



# Debates

WEEKLY HANSARD

Legislative Assembly for the ACT

**NINTH ASSEMBLY**

**13 FEBRUARY 2018**

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## **Tuesday, 13 February 2018**

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

### **Death of member**

**MADAM SPEAKER:** I have received written notice from Mr Coe, the Leader of the Opposition, advising of the passing of Mr Steve Doszpot MLA on 25 November 2017. I present the following papers:

Legislative Assembly for the Australian Capital Territory—Casual vacancy—

Death of Mr Steve Doszpot MLA—Copy of letter from the Leader of the Opposition to the Speaker, dated 27 November 2017.

Copy of letter to the Electoral Commissioner, ACT Electoral Commission, from the Speaker, dated 27 November 2017.

### **Announcement of member to fill casual vacancy**

**MADAM SPEAKER:** The Clerk has been notified by the Electoral Commissioner that, pursuant to sections 189 and 194 of the Electoral Act 1992, Miss Candice Burch has been declared elected to the Legislative Assembly for the Australian Capital Territory to fill the vacancy. I present the following paper:

Legislative Assembly for the Australian Capital Territory—Casual Vacancy—  
Declaration of the poll—Letter from the Electoral Commissioner, ACT Electoral Commission, to the Clerk, ACT Legislative Assembly, dated 13 December 2017.

### **Oath or affirmation of allegiance**

**MADAM SPEAKER:** The provisions of the Oaths and Affirmations Act 1984 require the oath or affirmation of a new member to be made before the Chief Justice of the Supreme Court of the Australian Capital Territory or a judge of that court authorised by the Chief Justice. The Chief Justice of the Supreme Court, Justice Helen Murrell, has authorised the Hon Justice John Burns, a judge of the Supreme Court of the Australian Capital Territory, to attend the chamber. I present the following paper:

Oaths and Affirmations Act, pursuant to section 10A—Nomination of the Hon Justice John Burns, Judge of the Supreme Court of the Australian Capital Territory—Letter from the Chief Justice of the Supreme Court of the Australian Capital Territory to the Clerk of the Legislative Assembly, dated 2 February 2018.

*The Hon Justice Burns attended accordingly—*

### **Affirmation of allegiance by member**

*Miss C Burch was introduced and made and subscribed the affirmation of allegiance required by law.*

*The Hon Justice Burns having retired—*

**MADAM SPEAKER:** On behalf of members, I bid you a warm welcome to the Assembly.

### **Inaugural speech**

**MISS C BURCH** (Kurrajong) (10.07): I seek leave of the Assembly to make my inaugural speech:

Leave granted.

**MADAM SPEAKER:** Before I call Miss Burch, I wish to remind members that this is her inaugural speech and it is traditional that it is heard in silence.

**MISS C BURCH:** It is a tremendous honour to be sworn in today as the newest Liberal representative of the electorate of Kurrajong. A little over six months ago, I farewelled my job at the Department of Finance, packed my life into a couple of suitcases and embarked on a working holiday overseas, as is a rite of passage for so many young Australians. When I left for Toronto—Canada, not Newcastle—I certainly did not expect to return so soon, but that is often the unexpected nature of life, and Hare-Clark. It is an incredible privilege and an exciting opportunity—amidst great sadness—to stand here today. I am, however, very much looking forward to working hard to serve the people of the inner north and the inner south.

I was in about year 9 when I first discovered the federal budget. I remember asking dad to record it on the VCR so that I could re-watch it and diligently take notes, which I then went and presented to my class in school the next day. I was fascinated by this new world of budget measures, with Peter Costello spruiking tax cuts and surpluses. This new-found interest soon led me to enrol in economics in high school, and later university, and eventually led me to the Department of Finance, where I had the great pleasure of working on six federal budgets.

Something that has always struck me is the waste and inefficiencies that we so often see throughout government. Why is it that as soon as we ask government to do something we suddenly seem to be faced with layers of bureaucratic red tape? Why is it that as soon as we ask government to do something we seem to be faced with triple the price tag? And why is it that as soon as we turn to government we seem to be faced with mountains of paperwork, complicated forms and websites that are just impossible to navigate?

We are, of course, a government town, and as a city we are lucky to have some of the brightest minds in our public sector. Our public service, both federally and locally, is brimming with some of the most hardworking, dedicated and passionate people who,

day after day, demonstrate incredible commitment to serving our country. It is this public service that I was so proud to be a part of, and it is this culture of service that contributes so greatly to the fabric of Canberra.

When I talk about efficient government, I am not talking about job cuts. Efficient government means looking for better ways of doing business. Efficient government means ensuring that we are harnessing and investing in the right technology to enable our public servants to do the best job they can do. Efficient government means making sure that our public service has the right skills and expertise to serve us well into the future.

Not long after I arrived in Toronto, I came to discover that, while you can take the girl out of the public service, it is perhaps not so easy to take the public servant out of the girl. I quickly found that I was regaling my new Canadian friends with many comparisons between our great cities—everything from the differences between our welfare systems, workplace conditions, banking sector, and the quality and abundance of local parks. There is nothing quite like having to rely on Starbucks or Tim Hortons for your daily caffeine fix to have you greatly appreciating the coffee culture that we have here.

One of the things I was perhaps ranting about more than anything else was the public transport system. Within a week in Toronto, I could navigate the public transport system better than I can after more than 10 years in Canberra. Who knew it could be so fast, so convenient and so reliable to catch buses? It was a well-integrated system, including subways, buses and, God forbid, a tram, that was easy to navigate and quickly got you to where you needed to be. It did not matter if I was travelling alone after dark; I could simply ask the bus driver to let me off between stops, so that I could get off closer to home. And I never had to rely on a timetable, because even if I was travelling at 2 am on a Friday night or 8 am on a Sunday, I always knew that the next bus or tram was never far away.

This is the kind of public transport system Canberra needs. While I realise that higher population density and the grid-like streets in Toronto make this a system that could never quite be replicated here, I think it is absolutely essential that we look to the best transport mix to suit Canberra's needs.

One of the most common questions I received on the campaign trail—probably second to whether or not you and I are related, Madam Speaker; and we are not, for the record—was, “You’re a Liberal? But you’re young and a woman.” I guess it depends on your definition of “young”, but I am under 30, I am a woman and I am a Liberal. And these things are in no way inconsistent. I do not ever remember making a conscious decision to enter politics, and I certainly never sat down to compare parties and decide which one best suited me. I simply always had a strong and deep-rooted passion for freedom, for individual liberty, for equality of opportunity and for limited and effective government.

I am a Liberal because I believe in freedom—freedom of speech, freedom of association and freedom of religion. I believe that this freedom includes the freedom to offend and that it is up to society and not government to judge those opinions

deemed to be unacceptable. As the saying goes, while I may not agree with what you say, I will always defend your right to say it.

I am a Liberal because I believe in individual liberty. I believe in choice and personal responsibility. I believe that you, not government, know what is best for you and your family, and I believe that you—Canberrans—deserve greater choice in how you live your life.

I am a Liberal because I believe in equality of opportunity and reward for effort. I think one of the simplest distinctions to make between our side of politics and those opposite is that the left tends to pursue equality of outcome while we pursue equality of opportunity. Where is the incentive to work hard, to better yourself and to strive for a better life for your family when there is no reward for your effort?

Public education is, of course, fundamental to achieving equality of opportunity, and I was lucky enough to receive a fantastic public education in Sydney. I had some of the most committed and dedicated teachers. I remember, in modern history and economics in particular, that we used to write practice essay after practice essay, yet nobody in the class could ever get a mark higher than 17 out of 20. It frustrated us no end, until eventually, once our exams were over, our teachers told us that all of our essays were consistently worth full marks; they just always knew that we could still do better. This is the kind of public education that our children deserve.

I am a Liberal because I believe in limited and effective government, and I believe that government should improve and not hinder your day-to-day life. How often have you found yourself at a barbecue or a friend's dinner party when the conversation inevitably turns to "the government"? "The government" has increased our recent rates bill, meaning that we can no longer afford that holiday. "The government" will not allow me to cut down that tree in my own backyard so that I can renovate my house to accommodate my growing family. "The government" still have not fixed that pothole at the end of my street. So often it seems that government is doing more to complicate our lives than improve them.

I am a Liberal because I believe that government has a duty to spend taxpayer money efficiently and effectively and to live within its means so as not to burden our children and grandchildren with debt. As a teenager, it is all too easy to go out shopping with mum and dad's credit card, giving very little consideration to where that money is coming from or how it could better be spent. It is an entirely different story when you get your first job and it is suddenly your own hard-earned cash that you are spending. This is the problem with government.

It is, of course, the hard-earned money of ACT taxpayers that we are spending. Government has a duty to ensure that ACT taxpayers are receiving value for money, and at the moment we are not. In fact, it often seems that ACT taxpayers are receiving far less value for money than any other state or territory.

