSS did on poverty in the ACT showed that there are some areas in Canberra where 60 per cent of people are in housing stress and are counted in the lowest quintile. We have poverty in Canberra and we must remember that.

It is a key focus for the Greens to make sure that housing is available for our most disadvantaged. If that works, it will be available for all of us. We have to be innovative. We have to be courageous. We need to develop solutions for renters as well as buyers, for families and singles, and for older and younger people. A number of the items in the parliamentary agreement go some way towards addressing this issue, and their inclusion in the agreement ensures that progress will be made on them. Obviously the summit is one of them, and I am very pleased to see the results from that so far. But we are also going to need to see more significant investment, as I have said before, in building additional and dedicated community housing across Canberra. The parliamentary agreement also includes an intention to grow and diversify the not-for-profit community housing sector through a combination of capital investment, land transfer and other means.

The Greens both federally and in the ACT have a focus on renters' rights, and we will work to ensure that we are standing up for renters and for a better and fairer housing system. With an increasing proportion of Canberrans now seeing renting as their only option, including a substantial growth in renters for life, and with renters under pressure from lack of choice and unaffordable rents, improving the conditions of our rental housing as well as the rights of tenants is an area we should focus on. We recognise that older people often have particular housing needs, and options should be available for them that suit their circumstances and respect their wishes, including ageing in place. Equally, the ACT Greens believe that people with disabilities should have access to a range of secure housing options that meet their needs and wishes.

The \$1 million housing innovation fund announced at the housing summit was another item in the parliamentary agreement which will support the development of projects like the HomeGround Real Estate, an ethical landlord scheme which gives socially minded investors the option to rent out their properties at reduced rates to tenants who need that support. It is working successfully in Melbourne now. It also includes another successful Melbourne scheme—HomeShare—which can match up older people living in large houses with individuals who need an affordable place to

live. This can have other benefits as well as the practicality of providing a roof over one's head; it can build social connections and a sense of inclusion and enable people to stay where they have spent the last 40 or 50 years of their lives. This is working to a small extent in Canberra in the disability sphere and we would like to see it expanded.

These are some of the innovative but simple ideas we took to the election last year and ensured were entered in the parliamentary agreement, but there were a lot more canvassed in the housing summit, including creating flexible planning pathways based on demonstrating community benefit and community support rather than standard rules; ensuring that community councils are part of the public housing tender process to minimise community push-back on new public housing; providing short-term accommodation for workers in Canberra temporarily for major construction projects; using vacant buildings as temporary crisis accommodation; providing an emergency relief fund for people in private market rental arrears; facilitating the establishment of an indigenous controlled community housing provider; and repurposing larger ACT Housing properties into group houses and vice versa as demand changes.

All of these ideas have merit; the challenge is how they can be implemented. As well as having a strategy, we have to implement it and we have to have good plans, including moneys to do them. That is why my amendment changes the word "identify" to "implement" opportunities for innovative and collaborative partnerships. I suggest that another item of low-hanging fruit could be to develop suitable and up-to-date IT to enable easier transfers in public housing. I believe that at present that can take up to five years.

My amendment also calls for the housing inquiry and demonstration projects to inform new initiatives and existing policy. Earlier this year I put forward a motion to develop a demonstration housing precinct that will promote best practice environmental performance, including excellence in construction design quality; carbon neutral buildings; showcasing innovative planning and engagement approaches and housing products; and options for public and affordable housing.

Demonstration housing precincts are an approach where government partners with industry, the community and researchers to develop housing that is above normal standard. Through the precincts, innovative design, construction and planning processes are tested, the financial viability of new approaches is tested and buyers are able to demonstrate the demand for innovative housing. Industry skill levels grow through working on best-practice projects, and local industry capabilities are showcased. That provides a boost for the participating companies' national profiles and marketing. It will be necessary to consider the possibilities that arise from the demonstration housing precinct, and hopefully the showcase will inform good, long-term solutions to affordable, accessible and environmentally sustainable housing for Canberrans.

Equally, as members would be aware, the planning and urban renewal committee is conducting an inquiry into housing in the ACT, in particular the interaction of population growth, housing affordability, housing diversity and design, consumer behaviour and the suburban and environmental impact of residential development.

This inquiry will help us to understand the level of existing housing diversity and the actual and perceived demand for different housing types. The outcomes of this inquiry should be considered and integrated into the government's housing strategy, whether it be affordable housing, changing the Territory Plan regulations, changing zoning, reducing barriers to achieving diverse housing stock or a broader focus on other things to ensure that Canberrans can have a roof over their head.

The Labor-Greens parliamentary agreement commits the government to set affordable housing targets across greenfield and urban renewal development projects. Ms Orr talked a little bit about one of the small aspects of this—ensuring that the affordable housing that is developed stays in the hands of people who need it. This, again, was part of our agreement, and I am very pleased that the Suburban Land Agency and the City Renewal Authority's legislation includes commitments to both of those. Setting concrete targets for social housing and affordable housing is a necessary step to ensure that we have enough of it. Overall, I commend the minister for housing for hosting the summit last week, and I look forward to the future. (*Time expired.*)

MS BERRY (Ginninderra—Deputy Chief Minister, Minister for Education and Early Childhood Development, Minister for Housing and Suburban Development, Minister for the Prevention of Domestic and Family Violence, Minister for Women and Minister for Sport and Recreation) (4.53): I welcome Ms Orr's private member's motion today and I thank Mr Parton for his enthusiasm in support of our housing summit held the other week. I thank you for the credit for that as well, but I really want to make sure that that credit goes to the people who were involved in providing some advice on how that housing summit would go ahead and how the conversations and consultations that were leading to the summit occurred.

That was all provided to the government through the advisory group and the individuals on the advisory group that were brought together to put this in place and to continue to work with us as we develop a housing strategy in the ACT. Those people are Peta Dawson and John Jacob, public housing tenants; Travis Gilbert from ACT Shelter; Adina Cirson from the ACT Property Council; Christine Shaw, Luton Properties; Chris Redmond from Woden Community Service; Professor Edwards from the University of Canberra; Neil Skipper from Havelock Housing Association; and Alan Morschel from the ACT Chapter of the Australian Institute of Architects. That group of individuals have worked very closely together in advising the government on the best way forward and how we communicate with the community.

Of course, following months of community consultation and engagement, the summit was achieved. Personally, I was really happy with the outcome. I have also heard that so far around 79 per cent of people who attended have indicated their satisfaction with the event. I think that is not a bad effort from everybody that was involved—from Housing ACT, the public housing renewal task force, the advisory group and all of the people who came along and contributed. It is really important to developing a new housing strategy into the future for the ACT.

All along the way I had wanted to raise awareness of the issues in housing in the ACT. Mr Parton is right. There are issues around housing in the ACT and all across the country. It is always natural for a government to want to defend some of the good

things that we are doing here in the ACT that are better than what occurs in the rest of the country. And we are better. We have the lowest number of rough sleepers in the country. We still have rough sleepers and that is a problem. In the ACT we have the most funding support for homelessness services and the most public housing per capita as well—something that we should all be proud of.

There are things in the ACT that we are achieving and doing very well, but more needs to be done, and it has to be more than just targets. We need to be a lot more innovative with how we are supporting individuals in our community to ensure that they are in homes of their own. I had wanted to see increased collaboration across the community—across government, business, the community sector, and with residents and public housing tenants. The community has definitely responded to that challenge and I am happy with the outcome so far.

Many of the stakeholders from a variety of interest groups hitched their wagon to a cause larger than themselves and the organisations that they represented to have their say. As Ms Orr said, the consultation and community interactions of almost 6,000 leading up to the summit showed that this was the case. It is unprecedented to have this level of engagement and it highlights the strong interest and the personal connection that Canberrans have for the issues of housing affordability and homelessness in the ACT. These issues affect families in the ACT and this shared interest in finding new ways to better respond to these challenges was heartening.

The summit itself was very different from any of the conferences that I have attended. It was deliberately designed with feedback from the advisory group so that the summit's facilitators could get the most out of the 200 summit attendees and so that the work produced on the day could harness the insights that shape the diversity of the lived experience of housing in the ACT. It is in this context that I want to acknowledge the work of PwC and their support to Housing ACT to deliver this fresh, engaging approach.

The opportunity the day provided to network and engage with representatives from across the community was highlighted by many and has been a real benefit. I had people coming up to me on the day from housing support services saying that they had just talked to a developer. They had never imagined that they would ever talk to a developer about housing and housing affordability. They said that they were going to connect and talk about some ideas and innovation that they might be able to work on together as well. It was a really great chance for people who would not ordinarily have the chance to share their views with each other to be able to do that.

Of course, I will be very happy to provide a report that will accurately reflect the voices that were heard at the summit. The affordable housing advisory group will be tasked with reviewing that document very carefully to ensure that it does that. The summit delivered on the government's commitment. The associated community consultations have already provided a strong foundation for a new ACT housing strategy which will be developed later this financial year. It will build on the successes of the previous affordable housing plans and the ACT government's strong commitment to preserving public housing in the ACT.

As was the case with the summit, the government intends that this work be undertaken in consultation with community representatives and in continued collaboration with key stakeholders. That is why I have asked the members of my affordable housing advisory group to continue in their role to help guide and support this process.

I made announcements at the summit about the \$1 million innovation fund. Part of that innovation fund will go towards the ACT government's election commitments and the commitments made in the ACT parliamentary agreement. The other part of the innovation fund will go towards some of the innovation that will come out of the summit. This could include new partnerships among the community housing, community services, real estate and design and construction sectors.

We are committed to expanding and improving the way that the release of land for affordable public and community housing occurs. For the remainder of 2017-18 we will be working with the SLA and the CRA to ensure that in the future the affordable housing policy yields the best outcomes for the people in our community. We will closely monitor the effect of the new annual community land release targets, which should provide greater certainty for developers and the wider community around the location of future affordable and social housing across the city. This work is important to ensure that Canberra continues to be a socially inclusive and livable city in which Canberrans can participate to realise their full potential.

There is much work underway seeking to improve housing affordability and reduce homelessness in the ACT. The recent housing and homelessness summit was an important step in the journey to achieve this endeavour. I know that the rest of the community that was involved in the conversations leading up to the summit will be keen to be involved in the future conversations to ensure housing availability and housing affordability in the ACT. I want to thank everybody who contributed, including members from this place who attended the summit and who will continue to be involved in the development of a strategy moving forward.

Of course, there are levers that we control in the ACT. There are levers that we do not control in respect of which I have consistently called for change. In the federal parliament it is changes to negative gearing and capital gains tax. I will continue to call for those changes. I take every chance at every housing ministers meeting to ensure that the federal government are reminded that that is something they control. The federal government could be bold and courageous and make a significant change to the levers they control. That would make a considerable difference to people not only in the ACT community but also across Australia.

I look forward to continuing all the work that we can do in the ACT, with the levers that we control, to address homelessness. I look forward to updating the Assembly and the broader community on the progress of this work. I commend this motion to the Assembly. I thank Ms Orr again for bringing it forward for this conversation.

MS ORR (Yerrabi) (5.01): I thank my colleagues Ms Berry and Ms Le Couteur for their constructive comments in this debate. I am not sure what to say about Mr Parton's comments. On the one hand he calls us narcissistic, then on the other he

provides a gushing review of what we are doing. But I think what we can all agree on, Mr Parton included, is that we need to continue to work in this area. That is what the government is doing through the work that is underway and highlighted in this motion.

However, I would like to address one thing. Mr Parton gives the impression that nothing is currently happening. That does not recognise what is going on and what has been going on, as the minister has stated in this debate and many times previously. Mr Parton also fails to acknowledge the need to respond to changing issues rather than simply standing still. That is a large component of this work that is before us. I would say that instead of playing the game for the sake of playing the game, which I feel Mr Parton was doing a little today, perhaps he would like to join the conversation in a constructive and productive way so that those actions we all seek can be identified and carried out. This is very important work. It affects a lot of people who really do need our support.

Amendment agreed to.

Original question, as amended, resolved in the affirmative.