In our schools we are spending more per student than most other states, yet our NAPLAN results are worse than similar schools in similar areas. In our hospitals we are spending more per person than any other jurisdiction, yet our emergency waiting

times remain second worst in the country. In our prisons we are spending 50 per cent more per inmate per day than the national average. In homelessness services we are spending more per person than all other states, yet last year a third of people seeking services were turned away. See the trend here?

Over the past five years our rates have increased by more than 40 per cent. Household rates have increased by 12 per cent this year alone. Commercial rates have increased by five per cent this year, while land tax has increased by 18 per cent. On top of this we are constantly seeing increases in vehicle registration, parking fees and fines and other government services.

The government claims that its rates reform is “fairer, simpler and more efficient”. How is it fair that we are charging Canberra families an extra \$400 a year in rates when they are already facing cost-of-living pressures? How is it fair that we are charging mums and dads who choose to invest in our property market an extra \$1,000 a year in rates when they are already being slugged with stamp duty? How is it fair that we are forcing our students to work multiple jobs just to pay the rent when rate increases are inevitably passed on by landlords? How is it fair that we are charging our local coffee shop \$25,000 more in rates a year—the equivalent of two additional part-time jobs—simply for staying in business?

How is it more efficient that the government is raising over 30 per cent more in stamp duty than it was five years ago, yet our local services continue to get worse and worse? How is it more efficient that they are raising nearly \$200 million more in rates revenue, when meanwhile our local bus routes are being cancelled? How is it more efficient that government is raising \$1 million more in parking revenue than it was five years ago, while it often seems that our roads are not being properly maintained?

We deserve a city in which you and your children can afford to buy your first home without paying through the nose in stamp duty—a city in which you can build a house without being rorted by development fees, and a city in which our students can get a fantastic tertiary education without having to juggle three jobs just to pay the rent.

We deserve a city with an efficient and effective public transport system for all Canberrans. We deserve a city in which we can enjoy our many fantastic bars and restaurants without having to pay for parking at 10 pm on a Friday night. We deserve a city with a thriving economy in its own right that is not solely dependent on the public sector and at the mercy of our federal government—a city in which small business and private enterprise, not government, are the engine room of our economy.

I would like, of course, to acknowledge my predecessor, Steve Doszpot. Steve was a selfless servant not only to the Canberra Liberals but to all three of the electorates that he served during his time here. Steve worked incredibly hard for our community and was often known for taking up the issues that many others saw to be lost causes. Over the last 12 months in particular, Steve demonstrated incredible courage, determination and selflessness. In Steve’s inaugural speech he said:

... the most important thing in life is not the triumph but the struggle. The essential thing is not to have conquered but to have fought well.

I think we can all agree that Steve fought incredibly well.

Like so many Australian families, my parents took a huge leap of faith, displaying tremendous courage by packing up their lives, saying goodbye to loved ones in South Africa and embarking on a journey to a new and unknown country with a toddler in tow, in search of a better life for their children. This is a common story not only to our Australian identity but to parents everywhere, who constantly strive for better opportunities and a better life for their kids than that which they have had. I would like to thank my parents, Alistair and Bernice, for all of the opportunities that they have given me and my sister, Danica, and, most importantly, for instilling in us a confidence in ourselves and the belief that we can achieve anything we set our minds to, as long as we are willing to work for it. To my younger sister, I thank you for constantly challenging me and for always displaying a wisdom well beyond your years.

I moved to Canberra as a bright-eyed, fresh-faced 18-year-old, so incredibly excited by all the opportunities that the ANU had to offer, yet, like so many, absolutely insistent that I would be here for no longer than the duration of my degree. Again like so many, I quickly found that Canberra stole my heart and became home, and that is in no small part due to the incredible friendships that I found here. To my Canberra family, past and present, I thank you for your love, friendship and support.

There are three people in particular whom I must thank. Firstly, I refer to the two superwomen I am lucky enough to have in my life. Emma, I do not think I ever really asked you to manage my campaign; I kind of just told you that you were doing it. But your ability to effortlessly juggle motherhood, your career, other commitments and my campaign without ever batting an eyelid never ceases to amaze me. Angela, you too seem to keep so many balls in the air at one time and constantly take on so much for our cause. I am still convinced that you never actually sleep at night, but I could not imagine politics without you. And I say to Duncan that ever since my very first ANU Liberal Club drinks event, I never could have asked for greater friendship and a greater ally in my time in the party. I certainly would not be here today if it were not for your constant support, encouragement and incessant optimism.

Despite joining the ANU Liberal Club on my very first day on campus, it was not until almost two years later that I really received my campaign baptism by fire—the “Go for Coe” campaign of 2008. It was a whirlwind because we crammed about six months of campaigning into six weeks. You know that you are well and truly in the thick of a campaign when all you dream of at night is letterboxes and doorbells flying past your head.

I have had some fantastic mentors and supporters throughout my time in the party. I would like to acknowledge a few in particular today: Alistair, of course, for giving me that first job in politics and all of the opportunities since; Zed, for your constant encouragement and for being such a fantastic doorknocking companion; and Gerry, for your sage wisdom and counsel.

To the ANU Liberal Club and the ACT and federal Young Liberals, I thank you for the many life lessons you have taught me along the way but most importantly for the

incredible lifelong friendships. You may be the backbone of the Liberal Party when it comes to campaigning, but it is your role, first and foremost, to hold our Liberal parliamentarians to account and to ensure that we are always upholding our values. Don't ever forget that.

To James in my office, and all of the Assembly staff, I thank you so much for the support I have received over recent weeks. I say to my new colleagues that I am so excited to be part of such a diverse, dedicated and determined team—and in a female majority party room at that! Elizabeth, remembering all of those late nights spent folding letters in your campaign office many years ago, I certainly never expected that we would be here representing Kurrajong together.

Finally, I say to the people of Kurrajong that I know you are frustrated: frustrated by a government who is not listening to you; frustrated by a government who is not consulting you; and frustrated by a government who is so preoccupied with federal issues, symbolic gestures and doing favours for its union mates, rather than with your priorities. Politics should be about people, yet all too often we see politics being about little more than power. I am listening. I will stand up and fight for your priorities, and I will ensure that your voices are heard.

## **Visitors**

**MADAM SPEAKER:** I acknowledge the presence in the gallery of two former members: Mr Cornwell, former Speaker, and Senator Seselja, former Leader of the Opposition. I welcome you both back to the Assembly.

## **Appointment of Deputy Clerk and Serjeant-at-Arms**

**MADAM SPEAKER:** I wish to advise the Assembly that we have another new face from the beginning of 2018. Ms Julia Agostino has been appointed to the position of Deputy Clerk and Serjeant-at-Arms, and we welcome her also to the Assembly.

**Members:** Hear, hear!

## **Leave of absence**

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

That leave of absence be granted to Mr Ramsay for this sitting due to illness.

## **Petitions—ministerial responses**

The following responses to petitions have been lodged:

### **ACTION bus service—Deakin, Kingston and Manuka—petition 22-17**

By **Ms Fitzharris**, Minister for Transport and City Services, dated 14 December 2017, in response to a petition lodged by Ms Lee on 24 October 2017 concerning ACTION bus services between Deakin, Kingston and Manuka.

*The response read as follows:*

Dear Mr Kiermaier

Thank you for your letter of 24 October 2017 regarding petition No 22-17 lodged by Ms Elizabeth Lee MLA regarding a bus service from Deakin to Kingston and Manuka. I apologise for the delay in responding.

The provision of new routes in the public transport network needs to be considered as part of the overall network design and not in isolation. This ensures that the public transport service is efficient and connects as many people and places as possible within the available fleet and budget.

I am pleased to inform you that Transport Canberra will soon be undertaking community consultation on local bus services across Canberra to complement the Rapid Network that has been announced for implementation in mid-2018.

This will provide an opportunity for residents to let the ACT Government know how their local bus services should connect their local areas to the Rapid Network and other important destinations.

Under the current network, customers can travel between Deakin, Kingston and Manuka by making a connection at the Barton Bus Station. This connection will improve under the Rapid Network in 2018, with the service between Deakin and Barton increasing to a Rapid frequency of 15 minutes or better between 7am and 7pm. The services will also run seven days a week, making connections between these areas much easier on weekends.

I understand that there are also members of our community who cannot access the public transport system and some of these people may be eligible to use the Flexible Bus Service. The service is designed specifically for residents, such as the aged or people with a mobility difficulty. It is a free service which picks up residents from their home and takes them to local community services, such as local shopping centres and hospitals.

Passengers can contact the Community Transport Coordination Centre on 6205 3555. Bookings are generally to be made two days prior to travel, but can be made as little as 24 hours prior to the journey. Further information on the Flexible Bus Service is available on the Transport Canberra and City Services website.

Thank you for raising this matter. I trust the information provided is of assistance.

### **Dangerous driving in Gordon—petition 23-17**

By **Mr Gentleman**, Minister for Police and Emergency Services, dated 23 January 2018, in response to a petition lodged by Mr Wall on 26 October 2017 concerning antisocial and dangerous driving in Gordon.

*The response read as follows:*

Dear Mr Duncan

Thank you for your letter of 26 October 2017 regarding petition No 23-17 lodged with the Assembly, by Mr Andrew Wall MLA, on 26 October 2017. The terms of the petition relate to concerns held by certain residents of the Australian Capital Territory about excessive hooning, anti-social and dangerous driving on Preddey Way, Clare Dennis Avenue and Lewis Luxton Avenue in Gordon.

In accordance with Standing Order 100, I provide you the following response to the issues raised by the petition:

The ACT Government is committed to reducing deaths and injuries on our roads and has in place the ACT Road Safety Strategy 2011-2020. Underpinning this strategy, the ACT Government released the ACT Road Safety Action Plan 2016-2020.

ACT Policing routinely enforces road rules in order to ensure the safety of road users. ACT Policing targets traffic 'hot-spots' with enforcement activities, prioritised according to traffic volume, accident statistics and community information. As police cannot be present at all times in any particular location, they rely heavily on public information.

I am advised during the period of 1 January 2015 to 10 December 2017, three Traffic Infringement Notices (TINs) were issued for driving offences on Clare Dennis Avenue. During the same period, nine TINs were issued on Lewis Luxton Avenue. No TINs were issued on Preddey Way during this time period. Please note the above numbers include TINs issued for all driving offences.

I can advise the petition has been forwarded to the Officers in Charge (OIC) of Tuggeranong Police Station and Traffic Operations, Station Sergeant Greg O'Ryan and Detective Acting Station Sergeant Marcus Boorman respectively. I am advised the area encompassing Preddey Way, Clare Dennis Avenue and Lewis Luxton Avenue has been flagged for increased Police patrols as operational priorities allow.

I encourage of the Canberra community to continue to report offences to ACT Policing on 131444, or triple zero (000) in the case of an emergency. Traffic related issues can be reported to Crime Stoppers on 1800 333 000, or online via [www.act.crimestoppers.com.au](http://www.act.crimestoppers.com.au).

Information provided to Crime Stoppers is sent to ACT Policing Intelligence for collation and analysis. The collation of this information assists police to identify trends in offending behaviour and prioritise resources accordingly.

In preparing my response, I sought input from Roads ACT regarding the possibility of traffic calming measures for the streets named in the petition. To identify the requirement for traffic calming measures in residential areas, Roads ACT considers a range of factors, including traffic volume and speed data, crash history, heavy vehicle use and surrounding land use. The results of these assessments are then compared with data obtained regarding other streets of concern to determine priorities for detailed investigation.

However, Roads ACT advised traffic calming measures are not an effective means of deterring or controlling anti-social driving behaviour as they rely on

drivers reacting reasonable to the road layout. Drivers committing intentional and deliberate 'hooning' type driving behaviour often see traffic calming measures as an added challenge, even when a multitude of closely-spaced devices are installed.

A consideration of the factors above in respect of Preddey Way, Clare Dennis Avenue and Lewis Luxton Avenue, indicates they are performing better than similar roads in the ACT. Accordingly, I am advised Roads ACT has no immediate plans to implement additional traffic calming measures on Preddey Way, Clare Dennis Avenue or Lewis Luxton Avenue. Roads ACT will however, continue to monitor the roads for any significant deterioration in traffic conditions and take action if warranted.

I trust this information is of assistance.

### **Dangerous dogs—petition 24-17**

By **Ms Fitzharris**, Minister for Minister for Transport and City Services, dated 31 January 2018, in response to a petition lodged by Mr Doszpot on 28 November 2017 concerning dangerous dogs legislation.

*The response read as follows:*

Dear Mr Duncan

Thank you for your letter of 28 November 2017 regarding petition No 24-17 lodged by the late Mr Steve Doszpot MLA, regarding the ineffective management of dangerous dogs and dog attacks.

On 29 November 2017, amendments to the Domestic Animals Act 2000 were passed by the ACT Legislative Assembly and came into effect on 14 December 2017. These amendments provide increased enforcement powers, giving authorised officers the ability to take action in regard to nuisance, harassing or dangerous dogs in a greater range of circumstances, particularly where the dog poses a potential or actual threat to public safety. They also include increased fines and penalties, with new offences for provoking a dog to attack and for not having effective control of a dog in a public place, on or off a leash. The amendments impose greater restrictions on keepers of dangerous dogs, with public safety being the paramount consideration.

These provisions enable firm and prompt action on dog management, improving the ability for Domestic Animal Services (DAS) to take effective compliance action. In addition, an additional eight rangers are being recruited to DAS, which will significantly increase the resources available to respond to incidents and take a proactive approach to compliance and education of pet owners.

The amended legislation underpins the Government's ongoing commitment to promoting responsible pet ownership as the cornerstone of our approach to ensuring that dogs in the ACT are properly managed to ensure public safety.

Thank you for raising this matter. I trust the information provided is of assistance.

### **Red Hill natural environment—petitions 28-17 and 29-17**

By **Mr Gentleman**, Minister for Planning and Land Management, dated 2 February 2018, in response to a petition lodged by Ms Le Couteur on 30 November 2017 concerning integrated planning for the Red Hill natural environment.

*The response read as follows:*

Dear Mr Duncan

Thank you for your letter of 30 November 2017 regarding petitions No 28-17 and 29-17 lodged by Ms Le Couteur MLA.

I understand the petitions bring to the attention of the Assembly concerns about the following:

- Protection of the Red Hill natural environment;
- Retention of existing green space in Hughes, Deakin and Garran; and
- Suspension of all development until a master plan has been developed for the Red Hill Nature Reserve, the Federal Golf Club, Deakin section 66 and any open space land adjacent to the Nature Reserve.

In relation to this matter, the Legislative Assembly passed a resolution on 25 October 2017 which halts Territory Plan variations adjoining the Red Hill Nature Reserve until an integrated plan has been prepared for the Nature Reserve and surrounding areas. This includes the Federal Golf Club and Deakin section 66. In this regard, I believe that the integrated planning process stipulated by the resolution will also address the issues raised in the petitions.

I have requested the Environment, Planning and Sustainable Development Directorate (EPSDD) undertake to prepare an integrated plan that addresses the resolution and considers the cumulative effects of development in the area.

Once EPSDD prepare a draft plan, the various community and environmental groups, key stakeholders and the general public will be consulted before the plan is finalised.

I look forward to providing the Legislative Assembly an update on the Red Hill Nature Reserve and surrounds later this year.

### **Justice and Community Safety—Standing Committee Scrutiny report 13**

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

Justice and Community Safety—Standing Committee (Legislative Scrutiny Role)—Scrutiny Report 13, dated 6 February 2018, together with the relevant minutes of proceedings.

I seek leave to make a brief statement.

Leave granted.

**MRS JONES:** Scrutiny report 13 contains the committee's comments on four bills, 16 pieces of subordinate legislation, seven government responses, one national regulation, one regulatory impact statement and proposed amendments to one government bill. The report was circulated to members when the Assembly was not sitting. I commend the report to the Assembly.

### **Planning and Urban Renewal—Standing Committee Report 3**

**MS LE COUTEUR** (Murrumbidgee) (10.29): I present the following report:

Planning and Urban Renewal—Standing Committee—Report 3—Draft Variation to the Territory Plan No 344 Woden Town Centre: Zone Changes and Amendments to the Phillip Precinct Map and Code, dated 7 December 2017, together with a copy of the extracts of the relevant minutes of proceedings and transmittal letter, dated 11 December 2017.

I move:

That the report be noted.

On 27 July 2017, pursuant to section 73 of the Planning and Development Act 2007, the Minister for Planning and Land Management, Mick Gentleman, referred the draft variation to the Territory Plan 344, Woden town centre, zone changes and amendments to the Phillip precinct map and code, to the Standing Committee on Planning and Urban Renewal for consideration and report to the Assembly. On 11 December 2017 the committee tabled, out of session, its third report for the Ninth Assembly, to whit this report on Woden.

In preparing the report, the committee received 18 submissions and heard from 19 witnesses, including members of community organisations, individuals, the Minister for Planning and Land Management and directorate officials. On behalf of the committee, I would like to thank everyone who provided information and evidence to this inquiry. In particular, I would like to thank the committee secretary, Annemieke Jongsma. I would also like to thank the other members of the committee: Suzanne Orr, Nicole Lawder, Tara Cheyne and James Milligan.