Access Canberra—shopfront service

MS LEE (Kurrajong) (5.03): I move:

That this Assembly:

(1) notes that:

- (a) the ACT government is reviewing its service offer to customers through the nine Access Canberra Service Centres across the ACT;
- (b) Tuggeranong, Woden, Belconnen and Gungahlin Service Centres offer a full suite of services, with the other five specialist centres offering specialised services to serve a purpose and other providers such as Australia Post and authorised inspection stations delivering supplementary services;
- (c) wait times vary throughout the day, with peaks occurring at opening and late afternoons;
- (d) the Dickson Service Centre closed on 8 September 2017 and will re-open in 2020;
- (e) since the closure of the Dickson vehicle testing station for redevelopment, vehicle owners are able to access majority of services at various commercial service centres around the ACT, however, vehicle owners that require particular testing must travel to Hume to have their motor vehicle inspected;
- (f) opening hours vary between service centres with specialist centres closing at 4.30 pm or earlier and those located further from the city opening earlier and closing later, to account for travel times to employment centres;

- (g) payment methods vary between shopfronts with some only accepting electronic forms of payment;
 - (h) an increased number of services are being delivered online; and
 - (i) the broad opening hours of the Access Canberra contact centre which can complete many transactions Access Canberra offers; and
- (2) calls for the ACT government to:
- (a) undertake an analysis of the various shopfronts to determine whether the range of services available at the various shopfront locations provide:
 - (i) appropriate choice and availability for all ACT residents; and
 - (ii) sufficient customer service;
 - (b) review the opening hours and operating procedures at the various shopfronts to determine how waiting times can be reduced;
 - (c) continue to consult with customers to better understand how to deliver improved accessibility, especially for those who work or who rely on others to take them to the shopfront to undertake their business transactions;
 - (d) undertake a thorough review of the current range of payment methods to ensure they provide sufficient choice for all ACT residents; and
 - (e) report back on the findings of the steps outlined in (2)(a) to (d) to the Assembly by the first sitting week in June 2018.

I am pleased to confirm at the outset that I have received support from all sides of the chamber and I thank my colleagues for working together with me on this. Whilst we may all broadly be in agreement on the wording which is reflected in the amended motion on the notice paper—and, most importantly, the call to action outlined in paragraph 2—there are some issues that I take the opportunity to raise on behalf of my constituents which I hope will give some helpful feedback to the minister in directing his directorate to carry out some of those action items.

Since the election and the start of the construction of the Gungahlin tram line, the residents of Kurrajong have had to endure a lot. They have been kept awake at night for weeks because of generators going all night to power drills and other machinery. They have been kept awake at night because of lights directed into their windows because someone cut a cable and disputes between contractors as to whose fault it was that meant temporary lighting had to be installed. They have been kept awake at night with tree felling because that is when trees were chopped down and chipped so that people would not notice that they were being taken.

It is ironic that we spent quote a lot of time yesterday in the chamber, and many staff hours before that, battling amendments back and forth over how to confirm that a dead

tree is dead and who would be allowed a say in confirming its death, and yet we remove 800 live trees in a matter of weeks, all by stealth in the middle of the night.

My constituents, and in fact anyone on the north side of Canberra, have had to stay very alert to the myriad of temporary signage to work out what road is open, what lane is closed and what intersection is still there. And I can say from personal experience that when I was living in Braddon and needed to access Ipima Street daily I never knew when it would be open or closed, and this happened on a number of occasions. When my constituents also lost the very established Dickson shopfront and the Dickson motor registry, where they registered their car, changed their licence plates and their children got their learners permits and undertook their driving tests, they were entitled to say that enough is enough.

This motion came about because of the number of constituents approaching me to say that, whilst more services being made available in areas like Gungahlin, with its growing population, is understandable, what they could not understand was that they might not be getting increased services but surely they were entitled to at least keep the services that they currently had access to. I am pleased that the Minister for Regulatory Services has recognised that the changes introduced to Access Canberra shopfronts have caused some issues, and I thank the minister and his staff for their cooperation and willingness to work with me to achieve a better outcome for all Canberrans, which is reflected by the tripartisan support for my motion.

As my motion outlines, there is considerable disruption for Canberra residents with the changes to Access Canberra shopfronts. There are currently nine Access Canberra shopfronts operating across the city. Of the nine, four—Tuggeranong, Woden, Belconnen and Gungahlin—operate a full suite of services, with the other five very narrow and limited in their speciality. They vary in services, in opening times and in capacity to take different payment methods and, without access to a computer, I am not entirely sure how someone knows which one they need to attend, what services they offer and when and how they should pay for the service they need.

The Access Canberra website is very detailed and provides a great deal of information; that is, if you are able to access a computer. Even in today's modern technology embracing environment there are many Canberrans who do not use a computer, who do not use online services and who do not wish to use credit cards. Many of these Canberrans live in Kurrajong. I would hope that Minister Ramsay, wearing his other hat as minister for seniors, would also be very much aware of the needs of older Canberrans who may prefer face-to-face, over-the-counter service and who may prefer to pay by cash or cheque instead of by card.

The Canberrans who are able to access the Access Canberra website would learn, for example, that Belconnen, one of the larger centres, opens Monday to Friday from 9 to 5, offers a range of approximately 250 services and will take EFTPOS, credit card, cash and cheque. Tuggeranong—in your neck of the woods, Madam Speaker—another of the larger centres, offers the same range but has even better opening hours, Monday to Friday from 8 to 5.

Woden, a full service centre, is open Monday to Friday 9 to 5 and Gungahlin, also a full service centre, is open Monday to Friday 8 to 6. But neither of these centres accepts cash or cheque, only electronic payment. I understand that the reason cash facilities are not available, for example, at the Woden centre is that it was designed to be welcoming and open, which impacts on physical security. However, I do find it hard to believe that a design that is both welcoming and safe for cash handling could not have been achieved if it had been given some thought early enough.

At least in Woden, though, there are banks and EFTPOS machines located nearby and staff will and can direct people to them if they do not have a credit card or a debit card to make payment. However, it is an inconvenience to Canberrans who may have already waited in long queues only to be told to go to the bank and then come back. When you get to the smaller centres, services are limited, times are reduced and they too provide a full range of payment methods.