The committee discussed the draft territory plan and the many submissions with the shared objective of finding recommendations that we could all support to lead to a better outcome for Woden. The committee recommended that, subject to all our other recommendations, and there are 31 of them, the draft variation to the Territory Plan should be approved. I am very hopeful that the draft variation to the Territory Plan will be approved with these recommendations, given the support that they have received from the entire committee.

I am now going to talk about the recommendations, and a bit about the state of Woden. I want to make clear that the comments that I am making from now on I am making in my capacity as the ACT Greens planning spokesperson and also as a member for

Murrumbidgee, rather than in my role as the planning committee chair. I do not wish anyone to feel that in this part I am speaking on behalf of my colleagues, although obviously I hope they will be supportive of my statements.

Our first recommendation, as I said, was subject to our other recommendations to approve this variation. Recommendations 2, 3 4 and 6 deal with issues of clear communication between the planning authority and the community. It is really disappointing that these recommendations still have to be made, because I can remember similar ones in previous Assemblies. Recommendation 5 tells the ACT government to finalise the development of master plans in a more timely fashion. Recommendations 7, 8, 9, 10 and 11 all deal with the important issues of building height and overshadowing, in particular in the town centre of Woden.

The draft variation to the Territory Plan proposed that many buildings could have an additional four storeys. However, the committee recommended that this should only occur where the development demonstrates design excellence; the development provides demonstrated community benefits such as community housing or not-for-profit community facilities; and the additional height will not have a significant detrimental overshadowing impact on public spaces or residential buildings.

Recommendation 12 is a key recommendation. It is that the ACT government deliver a broad-based urban renewal process for Woden town centre that includes actions on community facilities, recreation facilities, the renewal of public areas and the attraction of jobs to the town centre. The report follows that up with recommendation 13, specifically dealing with unsafe buildings, and a series of recommendations about community faculties.

Recommendation 20 recommends that the ACT government develop and fund a long-term plan for community and recreation facilities in the Woden town centre, incorporating a community hub. The committee gave more detail about this with recommendations 14 and 15, which dealt with the proposal to rezone Arabanoo Park.

Recommendation 21 talks about the need to reserve a large, flexible site in Woden suitable for future community, tertiary education or recreational uses, such as an indoor sports facility or a CIT facility. In recommendation 20, the committee noted the AMC Architecture study and report into community facilities for the Woden town centre and recommended that the government should consider this as part of the solution to the lack of community facilities. Recommendations 16 and 17 aim to protect the existing pocket park on Furzer Street and the landscape area along Matilda Street by rezoning both of them to urban open space.

Recommendations 18, 30 and 31 all deal with better connectivity for pedestrians and bike riders both within the centre and actually accessing Woden town centre, which is effectively walled off by very fast roads.

Recommendation 19 was that the ACT government create greater capacity for social, educational, recreational and cultural facilities in Woden, in order to prevent it from becoming a dormitory suburb. This was in response to what I heard as the united

voice of the community, which does not want to see Woden becoming merely a dormitory area.

Recommendation 23 aimed to be part of the solution by identifying one or more entertainment precincts in Woden town centre, suitable for night-time use, that are protected from noise-sensitive land uses. We noted that areas for this were not as abundant as they had been in the past.

Recommendations 24, 25, 26 and 28 deal with specific issues for the Phillip pool and the ice-skating rink as well as the proposed supermarket which is part of the Woden Green development, and a proposal from a private company, Junstamp, which involved considerable changes in community facilities. In recommendation 27, the committee supported adding “produce market” as an allowable land use for the Woden town square and the pedestrian spine. This, we thought, was a very innovative idea to potentially increase the life in Woden, particularly over the weekend.

Finally, with recommendation 29, the committee recommended that the ACT government amend the draft variation as soon as practicable to recognise the light rail route and possible stops; to protect bus, cycle, walking and park-and-ride connections to light rail; and to update these elements through a project-specific draft variation as soon as light rail stage 2 is in a position to do this. We hope that this will be sooner rather than later.

As before, I am speaking as a local member for Murrumbidgee, which covers Woden town centre. I want to talk a bit more about the bigger picture of Woden town centre’s current state, and its future. The problems with Woden town centre have been very well publicised, particularly over the course of the community consultation, first with the master plan and then with the draft Territory Plan variation, so I will just give a short summary. There are abandoned buildings and empty office space—a lot of empty office space. There has been the closure of community facilities and recreation facilities. Most recently, the CIT has closed, and we have no idea what will happen to that.

Woden was the first non-Griffin designed town centre, and it was designed and built for a previous era. Because of this, it has old buildings and infrastructure which need replacement and upgrading. It lacks a public main street, and the town square is dying. Woden basically has been built around a mall, which means that there is not a public life, and the offices which used to surround Woden town square have basically been abandoned for offices elsewhere. The combination of the mall and the lack of offices means the town square is dying. Also, unfortunately, the mall has turned its back on the square and there is no longer a coffee shop to be seen or patronised on the square. The commonwealth government is taking its employment elsewhere: elsewhere in Canberra and elsewhere in the country.

Woden is poorly designed for walking and cycling and has a lot of very dark, isolated areas. It lacks an entertainment area with bars and live music. The town centre needs a positive vision for renewal. This low point is a time of great opportunity, as the future of the centre for the next 50 years can be set now. I would like to see this Territory Plan variation be part of setting a positive future for Woden.

The ACT Greens' vision for Woden is for the town centre to be a hub of jobs, services, recreation and entertainment, with more community and recreational facilities, rather than less, and to be an entertainment precinct where people can go of an evening, and certainly on weekends, for restaurants, bars and live music. There should be some housing, including affordable housing, but the town centre should not just be a dormitory centre for the city: the housing needs be affordable so that young people, service workers and anyone who is earning in the lower half, not the upper half, of income in Canberra can still afford to live in Woden.

There needs to be much better active transport and transport-orientated development. There are going to be people living right next to the bus interchange and the eventual light rail stop. What is happening at present is that we are building a multistorey car park right next to the Woden square. That is appalling. The new buildings need to be designed for the challenges of the next 50 years, and to be highly energy efficient, preferably with zero emissions.

How can we get there? We need to do better. Urban renewal which is not well done will result in conflict between developers and the community, a dormitory centre with low quality of life and missed opportunities for bringing life to the centre, sustainability and affordable housing.

I note in terms of conflict in the community that there is a new development plan for the Woden Tradies site. That was a source of considerable conflict a few years ago, and I fear it may become a source of conflict again or has become a low level source of conflict. I hope that these can be resolved before the DA is finally put in.

Woden town centre needs a comprehensive urban renewal strategy that pulls together community and recreation facilities, the renewal of public areas, planning rule changes, major projects like light rail or tertiary education in south Canberra, or more community facilities. There are a lot of things which could be and should be built in the Woden area.

The master plan developed by the government in 2015 was a good start and had community support, but implementation has been and is lacking. It is very disappointing that a 26-storey building has been approved in Bowes Street, whereas the master plan agreed by the community said it should have been 12 storeys. Woden has already shown that, by themselves, very tall buildings do not lead to vibrant, attractive centres. They can create dark, unpleasant streets with no life. We have the Lovett Tower, now called the MLC tower. We know this. The planning system needs to be used more cleverly. Very tall buildings should only be allowed as an incentive to provide real community benefits like community facilities, an entertainment precinct or affordable housing for workers.

There has been a real decline in community, education and recreational facilities which needs to be reversed. There should be real ambition. For example, why is the proposed new University of New South Wales campus to be in the city when the south side basically no longer has tertiary education?

We should reserve a large, flexible site for community and recreational facilities. There has already been a report into using the Callam offices for this, but nothing has been done by the government as a result of this report. The former CIT site needs to be looked at as a community asset, not just vacant land to be sold off. Could this become part of an expanded hospital precinct? God knows, it seems that we need more emphasis on medical facilities in the ACT rather than less. Or could it become another higher educational option which the south side would welcome with open arms?

Light rail could help a great deal, but it needs to be coordinated with other actions; otherwise it will just lead to a dormitory centre. For example, it needs a major redevelopment of the bus interchange. This could be a huge opportunity to improve the whole area between Callam Street and the town square.

In conclusion, there is a great deal of work to be done for Woden town centre so that it can achieve its potential. The first step in achieving that is a comprehensive urban renewal strategy, as recommended by the committee in its report. I urge the government to deliver on that and all the 31 recommendations that the committee has made.

Question resolved in the affirmative.

## **Portfolio priorities 2018**

### **Ministerial statement**

**MS BERRY** (Ginninderra—Deputy Chief Minister, Minister for Education and Early Childhood Development, Minister for Housing and Suburban Development, Minister for the Prevention of Domestic and Family Violence, Minister for Women and Minister for Sport and Recreation) (10.44): Madam Speaker, I am glad to join my colleagues this week in outlining a set of priorities for 2018 which show a strong, progressive agenda across all arms of the ACT government. In my portfolios I plan to build on a successful 2017 with further delivery of commitments Labor made at the election and those contained in the parliamentary agreement. I will continue to progress these initiatives in a collaborative way, and I want to thank the many community members who are feeding into my work. These people reflect a progressive community, with a strong set of values, working together to push for equality and fairness in all parts of life.