For my constituents, the loss of the Dickson centre has had a significant impact. The Dickson centre closed on 8 September 2017 and, whilst I have been assured that this closure is temporary, it will not reopen for another three years. This has had significant bump-on effects, with an increase in the number of customers having to go to Belconnen, Gungahlin or Woden.

The reduction in services, the closure of some centres, changes to and limitations on the types of payment methods that can be handled at different centres, along with variable hours, all contribute to the frustration of Canberra residents in accessing essential services. In a letter to the *Canberra Times* on 20 September an Ainslie resident wrote:

On Monday September 11, I discovered that the Dickson Shopfront had closed. This leaves central Canberra and the Kurrajong electorate without any government shopfront. Each time I have visited the shopfront there have been significant queues. The media release put out by Access Canberra stated that the number of people visiting the shopfront had declined by 30 per cent over the last three years to a mere 10,000. But omitted to say by how much visits to other shopfronts had changed. Many residents in Canberra are aged or disabled and do not have the option of online transactions, whilst other matters need to be dealt with in person.

My rates have increased by over 30 per cent over the past three years, our footpaths are in very poor condition and now I will have to travel to Gungahlin or Belconnen to visit a shopfront. Why are the residents of Kurrajong electorate being discriminated against?

As a fellow Kurrajong resident I can only support and agree with those sentiments.

Clearly the gentleman who earlier today caused a commotion at the public entrance of the Assembly building also agreed. He was complaining that he was unable to renew his vehicle registration at the Civic library shopfront, the only shopfront, with very limited services, left in the vicinity of the city. The increase in customers attending fewer centres means that waiting times lengthen and, in an era when many Canberrans

are time poor, it is more than frustrating for someone to have to wait in a queue sometimes for an hour or more.

A Braddon constituent recently advised me that he had attended the Woden centre, having already gone online to check the indicative wait times, to complete a transaction that previously he had been able to do at Dickson. The website suggested a wait time of something around 10 to 15 minutes, so he took a break from work believing he could fit it in during his lunch hour. When he arrived in Woden about 10 minutes later he was surprised to see that the estimated wait time had shot up to one hour, and when he was eventually served he had waited an hour and a half.

When I drew this issue to the minister's attention he went to great pains to point out how the wait times are measured, being based on the time lapse between someone taking a ticket and being called to the counter. I understand that in any measure in real time you will have some variation from the moment of checking the time on the website and the time it takes to get to the centre. However, after having waited for the hour and a half, this constituent specifically made the point of asking the staff at the centre whether they had suddenly had a spike in people coming in, which may have explained the sudden variance in the estimated time. The staff member was adamant that there had been an hour or more wait time every day for the previous three weeks.

Just to test the accuracy of the current wait times, my staff accessed the website this morning. At 10.30 every centre had a wait time of less than one minute. At 11.30 all but two had a wait time of less than one minute. By midday some had moved out to eight minutes but Gungahlin was still suggesting a wait time of less than one minute. Unless the minister has authorised a sudden new team of new staff to be at these centres, it seems to be inconsistent with the experiences of various constituents who have contacted me or even with what the Access Canberra staff who are on the front line are saying.

There is no option to attend a shopfront after work or on weekends because all the centres close variously between 4 pm and 6 pm and you would need to know which centres close when. The exception is the vehicle inspection station at Hume, which stays open later on Thursday nights. But that, of course, is a very specialised service. This motion does acknowledge that many services are now available online and that it is a sensible and inevitable development, but it is incumbent on the ACT government to provide these services to all Canberrans irrespective of where they live, how they want to pay and what transaction they want to make.

My motion calls on the government to undertake an analysis of the various shopfronts to determine whether the range of services available at the various shopfront locations provide appropriate choice and availability for all ACT residents and sufficient customer service; to review the opening hours and operating procedures at the various shopfronts to determine how waiting times can be reduced; to continue to consult customers to better understand how to deliver improved accessibility, especially for those who work or who rely on others to take them to the shopfronts to undertake their business transactions; to undertake a thorough review of the current range of payment methods to ensure that they provide sufficient choice for all ACT residents;

and to report back on the findings to the Assembly by the first sitting week in June 2018.

I am very pleased that the government and, in particular, Minister Ramsay, accept that it is important to assess whether the range of services are being provided in their most appropriate location, with suitable opening times, and are best practice and best suit the needs of our community. I also thank the Greens for their support on this motion and, once again, I thank the minister and his staff for their willingness to talk through the issues to reach a sensible and practical move forward to ensure that these vital services are accessible to all Canberrans. I look forward to the minister providing a full report to the Assembly on the outcome of this review by next June, and I commend my motion to the Assembly.

MR RAMSAY (Ginninderra—Attorney-General, Minister for Regulatory Services, Minister for the Arts and Community Events and Minister for Veterans and Seniors) (5.15): I thank Ms Lee for this motion. The government, as has been indicated, will be supporting the amended motion. I thank Ms Lee for her and her office's work and for their willingness to work with us to reach a motion that has agreement right across the chamber.

Access Canberra was created to service the Canberra community and to make it easier for businesses, community organisations and individuals to get their business done in the territory while ensuring that community safety is preserved. Access Canberra has nine face-to-face customer service locations. The service centres at Gungahlin, Woden, Belconnen and Tuggeranong offer over 250 transactions, across all of the Access Canberra services, as well as touch screen terminals and enhanced concierge services to assist customers to engage with digital options.

The remaining five locations offer specialised services. Mitchell and Dickson shopfronts focus on land, planning and building services, offering a single point of service for the building and conveyancing industries in the ACT. Those teams offer expert advice and support for the more technical services. The Civic drivers licence service is a boutique shopfront offering driver licence renewal and working with vulnerable people application services for people working in Civic. The health protection service at Holder offers food business registration support.

The newly opened Hume motor vehicle inspection station is a purpose-built building offering state-of-the-art facilities, including expanded lanes, making heavy vehicle inspections easier and faster. Multiple bookings are available at the same time, allowing the hardworking staff at the centre to inspect more than one vehicle at a time. In addition, the site has been constructed to enable inspection of larger, heavy combination vehicles—B-doubles, semitrailers, caravans and trailers—which is something that was not available at the Dickson test service station.