Next week I will deliver a statement to sum up the first year's work on developing a new strategy for the future of education in the ACT. This process has been truly community led. With the help of expert leaders in the education field, we have found a great balance, with a conversation bringing the best of knowledge and evidence but that is grounded in what local teachers, students and families identify as most important. My statement next week will start to shape the policy direction for this strategy, clearly and rightly focused on equity, to drive the best outcomes for everyone in our schools. Of course, the Labor values of equity and universal access to education will be strong themes across the education and early childhood development portfolios in 2018.

Right now the government is about halfway through the rollout of 15,000 Chromebooks this year—improving equity, helping Canberra kids learn with the latest technology and easing the expectation on teachers to be experts on every device. This is nation-leading. Other states are following Canberra's lead, and I have no doubt that a few years down the track we will start to see amazing young students emerge on the back of this investment.

I would also like to emphasise the work I will continue to progress around inclusion and support for all students in ACT schools. In particular, this will include full implementation of the schools for all program, continuing with our commitments to support mental health for young people and making sure that every school is a safe school for young LGBTIQ students, their friends, families and school communities. Australia has demanded equality for LGBTI community and this includes young people. The government will proudly continue to provide the safe and inclusive schools program.

In early childhood education and care, last week brought disappointment as the federal government again fell short of its obligation to join states and territories as a partner to long-term, universal access to preschool. The bookshelves are straining under the weight of evidence of how important this access is for young children, particularly those from poor or disadvantaged circumstances. It is as important as school education—in many ways more so. That is why, with the help of my ministerial advisory group, the ACT will work to keep pressure up for long-term commitment at the national level and also make every effort we can locally to extend the reach of quality preschool education.

This year will also see the release of the government's next housing strategy. Again, my approach to this work has been to empower the people who live and breathe these issues each day to help guide the policy process in government, and this is what has happened. The government facilitated a long period of outreach and consultation last year, culminating in the housing and homelessness summit in October.

The next step in this process will be the release of a full and detailed communique reflecting the community's input. Currently, with the housing advisory group, this document will present an extensive list of policy options. Not all will be right for the ACT, but I will welcome any constructive involvement from across this chamber as we look at these options.

We will then face the challenge of assessing a long list of ideas and crunching the numbers around what will be possible and effective with the level of influence that the ACT government has over our housing market. I have also begun conversations with my ministerial colleagues around which there are shared responsibilities in the housing response and I look forward to working together in bringing this strategy together.

In greenfield development, 2018 will see the delivery of the first year of public, affordable and community housing targets through the Suburban Land Agency. I will bring key arms of the government together to set new targets heading into 2019.

Madam Speaker, in my past statements on ministerial priorities I have spoken repeatedly about the government's commitment to achieving gender equity. It is a challenge that needs to be taken on in every part of government, in private enterprise, in the community and in the home.

In 2018 the government, together with the Ministerial Advisory Council on Women, will get stuck into further implementation of the women's plan. We will continue to reach out to the many champions for gender equity—both women and men—to push this movement forward and continue to show national leadership.

After two years of particular emphasis in the prevention of domestic and family violence and in the sport portfolio, the government will make further strides in these areas. The family safety hub will take shape, having been through an extensive co-design process, and will become a real organising point and a place for innovation among the amazing support services working in this field.

Through the Coordinator-General for Family Safety, we will also continue to work on a seamless government response to domestic and family violence and sexual assault. Some of the important gains which have been made have not been the most expensive initiatives but have enabled new partnerships and approaching things from a new angle. One example is the work of the Domestic Violence Crisis Service and Housing ACT working together to identify suitable properties for the room4change program, which is now established.

As we know, the key indicators around domestic and family violence are likely to stay very high as Australia comes to terms with the full extent of this problem, and the same goes for Canberra. What is really growing is our knowledge of some of the related factors and the controlling or abusive behaviours which play out in too many relationships. Insofar as it is possible, I will use the structure of the safer families program to report on these different factors and the government's response to them. Again, I thank the Assembly for the cooperative way we have been able to come at our response to this issue and I look forward to this continuing.

In the sport portfolio, 2018 will see delivery of the numerous commitments the government made towards gender equity. Each of these was funded in the last budget and is now working together with ongoing policy commitments around elite team funding and board representation. These priorities represent another great example of where the community have embraced the government's direction—in some cases they have raced ahead of us—to work together on getting things done.

One area where I will focus particular energy this year is on further improvements to sporting amenities, making them safe and inclusive for everyone. I will soon announce a number of grants all aimed at this outcome. At the national level, the ACT has been pushing for more than a year now on the need to agree on clear targets for growing participation and promoting gender equity in sport. This is an outcome I will continue to work towards with fellow ministers and sports administrators—not to rank states and territories in a competitive way but to show a shared commitment to using sport to drive greater equity in all our jurisdictions.

Madam Speaker, this summary gives a small snapshot of the challenges and opportunities that I will be embracing in 2018. They contribute to a far-reaching set of government priorities which will continue to make our community a safer, fairer, more equitable and more inclusive place. I will continue to do my best through my portfolios in contributing to this work. I present the following paper:

Portfolio priorities 2018—Ministerial statement, 13 February 2018.

I move:

That the Assembly take note of the paper.

Question resolved in the affirmative.

## **Portfolio priorities 2018**

### **Ministerial statement**

**MR GENTLEMAN** (Brindabella—Minister for Police and Emergency Services, Minister for the Environment and Heritage, Minister for Planning and Land Management and Minister for Urban Renewal) (10.53): I am pleased to outline the policy priorities for my ministerial portfolio for 2018. The year ahead will be a full 12 months of major projects for government. A wide range of priorities are planned across my portfolios.

Firstly, I would like to highlight a substantial piece of work that will be carried out for the ACT planning strategy refresh, including significant engagement with the community. Since the planning strategy was launched in 2012, major changes have occurred in the ACT, including government commitments to a carbon-neutral future, the light rail network and urban renewal. The review will consider these changes and will ensure the planning strategy remains consistent with its main aim to promote the orderly and sustainable development of the ACT. The Canberra community and industry will play an important role in shaping refreshed planning that will ultimately deliver to create a compact, competitive and sustainable city for the future.

Secondly, I would like to touch on the government's building policy reform. This is an important year because we are putting in place the foundations for a more effective regulatory scheme and future reforms. The things we are doing include minimum documentation requirements for building approvals; new codes of practice and licensing exams for builders and building certifiers; a training course on the ACT building regulatory system for building certifiers, designers and building practitioners; and a new risk-based auditing and inspection system for building work and building certification. We will also be consulting further on insurance and warranties for building work; licensing and accountability for design practitioners; and dispute resolution.

Thirdly, of course, housing choices is a major project. Like many cities across Australia, Canberra's community is growing and changing. People have different ideas and priorities for what their city, suburb or street should look like. The

discussion paper launched in November last year begins a conversation with the community about housing choices.

So far our conversation has focused on: “What kind of city would you like to live in?” and “Does the current housing supply meet your needs?” The next step in our engagement, the collaboration hub, will be launching in April. This process will bring together 36 citizens over five in-depth meetings and will consider and weigh up the demands, the options, best practice and the desires of stakeholders. It will explore issues such as what zoning should allow and what provisions and principles Canberrans agree are important to deliver the housing we want.

Parallel to housing choices is the demonstration housing project. The timing of these two projects presents a unique opportunity for the collaboration hub and the demonstration housing project to interact in a way that enriches both processes. The demonstration housing project provides case study like examples of the impacts and viability of the decisions of the collaboration hub. Equally, the hub’s deliberations will be guided through the demonstration housing project by providing insight into which housing choices are desired and where. In early 2018 the government will seek innovative development proposals that target a number of demonstration areas, including environmental performance, innovative design, innovative delivery of tenure, and affordability.

Fourthly, another substantial planning project is Dickson section 72. The government identified Dickson section 72 as a site with several opportunities where broader community benefits could be readily realised. Its location within 800 metres of major public transport services on Northbourne Avenue and next to the Dickson group centre and recreational facilities at the Dickson playing fields means it is an important precinct where we can reconsider its best uses for the community.

We are consulting on the future of the precinct as part of our commitment to work with the community and the service providers to explore options for future uses of Dickson section 72. Community aspirations will be a key focus of the renewal ideas. We will be guided by an integrated and consultative approach to planning for this site and will work with the community and existing occupants of blocks within section 72 to explore options for future uses.