It is true that there are varying opening hours across the sites. However, they are generally set to cater for the clientele that typically frequent them. For example, recognising that many of our Gungahlin and Tuggeranong residents need to travel to another location for work or study, there are expanded hours available in those town centres. The other service centres are in Canberra's primary employment hubs, where

standard business hours are more typical. However, the government is open to looking into the collective Access Canberra service offering and the impact that service hours have on waiting times.

Access Canberra is focused on the continual improvement of its services. As the number of digital services increases, the more flexible the government becomes in removing pressures from face-to-face and telephone service delivery. Approximately 60 per cent of customers have indicated a first preference for digital services, and this number is increasing steadily. At the moment there are 312 digital transaction services currently available on the Access Canberra website. Seventy-seven new services were added in 2016-17 alone.

I recently launched the online driver licence renewal option. Between 4 September and 31 October 10,275 drivers licences were renewed. Close to 2,900 of these people elected to renew their drivers licence online. That means 2,900 fewer customers attended an Access Canberra service centre during that time. A further 3,230 people have chosen the longer renewal option, which means they do not have to return to renew their licence for 10 years. This is another way that Access Canberra continues to provide services to the Canberra community which are easier and simpler. This is a highly positive outcome and it shows that when a simple, quick digital service is offered people will embrace it.

Last November Access Canberra upgraded its website. The search bar is more prominent, enabling customers to find services and information more easily. A new pay online page has been implemented which presents the top 10 payments for easy access. As some of you are aware, Access Canberra has a web chat service which supports the digital service delivery by answering questions and helping approximately 1,000 customers each month. This also assists in reducing pressures on service centres and provides community members with another way in which to communicate with government.

To provide members with an accurate picture of the magnitude of the services provided, I would like to go through some statistics about how many customers Access Canberra served in the last financial year. These statistics are crucial, as they highlight the important and significant contribution that Access Canberra makes in the ACT community, connecting citizens with government.

In the last financial year Access Canberra welcomed more than 450,000 customers through its service centres and shopfronts, it recorded more than 2.7 million visits to the Access Canberra website and it received more than 720,000 phone calls. Canberrans undertook over 1.7 million digital transactions in 2016-17. This includes transactions relating to rates, vehicle registration renewal and other more complex transactions like event approvals, obtaining a liquor permit or lodging a development application or building approval.

I would also like to provide a snapshot of what Access Canberra's customers are saying about their experience. When contacted recently by an external service provider seeking feedback on Access Canberra's service delivery, the feedback from the community was overwhelmingly positive. Satisfaction with service centres

increased from 94 per cent in 2016 to 97 per cent in 2017. Satisfaction with the contact centre increased from 87 per cent in 2016 to 91 per cent in 2017. Satisfaction with the Access Canberra website increased from 78 per cent in 2016 to 83 per cent in 2017. This is further supported by results from service centres' instant feedback terminals, which consistently show that regardless of the wait time the overall satisfaction level remains at approximately 95 per cent, dropping only when a person cannot complete the transaction. So it is clear that we are doing something right.

While waiting times vary depending on the time of day that customers visit the service centres, I can assure members that the indicative wait times listed on the Access Canberra website do indeed reflect reality. They are drawn in real time from the service centre ticketing system. I can advise, though, that the best time to visit a service centre is often from 12 noon to 2.30 pm, as this is usually when the wait times are lowest. Feedback from both customers and Access Canberra data indicate that peak times in the service centres and shopfronts are at opening times and mid to late afternoon. As a government we are continuously looking at ways in which we can better deliver services to the Canberra community, and how we can provide services through Access Canberra is no exception. We are in the process of looking at our service delivery network and we are happy to ensure that it covers the requested areas in Ms Lee's motion.

Ms Lee touched upon cashless service centres. Indeed, the service centres in Woden and Gungahlin only accept electronic payments via EFTPOS or credit card. Removing cash and cheque payments enables Access Canberra to have a more open-plan design, which enables a higher quality conversation with the customer and improves the overall customer experience. It also eliminates the need for secure counters and cash collection services by external providers. Additionally, it reduces the risk of fraud, theft and robberies at service centres, making them a safer environment for staff and customers alike.

Some of the more common transactions, including rates payments and vehicle registration, are also available through Australia Post outlets across Canberra, which accept cash payments for people who prefer to transact in this way. Fewer than 15 per cent of transactions in the service centres are paid by cash and this continues to trend downwards. The most popular form of payment for Canberrans remains electronic. Following the successful pilot of the electronic-only payment service centre at Gungahlin, moving to an electronic-only payment service centre at Woden was an informed decision. It is understood that this may impact accessibility for some people in the community. I can advise that there are no current plans for Access Canberra to change other service centres to electronic payment only.

The Dickson motor vehicle registry building is part of the territory asset recycling initiative. The site has been sold to make way for the construction of the new ACT government accommodation and a new Access Canberra service centre will be built as part of the new accommodation. This is expected to be completed in 2020 and will include a purpose-built service centre, which will allow us to more efficiently service the inner north community.

Until such time as the new service centre in Dickson is complete, all services previously provided at the Dickson shopfront are available at other Access Canberra service centres. Most Canberrans live within 12 kilometres of a service centre. The Belconnen service centre is eight kilometres and the Gungahlin service centre is nine kilometres from the Dickson shopfront. The Civic drivers licence service in the Civic library is located five kilometres from Dickson. Additionally, from 2013-14 to the closure of the Dickson shopfront, there was approximately a 30 per cent decrease in the number of customers attending the Dickson shopfront. The number of customers attending Dickson continued to decrease when the Dickson motor vehicle inspection station closed on 12 May this year.

With respect to Canberrans wishing to have their vehicles tested, I need to reiterate that they are not always required to attend the Hume facility. Roadworthy inspections may be carried out at one of over 80 authorised inspection stations which are located right across Canberra. A list of these is available to the public on the Access Canberra website. Having the new test station at Hume provides a more convenient location for south side residents—and with it being located on a national freight route, it removes the need for over 3,000 heavy vehicles that require testing to travel through the suburbs of Canberra each year.

I wish to conclude by noting that Access Canberra is here for all Canberrans. Its purpose is to provide easier and simpler services for everyone. Access Canberra is simply here to help. As a government we commit to further continuous improvement on all fronts. As such, we are very happy to undertake the review noted in Ms Lee's motion to ensure that we have our settings right and to ensure that Access Canberra is indeed easier, simpler and here to help.

MS LE COUTEUR (Murrumbidgee) (5.27): As the previous speakers have noted, the Greens will be agreeing with this motion. It is a very sensible motion. Access Canberra is something which is seriously useful to the people of Canberra and it behoves all of us to make it as useful as it possibly can be. I will not speak at great length because most of the things that I might have said have already been said by one of the previous speakers, but I do have a few points to make.

The discussion on Access Canberra follows on from the earlier discussion last week on fix my street. It is all part of the continuum of government services and how the people of the ACT interact with the government. Fix my street is more focused on, "It's wrong; fix it." Access Canberra is more focused on, "You've got to get your form; you've got to put your money in," or whatever. But from the point of view of a resident of Canberra, it is all the same thing: "I want to interact with the ACT government; I want to get something done."

On that note, I would like to particularly mention a problem with car regos which I have had brought to my attention by a constituent who was stopped by the police, who said that his car rego had expired. His car was put in the middle of the Tuggeranong Parkway and he was not even in a position to walk safely from his car to the side of the road. His point was that we do not have any electronic reminder system for regos. I agree that we do have a paper one. He also said—and it is quite true—that

you cannot do a recurring direct debit for your car rego. You can do that for your rates; you can do that for your land tax. Why can't we do this for our car rego? He actually volunteered to do this for the ACT government, but I said that I thought the ACT government could probably manage to do it itself.

I assume the situation is that the ACT government brought in the motor vehicle registry system—a very long time ago I was the IT manager for that system—and it must be an external system. That is why the government has not been able to set up a recurring direct debit for it, in the way that it has for rates and land tax. That is something that, in the continuum of government services, we should do.

Another thing that I want to mention, which was alluded to here, is that a lot more government services are being provided electronically. In general, this is a very good thing because it is more efficient and it reduces the cost to the government, which means it reduces the cost to the taxpayer. Also, in many instances, it is vastly more convenient for the people of Canberra. But there are a small number of people, as Ms Lee alluded to, who find that this just does not work for them. Either they are older and computers are not really a part of their lives or they cannot find the right bit on the computer. One of the frustrating things about computers is that if you have the right words you can usually find something, but if you are looking for accommodation and the computer article is about housing, for instance, you may never find it. Sometimes considerable frustration occurs and, if there was a human being that you could speak to, they would say, “No, what you really need is this, this and this.”

When I have used the concierge system at Access Canberra, it has been very good. I would say that is a really positive step forward, but it is possibly not in enough places. What about all the libraries in Canberra? They do not have to become full Access Canberra shopfronts and they should not be taking money, but they all have computers and they should have someone there who is trained in what fix my street and Access Canberra can do so that they can be human service people for people in Canberra who are trying to interact with the ACT government and who cannot quite work out how to do it. This could be another access point which would be very cheap and efficient for the government. We already have library staff who see it as their job to be information custodians. It would be something that could fit reasonably well.

The other area where there is a bit of tension in terms of efficiency and equity is after-hours access to shopfronts. I totally appreciate that, from the point of view of the working conditions of Access Canberra staff, doing it from nine to five is clearly a good thing. But from the point of view of many people who work during those hours, it may sometimes be a problem. As Ms Lee highlighted, sometimes you have to wait for an hour or an hour and a half. I wonder if it might be possible, on one evening a week or one morning a week, to have an early opening or a late closing. It could be trialled so that we can work out whether it would be used by a significant number of people. Even if there were not a significant number, there could be a group of people who say, “This actually is the only time I can come.”

I think Access Canberra is going in the right direction. The reviews proposed by Ms Lee in the motion are a step in the right direction. I commend Ms Lee and the government for their work on this motion. I am very happy to support it.

MS LEE (Kurrajong) (5.34), in reply: I thought it was going to be an exciting topic that many people would speak on, but clearly not, Madam Speaker. I rise to close the debate. I wish to thank Minister Ramsay and Ms Le Couteur for their contributions and for their support of the motion. It was really good to hear the minister state specifically that he was looking at the opening hours because it is an important issue and is of concern to many Canberrans. I note that this was also an issue that Ms Le Couteur raised.

I also acknowledge, minister, that there has been an increase in the availability of online services, which, as I indicated in my opening remarks, is a sensible and inevitable development. I refer to services such as drivers licence renewal—and I am sure it is not only because you are now able to keep your photo for 11 years.

What did come as a surprise to me was that the lowest waiting times were actually between 12 and 2.30. I think most people would assume that it was actually the opposite—that at lunchtime there may be a spike. Perhaps that is the reason for the lower waiting times, because people have thought, “There’ll be too many people over there,” and the peak is actually at opening time and during mid to late afternoon. That is helpful, and I will be able to let my constituents know about that when they complain about wait times.

I thank Ms Le Couteur. I agree when she says that it is up to all of us to ensure that Access Canberra is as useful as possible for all Canberrans. The issue that Ms Le Couteur raised about payment by direct debit for car rego is probably an issue that is of concern to many other Canberrans, if it has been an issue for one of Ms Le Couteur’s constituents. The idea about public libraries perhaps providing assistance with accessing computer and online-related services for people who may not be in a position to do it by themselves is worth exploring.

I also wish to thank the staff at Access Canberra because they are on the front line, and Canberrans who may have waited in line will sometimes take it out on the people who are serving them. For them to deal with that on a daily basis is no mean feat. Serving 450,000 customers at the actual centres, 2.7 million visits to the website, 720,000 phone calls and 1.7 million digital transactions by any measure is a huge load, and we must all commend the staff at Access Canberra.

With respect to having an overall satisfaction rating of 95 per cent, I am pretty sure that all of us in this chamber can only dream of receiving that from our electorate. I am sure that a lot of the frustrations that Canberrans have will die away once they are there, because I have no doubt that the staff there are nothing but pleasant and helpful.