Also in the planning space, work continues to finalise the Curtin and Kippax master plans. We also have substantial work being carried out on the environment front. It is only possible to touch on a few of the key projects.

The ACT government has prepared the draft Molonglo River reserve management plan to guide management of the new reserve for the next 10 years. Set near the growing suburbs of Coombs and Wright, the existing site of the proposed reserve comprises 1,280 hectares and extends 23 kilometres along the Molonglo River, from Scrivener Dam to the Murrumbidgee River corridor reserve. This area contains some of Canberra’s best river landscapes and is home to a wide range of native plants and animals, including the endangered pink-tailed worm-lizard, the superb parrot and box-gum grassy woodland habitat.

As a central recreation location for the rapidly growing Molonglo Valley region, it is vital that the final management plan strikes a balance between community use, cultural heritage and nature conservation. Community feedback will be critical to getting this balance right. The draft plan sets out guidelines on the protection of the significant features of the reserve such as the river, wildlife corridors, habitats, and heritage and recreation sites. It also defines boundaries, protects the diverse range of wildlife, combats land degradation, manages for bushfire and cares for cultural heritage.

The Fisheries Act review is another noteworthy project for our environment sector. We have a keen community of anglers here in the nation's capital, so it is important that our legislation provides for sustainable fishing, protects our native fish species and guides the management of commercial fish operations. This is the first significant review of the Fisheries Act since 2000. It will make sure that the act is still relevant and up to date and that it addresses contemporary fisheries management issues.

The review is considering how we can achieve a balance between environmental, conservation and recreation values; align the legislation with other jurisdictions where appropriate; put in place appropriate offences and penalties; provide for the inclusion of cultural fishing by Indigenous and other cultural groups; best make provisions for the management of commercial trade; and improve the management of aquaponics and aquaculture. Great interest has been shown by local fishing clubs and anglers during the consultation, which closed early this month. Findings are now being analysed, with proposed changes to the legislation expected later this year.

It would be remiss of me if I did not give you an update on the healthy waterways project, which is making such a difference to Canberra's water quality, amenity and recreation opportunities. Work is well underway on the \$93.5 million healthy waterways project, a joint initiative of the ACT and Australian governments to improve the quality of water entering our lakes and waterways and flowing downstream into the Murrumbidgee River system. This includes capital works, investigations and community projects.

I would like to acknowledge the excellent work of the services in my police and emergency services portfolio and what they do on a daily basis to keep the Canberra community safe. I would like to acknowledge the commitment of the ACT Emergency Services Agency Commissioner, Dominic Lane, and the ACT Chief Police Officer, Assistant Commissioner Justine Saunders, to the community and to their officers. I can assure you this government is committed to keeping Canberra safe.

In 2018 my priority for emergency services and policing in the ACT is to ensure the ACT continues to be one of the safest communities in the world. The ACT Emergency Services Agency, or ESA, will recruit additional firefighters and paramedics to meet increases in demand and maintain our nation-leading response times; ensure our bushfire policy reflects best practice in fire preparedness and management; appropriately resource ACT Fire & Rescue, including the progression of procuring an aerial pumper to assist in servicing medium to high-rise buildings; and

continue improvements to staff welfare programs that ensure our front-line staff are equipped to handle the pressures of their roles.

We will continue to provide the highest standards of emergency services through support for projects within the ESA strategic reform agenda. Those include progressing reforms to the ESA communications centre and releasing crews to front-line services; implementing the leadership framework and modernising service delivery for ACT Ambulance Service staff; and upgrading stations to provide personal privacy and dignity upgrades and to plan stations that provide strategically located emergency services for the ACT.

In the Justice and Community Safety Directorate our security and emergency management officers will continue to work with partner agencies and other governments to focus on enhancing the ACT's public safety CCTV network through continued investment in new technology, footprint expansion and collaboration; and building community resilience to natural disasters through investment in programs and projects on disaster resilience policy, including developing a five-year disaster mitigation framework.

The ACT community is growing, and Canberra's government and community expectations of emergency services and police continue to evolve. That is why this government has invested in the future of ACT Policing, with \$2.1 million to review current operating models and infrastructure in the light of the ACT's growing population.

Other specific priorities for ACT Policing are set out in my 2017-18 ministerial directions. They include continuing to focus on preventing, disrupting and responding to the evolving threat of violent extremism and terrorism, with a particular focus on crowded places; strengthening the ACT's response to domestic and family violence in appropriate and culturally sensitive ways and supporting the efforts of the Coordinator-General for Family Safety; working proactively and innovatively with the government to reduce and prevent alcohol-fuelled violence, including enforcing liquor laws; continuing the commitment to early intervention and diversion strategies, including restorative justice, with a focus on vulnerable groups; and improving road safety through particular emphasis on vulnerable road users and combating antisocial and dangerous behaviours.

While Canberra remains a very safe city to live in, we are not immune to the presence and activities of serious and organised crime, including criminal gangs and those who travel from interstate. The ACT government is strongly committed to responding to this type of criminal activity, and this is a top priority for ACT Policing. In 2018 we can expect to see ACT Policing's Taskforce Nemesis continue to achieve success in disrupting OMCG activity, assisted by the government's \$6.4 million investment in additional staff and physical and electronic capabilities. In 2017 we introduced a number of legislative initiatives to grant police powers to tackle organised crime, including new crime scene powers, the introduction of a new offence addressing drive-by shootings, and fortification removal laws.

In 2018 the community can be assured that this government is committed to providing all our police, security and emergency services agencies with the funding and resources needed now and into the future to ensure that Canberra remains one of the safest places to live, work and visit. I present the following paper:

Portfolio priorities for 2018—Ministerial statement, 13 February 2018.

I move:

That the Assembly take note of the paper.

Question resolved in the affirmative.

## **National apology to the stolen generations—10-year anniversary Ministerial statement**

**MS STEPHEN-SMITH** (Kurrajong—Minister for Community Services and Social Inclusion, Minister for Disability, Children and Youth, Minister for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Affairs, Minister for Multicultural Affairs and Minister for Workplace Safety and Industrial Relations) (11.06): It is a privilege for me to stand here today on the 10th anniversary of the national apology to the stolen generations and acknowledge the traditional custodians of the land we are meeting on. I pay my respects to elders past and present, to our community's current and emerging leaders and to any Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people who are here today. I acknowledge and respect their continuing culture, the oldest living culture on earth, as well as the ongoing contribution of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people to the life of this city and this region.

Today I also wish to pay my respects to the family and friends of Steven Freeman, acknowledging that today, Steven's birthday, will be particularly difficult for them. Like too many Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander families, they have lost someone they love far too young and in traumatic circumstances.

On this 10th anniversary of the national apology I reflect on the resilience and strength of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people and their profound connection to family, country, community, culture and language which has endured despite enormous challenges resulting from the intergenerational impact of colonisation and discrimination.

On 13 February 2008 former Prime Minister Kevin Rudd delivered an apology on behalf of the Australian government to the stolen generations, acknowledging and expressing sorrow for the pain and trauma caused by past Australian government laws and policies that forcibly removed children from their families, communities, land and culture solely on the basis of their race.

The national apology was a significant moment in Australia's history, as this injustice committed against Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people was officially and

publicly acknowledged. The apology was delivered in response to the *Bringing Them Home* report which was tabled in the Australian parliament on 26 May 1997 and outlined the extent of the forced removal of children from their families throughout much of the 20th century. While all states and territories, including the ACT Legislative Assembly in 1997, had formally apologised to the stolen generations, the national apology was a key moment in the healing and reconciliation process.

I know that for many it was a moment imprinted in memory as the words were finally spoken:

For the pain, suffering and hurt of these stolen generations, their descendants and for their families left behind we say sorry.

These formal apologies have been important steps towards building a respectful relationship between Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander and non-Indigenous Australians. Many stolen generations members felt that their pain and suffering was at last acknowledged and that the nation understood the need to right the wrongs of the past. Reflecting on that day 10 years ago, IndigenousX host Steve Bunbadgee Hodder Watt said:

Schoolchildren of all backgrounds waved Aboriginal flags while Kutcha Edwards and John Butler sang the Aboriginal land rights anthem, *From Little Things Big Things Grow*. Strangers felt closer to one another as a sense of unity washed over the crowd. The elderly survivors cried and embraced each other.

It was easy to get caught up in the emotional grandeur, or even the novelty of the day, but the occasion carried extra weight for our peoples. It isn't often that we get to celebrate the official, widespread acknowledgement of an injustice, especially with the non-Indigenous community celebrating alongside us. I can count on my hands the brief moments in Australian history where we actually became lost in a sea of collective emotion.

The ongoing work of the Healing Foundation and Reconciliation Australia has been instrumental in advocating for and supporting continued progress. Such progress has included, in many jurisdictions, statutory reparations or compensation schemes. I was pleased to hear yesterday the national Labor leader, Bill Shorten, commit an incoming Labor government to a compensation scheme for members of the stolen generations in the ACT and the Northern Territory. As Mr Shorten has said in this regard, territorians, are still waiting for saying sorry to be matched by making good.

As we commemorate the anniversary of the national apology it is time to both reflect on the past and re-energise our collective efforts to support Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people in the ACT. Many Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people across Australia, including in the ACT, continue to face a legacy of disadvantage, dislocation and profound trauma as a result of past practices. The ACT government is committed to working in partnership with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people to find solutions to challenges that persist today as a legacy of past policies and decisions.

Since becoming Minister for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Affairs, I have spoken with and listened to as many community members as I can. I have been to community events and sat down with community leaders. One thing has become increasingly clear to me: no matter our intellectual understanding and acceptance of the impact of intergenerational trauma, of the depths of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander connection to country, of so many community members' legitimate lack of trust in institutions and government, it is almost impossible for us to fully comprehend these things in our hearts.

It is immensely challenging to acknowledge and truly understand that there is not an Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander family in the country left unaffected by the policy of forced removals. To me, this is one of the most shocking findings of the *Bringing Them Home* report and the work of the Healing Foundation, and it speaks in a profound way to why we must seek solutions led by Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people.

As we all know, the closing the gap reporting process began 10 years ago and remains a priority for all Australian governments. The latest report tabled by the Prime Minister yesterday showed that three of the seven national targets are now on track—a significant improvement on last year's report. But four targets will expire this year, and there have been consistent calls for new and additional targets to be included. This is, therefore, the ideal time for a refresh that will include working differently and more effectively with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander leaders, organisations and communities.

Last week a special gathering of first ministers and prominent Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Australians was held to provide an Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander view on policy priorities and areas of focus for the Australian government and an opportunity to include Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Australians in decision making. Representatives from the ACT included Ms Jo Chivers, Deputy Chair of the ACT Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Elected Body; Professor Tom Calma, Chancellor of the University of Canberra; Mr Dion Devow, ACT Australian of the Year for 2018; Ms Julie Tongs, CEO of Winnunga Nimmityjah Aboriginal Health Service; Mr Bill Collins, Chair of the Gugan Gulwan Youth Aboriginal Corporation; and Ms Roslyn Brown, Co-chair of the United Ngunnawal Elders Council. I want to acknowledge these outstanding ACT community leaders and thank them for their willingness to share their expertise and passion to develop informed, responsive policy that puts the needs of the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community first.

Community consultation on the closing the gap refresh will also take place in the ACT in March, and I encourage Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Canberrans to have their say. The national closing the gap refresh will also tie in with the renewal of the ACT Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander agreement between the ACT government and the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Elected Body. We have made progress in the territory, but significant work is needed to achieve more equitable outcomes for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people and particularly for families who continue to experience the intergenerational effects of past removals and dislocation from family and country.

The ACT government signed the first Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander agreement with the elected body in April 2015, following extensive consultation with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander individuals and service providers from the Canberra community. The agreement identifies seven focus areas to improve life outcomes through the key theme of strong families.

Members will be aware that in November last year I tabled the 2017 annual report against the agreement, the first report to reflect the new outcomes framework. The annual report highlights programs, initiatives and key performance data on the ACT's progress towards improving outcomes for our Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community. In partnership with the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Elected Body, we will soon be engaging with the community on its priorities for a refreshed agreement. The new agreement is expected to cover a period of five years, which will allow for a forward-thinking, coordinated approach.

Improving outcomes for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people is about not just strategies and agreements but also recognition and celebration within our community of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people's culture and contribution to our region. Last year a new Reconciliation Day public holiday was established, with tripartisan support here in the Legislative Assembly. The inaugural holiday will be held on 28 May and then every year on or just after 27 May, which is the anniversary of the 1967 referendum and the first day of Reconciliation Week.

The government is supporting a series of events to mark Reconciliation Day 2018, Australia's first public holiday celebrating the culture, contribution and resilience of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people. Funding of \$200,000 is going towards a flagship community event to mark Reconciliation Day and enabling grassroots organisations to fully participate in the celebrations to ensure Reconciliation Day has a strong community focus. The Reconciliation Day grants program which is now open will support activities that promote Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander culture, encourage understanding of the impact of historical events on the community and support meaningful community engagement and interaction.

Moving forward, and in the theme of reconciliation, the ACT government will seek to implement a number of measures, including co-design principles whereby giving Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people a voice at the table and being transparent are key, and implementing practical and meaningful initiatives to achieve culturally appropriate services for the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people in the ACT. We also look forward to continuing to work closely with the ACT Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Elected Body, as the voice of the community, and the United Ngunnawal Elders Council in providing cultural and heritage advice.

Mr Assistant Speaker, saying sorry is one thing, but actually making change is another. This is the unfinished business of the apology. Today, as we acknowledge the legacy of past policy and practices and the significance of the national apology a decade ago, let us take this opportunity to continue to build a community that celebrates, protects and supports Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander families and communities. I present a copy of the paper:

National Apology to the Stolen Generation—Ten Year Anniversary—Ministerial statement, 13 February 2018.

I move:

That the Assembly take note of the paper.

**MS ORR** (Yerrabi) (11.18): I rise to make a contribution on this 10th anniversary of the apology to the stolen generations. Firstly I acknowledge the traditional owners and custodians of this land on which I am speaking and pay my respects to elders past, present and emerging. On this day 10 years ago our nation changed for the better. The national apology to the stolen generations marked a significant point in Australia's journey towards recognition and reconciliation for our first nations peoples.

Prime Minister Kevin Rudd delivered the national apology on 13 February 2008. This apology was not just a symbolic gesture to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people, it was the first time in our history that the commonwealth government stood with humility and apologised for the injustices that had occurred to Indigenous Australians. You know a day is framed in the psyche of a country when you can say to someone, "Where were you when this happened?" Like many of us, I remember exactly where I was on the day Prime Minister Rudd delivered the apology.

I was working in a cafe in Manuka and a lot of people had come into the cafe that morning to get breakfast before going to the apology. As everyone was leaving to go to the start of the ceremonies there were just two tables left, one lady, an Indigenous lady, and her son, and another person who was one of our regulars and who always came in. The regular came up to me when she came to pay and said, "I would like to grab their bill as well. It is the least I can do." For me, that was an indication that it is not just an apology; it is an acknowledgement of these people; it brings them forward; it brings us all together; it makes us think that small gesture can go a long way. Obviously the lady whose breakfast was paid for was very chuffed and was a little surprised. She said to me, "No-one has ever done anything like this for me before."

Ten years later I still remember this episode perfectly because it is a case of, like I said, a little bit of recognition going a long way, and people who previously felt forgotten or frozen out of the conversation really came front and centre on that day and ever since.

The road to the apology is considered to have begun with the tabling of the *Bringing them home* report in 1997. It was finally, at that time, that the effects of laws, practices and policies that separated Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children from their families was first placed on the record. It brought the issue to the forefront of the national conscience and began the conversation on Australia's treatment of Indigenous Australians.

In 2018 Australia has come a long way on the journey towards reconciliation. However, we still have a way to go. With the release of the 2018 *Closing the gap* report this week, the Prime Minister highlighted that just three of the seven *Closing*

*the gap* targets are on track. We can all recognise that it is positive to see these targets on track. However, at the same time we must recognise that governments across the country must continue working to achieve better outcomes for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people, with the aim of definitively closing the widening gap.

As a white, non-Indigenous Australian, I cannot say I understand the pain and suffering felt by those of the stolen generations and other Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people who may be affected by the intergenerational trauma. However, I do know that Indigenous Australians have a deep connection to their culture and family and their right to this connection must not be denied.

I believe it is important that on this day, especially as an elected representative, I formally place on the record my deepest condolences to those affected and who continue to be affected by the separation of children from their families and offer my commitment to advance the cause of reconciliation and recognition for our first nations peoples.

As Minister Stephen-Smith has highlighted, the ACT government is working hard to deliver better outcomes for all Indigenous people in our community. On 28 May this year we will observe our first Reconciliation Day public holiday, the first of its kind in Australia. The Reconciliation Day public holiday will provide Canberrans the opportunity to demonstrate our commitment to reconciliation and to celebrate the everlasting culture of our fellow Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Canberrans.

The minister and this government are currently developing a new ACT Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander agreement for the period 2018-2023, alongside a continued commitment to work closely with the United Ngunnawal Elders Council and the ACT Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Elected Body. I am proud of the work the ACT government is undertaking to deliver a real change for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people living in the ACT.

Each year, on the anniversary of the apology, we reflect on the disgraceful acts committed towards Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people and we look forward to a better and fairer future for our Indigenous Australians.