As I said earlier, I am glad that I have tripartisan support for this motion. I do not know whether that is an indicator that I am a better negotiator than I thought or whether I am not doing a good enough job in opposition, but I will take it. I thank all of my colleagues for their support of my motion.

Question resolved in the affirmative.

Adjournment

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

That the Assembly do now adjourn.

Aboriginals and Torres Strait Islanders—Uluru statement

MS STEPHEN-SMITH (Kurrajong—Minister for Community Services and Social Inclusion, Minister for Disability, Children and Youth, Minister for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Affairs, Minister for Multicultural Affairs and Minister for Workplace Safety and Industrial Relations) (5.37): In May the First Nations National Constitutional Convention met at Uluru on the lands of the Anangu people. The majority of delegates supported the Uluru statement from the heart, which called for two things: a first nations voice enshrined in the constitution; and a makarrata, or treaty, commission.

Last week the federal Liberal-Nationals government broke the nation's heart by confirming it had rejected the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander voice to parliament. Attempting to explain why they thought the proposal was too ambitious, the federal Minister for Indigenous Affairs made it clear that there was no evidence to support their assertion that it would not fly with voters. He said:

I don't need evidence ... We have done a lot of polling, not on this particular matter, but on other matters.

Finally, he admitted:

It's our instincts.

In delivering the Uluru statement, members of the first nations convention, represented by Professor Megan Davis, said:

In 1967 we were counted, in 2017 we seek to be heard ... We invite you to walk with us in a movement of the Australian people for a better future.

The first nations people of this land have experienced more than 200 years of policies and decisions being made about them, their country and their culture. Yet they did not issue demands; they issued an invitation. This generosity of spirit has been met with "a slap in the face", in the words of Senator Pat Dodson.

To the shock of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander leaders, who placed their trust in this process, it is happening again. Other people are making decisions for them without them. Canberra's own Rod Little, co-chair of the National Congress of Australia's First Peoples, said:

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people have been let down once again.

His co-chair, Dr Jackie Huggins, has described the government's rejection of a referendum proposal as a low point in race relations. She has said that

Malcolm Turnbull has now lost the trust of many Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people. In contrast with the Prime Minister, Bill Shorten said last week:

At no stage in this process have I believed that those matters are beyond us. Indeed, I made it clear ... I was of the view we could get it done, if only we had the will.

Clearly Mr Turnbull does not have the will, the vision or the capacity to lead his own party, let alone the nation. He has refused to try to find a bipartisan position to take to the people. He has refused to believe that we could take the people with us in the cause of fairness, just as happened in 1967. He has blithely disregarded 10 years of discussion and consultation. Yet again, he has squibbed it.

For my part, I recognise that governments at all levels need to do a better job of listening to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people, who are the experts in their own lives and who have the answers to many of the challenges facing their communities. The ACT has some experience with a representative voice to parliament. The ACT Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Elected Body has been in place since 2008. The ACT remains the only jurisdiction in Australia to have such a democratically elected office, although I am pleased to note that my Victorian Labor colleagues are working to establish a representative body. The purpose of the elected body is to be a voice for the community and to hold the government to account.

In that context, I note the proposals put forward by my predecessor, Dr Bourke, on RiotACT yesterday, about how we may wish to change and improve the hearings process for the elected body. I have put those proposals to the elected body for their advice, recognising that self-determination is all-important here. Contrary to the Prime Minister's disingenuous arguments, the elected body has not become an extra chamber of this parliament and there has never been any danger of that. This is a total furphy, and I am sure he knows it.

Madam Speaker, some say we are back to square one when it comes to the meaningful recognition of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people. I hope that is not the case. The Uluru statement came from the hearts of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people, gathered together in one of the largest and most representative forums of Australia's first nations people in modern times. Their work and their goodwill cannot and should not be squandered.

Clontarf Foundation

MR MILLIGAN (Yerrabi) (5.42): I would like all members to imagine walking into a room with several young males aged from 13 to 17, each of them walking up to you, shaking your hand and introducing himself to you in a clear voice and engaging with you in conversation about his passions and interests. You might be forgiven for thinking you were at a high end private school somewhere here in the ACT. But I was not; I was visiting Mount Austin High School in Wagga, at the invitation of the Clontarf Foundation, meeting with the staff, students and enthusiastic school principal, Susan Lockwood.

I truly enjoyed my visit to the Mount Austin Clontarf Academy, which comprises several well-provisioned rooms in the Mount Austin High School campus, a school which serves a very low socio-economic area. More than three-quarters of the students at this school have a background that falls into the bottom quartile economically, with no students coming from the top quartile. This is a school which has a 42 per cent Indigenous enrolment, yet the attendance record for these Indigenous students is equal to or higher than that of some schools here in the ACT. I do not say similar schools here in Canberra, as we truly do not have an equivalent in terms of either the numbers of Indigenous students who attend Mount Austin or the socio-economic status of students.

Their attendance record is remarkable. According to the school principal, this is having a positive impact on students. There are improvements in educational outcomes, levels of self-esteem, life skills and employment prospects of the young Aboriginal men involved in the academy.

So what is Clontarf Academy? Why is it able to have such a positive impact on the students? I met with the Clontarf Academy staff, having previously met with Brendan Maher, the New South Wales zone manager. The Clontarf Foundation was started in Western Australia by former Fremantle Dockers coach Gerald Neesham. Clontarf exists to improve the education, discipline, life skills, self-esteem and employment prospects of young Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander men across Australia. By doing so, it equips them to participate meaningfully in society. Academy activities are planned with a focus on these areas, using the sporting and cultural interests of the students to make connections with them.

A key focus of the program is retention and attendance, with year-to-year retention at 90 per cent and school attendance rates greater than 80 per cent for schools who house at Clontarf Academy. One of the staff said, "You don't do well at school if you are not here." Certainly, many of the students at Mount Austin achieve this target. After completing Year 12, students are supported to either enter further education and training or land a job, with specialist employment officers engaged to provide support until graduates are comfortable with their job and their new environment.

As a charitable not-for-profit organisation, it relies on the funding received from the federal government and state or territory governments and donations from the private sector. At Mount Austin this includes, for example, donations in kind for an annual supply of breakfast cereals from Kellogg.

Why visit the Clontarf Academy at Wagga? Because Clontarf wants to open a campus here in Canberra. We have several schools with Indigenous students, and not all are achieving educationally at the level at which they could be. If attendance is one of the indicators, then some Canberra schools fall short of the 80 per cent target for Indigenous students. More than that, in a city with a high socio-economic index, our Indigenous students are still, on average, two and a half years behind their non-Indigenous peers. They fall behind in progressing to years 11 and 12 and completing their high school education or equivalent. Let us do what we can to support our students and invite Clontarf to the ACT and finally start closing the gap.

ANU internship program

MS CHEYNE (Ginninderra) (5.46): Over the last three months my office has had the privilege of participating in the ANU internship program. The program matches ANU students with parliamentary offices, embassies, NGOs, think tanks and industry organisations to undertake a research topic over the course of one semester. The hosting organisation is able to nominate a topic of research which will assist them in their future operations, and the ANU student receives valuable experience, networking opportunities and, importantly, a subject's credit for their efforts.

My office played host to Jacob from August to October this year. On exchange from the UK, Jacob has not only contributed valuable knowledge to our office; he also taught us how to respond when a Brit asks you: "Y'right?" Jacob is studying sustainability and environmental management, and during his time in my office he undertook a research project on waste management in the Belconnen town centre, a subject close to my heart. Jacob devised a research methodology for the collection of survey information in the town centre and proved himself to be a great sport when he repeatedly went to the town centre to ask strangers their thoughts on waste management in the area. He was able to collect valuable information on people's attitudes towards waste and their ideas to improve waste management in the town centre.

Jacob's final report provides an analysis of the results and identifies specific areas where we could improve waste facilities, such as the locations where people tend to congregate to smoke and which would benefit from butt bins. Jacob has made several recommendations to help keep the town centre beautiful and to improve the options for environmentally friendly waste disposal. Jacob's report will help to guide my own priorities for improving waste management in the town centre and will be a valuable resource as an insight into community attitudes and expectations. I look forward to sharing it with the relevant ministers.

I would like to publicly thank Jacob for all of his hard work during his time in my office, and for the high quality report he has produced. I also extend my thanks to ANU for the wonderful intern showcase they held last Thursday evening. To wrap up the semester, the university coordinated an evening to meet different interns who participated in the program throughout the year. It was a fantastic opportunity to meet a very wide range of students who had many stories to tell about their internship experiences. The ANU internship program is a fantastic opportunity to connect with an ANU student who is able to undertake research in a relevant policy area. I commend this program to any other members who may have a research need. I would happily participate in the program again in the future.

Ginninderra District Girl Guides

MRS KIKKERT (Ginninderra) (5.49): The Ginninderra District Girl Guides operate from the guide hall located in Walhallow Street in Hawker, and the district serves guides from the suburbs of Aranda, Belconnen, Bruce, Cook, Hawker, Higgins, Holt, Macquarie, Page, Scullin and Weetangera, all located in my electorate of Ginninderra.

This guide hall is a simple building in desperate need of its own car park, but for the many young women in this area who have enjoyed their association with the Girl Guide movement over the years it is a source of pride and the centre of many fond memories.

Two weeks ago the Hawker guide hall reached its 40th birthday, a significant milestone that was enthusiastically celebrated by the Ginninderra district's guides and leaders. I am grateful to have been invited to participate in this event. My daughter, who attended with me, and I both enjoyed ourselves tremendously. Activities included bedroll racing, a scavenger hunt and a game of capture the flag—one of my family's favourite games to play. We also got to enjoy some delicious birthday cake and the singing of campfire songs around a figurative bonfire outside.

The Girl Guides is the single largest movement in the world for girls, with approximately 10 million guides scattered across the globe. The goal of the movement is to provide girls between the ages of five and 18 with opportunities to have fun, develop leadership qualities and learn skills that develop both their self-confidence and their sense of community responsibility.

Women who participated in Girl Guides as children and youths often speak about how the movement helped to empower them and teach them self-respect and respect for others. By meeting weekly with their peers, guides frequently develop strong friendships with other girls and with their leaders that last a lifetime. They also learn teamwork. Women aged 18 and over can be involved by volunteering as leaders in the Girl Guides. They are, of course, always looking for more volunteers who are willing to give a few hours a week to help in developing strong, capable young women who have a sense of purpose and community responsibility.

Girl Guides carry out many service projects in order to make the world a better place. Recent service activities have included participating in Clean Up Australia Day, making care bags to donate to post-operative breast cancer survivors, sewing trauma teddies for the Ambulance Service, baking treats for hungry firefighters and collecting clothing to be donated to the Smith Family.

I express my appreciation to the good women who serve the Ginninderra District Girl Guides. As I spent time with them and the girls whom they mentor I realised how much I personally would have benefitted from the Girl Guides program. I very much wish that when I was a young woman I could have been a part of a unit where I would have enjoyed the friendship of other girls striving to conduct their lives according to the guides law: being honest and trustworthy; being friendly to others; using their time and abilities wisely; being thoughtful and optimistic; and living with courage and strength. I am glad that there are 14 Girl Guides districts in the Ginninderra electorate, and I am grateful for all the good they accomplish in the lives of so many girls. I am confident that our Canberra community is a better place as young women learn and embrace the values and principles taught to them in the Girl Guides program.

Question resolved in the affirmative.

The Assembly adjourned at 5.55 pm.

Schedule of amendments

Schedule 1

Government Procurement (Financial Integrity) Amendment Bill 2017

Amendments moved by the Treasurer

1

Long title—

omit

, and for other purposes

2

Clause 2

Page 2, line 5—

omit

1 January 2018

substitute

1 July 2018

3

Clause 3, note

Page 2, line 10—

omit

4

Clause 4

Proposed new section 42A (1)

Page 2, line 18—

omit

\$12 500

substitute

the prescribed amount

5

Clause 5

Page 3, line 18—

[oppose the clause]

6

Schedule 1

Page 4, line 1—

omit