On this 10th year anniversary I look forward to our first nations people being recognised in our constitution, being empowered with a voice in our federal parliament and being better off with the achievement of all seven *Closing the gap* targets. I believe that in 10 years time we will all be able to reflect and see these measure achieved so long as governments work with Indigenous Australians and the wider community to prioritise recognition and reconciliation.

**MR RATTENBURY** (Kurrajong) (11.23): As has been noted, today marks the 10th anniversary of the national apology to the stolen generations and Indigenous peoples of Australia. I thank Minister Stephen-Smith for her statement on the anniversary and I join her in paying my respects to elders past, present and emerging, as well as the broader Aboriginal community. I also join her in acknowledging that today is Steven Freeman's date of birth, and I acknowledge Steven's family and friends at this difficult time.

Ten years on from the national apology it is important to pause and reflect on this significant moment in our history. I and the Greens acknowledge that intergenerational trauma continues to affect many Indigenous communities across the nation, including here in the ACT. While the words of the apology were powerful and important, there is much justice and healing yet to be done.

Looking back on the policies that led to the creation of the stolen generations is a profoundly disturbing and uncomfortable process. As Prime Minister Rudd noted on 13 February 2008, the facts are that, between 1910 and 1970, between 10 and 30 per cent of Indigenous children were forcibly taken from their mothers and fathers; that, as a result, up to 50,000 children were forcibly taken from their families; that this was the product of the deliberate, calculated policies of the state as reflected in the explicit powers given to them under statute; that this policy was taken to such extremes by some in administrative authority that the forced extractions of children of so-called mixed lineage were seen as part of a broader policy of dealing with what was referred to as the problem of the Aboriginal population.

Today I take this opportunity to acknowledge these facts as a reminder of the dark parts of our history. It is my hope that through moments of truth telling like the apology we can find healing and start to walk forward together. We cannot heal the wounds of the past by ignoring the true history of this country.

Unfortunately these are not just problems of the past. We must also acknowledge that Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people in our community continue to face many issues of disadvantage, including many in Canberra. This disadvantage is associated with both historical and contemporary racism, colonisation and oppression, including policies such as the forced removal of Indigenous children from their families and communities.

As was highlighted in the Uluru statement from the heart, Indigenous Australians are the most incarcerated people in the world and here in the ACT we continue to see unacceptably high rates of Indigenous incarceration in the AMC. Even today we continue to have high rates of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children and young people removed from their families and too many Indigenous young people in detention. The health and life expectancy gaps, which we have been talking about closing for so many years, remain. It is clear that we still have a long way to go.

Just this week the Prime Minister released the 2017 edition of the *Closing the gap* report. While this year there were some improvements, only three of the seven *Closing the gap* targets are on track to be met by 2030. In fact, the AIHW report from 2017 found that the mortality and life expectancy gaps are actually widening due to the accelerating non-Indigenous population gains in these areas.

So while it is clear that there is much still to be done, I take this opportunity to recognise the injustices of the past and to again say sorry. Today we come together and reaffirm our apology to the stolen generations for the hurt, the pain and the suffering that was caused by the laws and the parliaments of this country.

The apology has not solved all the problems of disadvantage, racism and trauma that I spoke of. But I and the Greens believe it remains an important symbolic milestone on the journey towards truth, justice and reconciliation. We can, and we should, work towards addressing the problems of disadvantage and inequity whilst also working towards symbolic change.

Today as we reflect on the wrongs of the past we should also celebrate the resilience of the stolen generations and all those who have come after them. Today we can celebrate the strength of Indigenous and non-Indigenous Australians working together for a better future.

Question resolved in the affirmative.

### **Order of the day—postponement**

*Ordered that order of the day No 1 executive business be postponed until a later hour.*

### **Firearms and Prohibited Weapons Legislation Amendment Bill 2017**

Debate resumed from 14 September 2017, on motion by **Mr Gentleman**:

That this bill be agreed to in principle.

**MRS JONES** (Murrumbidgee) (11.28): I would like to take this opportunity to say that the Canberra Liberals will be supporting the bill with the proposed government amendments. The bill is obviously a mixed bag of tidy-ups and changes agreed through COAG, some of which make more sense than others. However, issues do arise from time to time as we try to modernise our laws and keep up with the modern use of firearms, as we have seen with this bill.

I acknowledge that there will be amendments to the explanatory statement and the inclusion of the term “detachable” when referring to centre-fire rifle magazines with a capacity of more than 10 rounds. There will also be an effort to clarify the definition of an antique firearm: one which the community understands is not going to be used, has no intention of being used, and is perhaps better described as a collector’s item.

I have put amendments to the Assembly that I will not be moving at this stage—they were around the definition of an antique firearm—because the government has at the same time produced something similar. However, I maintain that the amendment that I have proposed is a very simple and straightforward definition, eliminating the scope for confusion or misrepresentation.

I will be carefully watching the space to see how those who are owners of antique firearms, particularly certain types of pistols, are treated and whether there is an expectation placed on them that what was considered previously to be a non-used antique firearm now becomes something that there is an expectation to have a licence for.

The government now agrees that their own original drafting of the bill did not accurately or clearly define an antique firearm. There have been numerous community discussions to come up with an agreed position between some representatives of firearms users, but not all, and the government's own bodies. I will assume that the government's amendments will not adversely impact collectors of antique firearms or make what is currently an antique firearm into a firearm needing registration and licensing. When the detail gets presented, I will go to that in a little more detail.

The bill addresses some discrepancies in our existing laws, which do require fixing, particularly in relation to weapons such as knives. There is a harmonisation occurring here with laws existing in New South Wales and in some cases with the commonwealth. The bill bans credit card knives, for example, thus bringing the ACT into line with New South Wales, and it is adopting the commonwealth definition of body armour, a new term, a more modern term, for what was previously referred to as soft body armour. In general, we support the elimination of ambiguity. Obviously, having harmonisation with New South Wales has many benefits where it is possible, as we have discussed in this place in relation to other laws.

The bill also seeks to impose storage requirements on category A and B shooters, bringing them into line with the requirements for collectors. Stakeholders have told me, and the government has reported the same to me, that many shooters already adhere to the storage requirements that are now going to be set out in law, thus making the impact probably minimal on firearms owners. Certainly, having a storage facility for weapons that is bolted to the floor or concreted in I think is a very common expectation, and a reasonable expectation, so that without keys firearms cannot go walking away.

I would like to thank Frances from the minister's office, and the many JACS officials, for their dealings with me in relation to this bill. I look forward to it being debated.

**MR RATTENBURY** (Kurrajong) (11.32): The Greens are pleased to support legislation which strengthens our firearms and weapons laws. By updating our firearms and weapons legislation the bill will ensure community safety by enabling the better administration of firearms in the territory, whilst acknowledging that there are legitimate uses for firearms. I acknowledge the extensive consultation the minister has undertaken with stakeholders and interested parties in relation to this bill to achieve a better outcome for community safety.

The bill will impose greater storage requirements for category A and B licence holders who possess more than 10 firearms. Weapons will now need to be stored in a metal, brick or concrete safe. Previously this requirement only applied to collectors. The bill also creates an express prohibition on bladed weapons which can be disguised to look like something else, such as credit card knives. This will bring the ACT into line with other jurisdictions, including New South Wales.

The bill also provides for greater protection of criminal intelligence or security sensitive information. The Firearms Registrar is currently empowered to refuse to issue a firearm where information held by a law enforcement agency suggests the

issuing of a firearm to a particular person would be contrary to the public interest. The bill enables the registrar to withhold the reasons for refusing to issue a licence to protect security sensitive information.

The bill seeks to provide more clarity and certainty for firearms users, particularly those who may need to use one during the course of their employment. For example, the bill allows conservation officers and veterinary surgeons to use suppressors, also known as silencers, to euthanise injured fauna. Furthermore, the bill authorises firearms instructors to use a firearm that belongs to another person, such as firearms belonging to their students. Currently instructors are only authorised to possess and use firearms licensed by them or by their employing club. This will facilitate the demonstration of the proper and safe use of firearms by instructors.

The bill also authorises the storage of firearms at an interstate place of work. This will enable ACT residents who work on a rural property in New South Wales to have their firearms stored at their place of work, rather than having to transport them to and from the ACT. New South Wales police will be given the power to inspect and prosecute any breaches of storage requirements.

The Greens have a long history of supporting strict gun control, which started in the Parliament of Tasmania in the 1980s when attempts were made by the Greens to ban automatic and semiautomatic weapons due to ongoing concerns about public safety and the number of guns in circulation not only in Tasmania but nationally at the time.

After the tragedy of the Port Arthur massacre, where 35 people were killed and 23 injured, we did see a national approach to gun law reform that put community safety first. It involved an amnesty and gun buyback that took some 600,000 firearms out of the community. These reforms have become the envy of the world. Other countries look to Australia for our gun laws, which gun control advocates in many countries would like to introduce.

The evidence has clearly shown that these reforms have had a positive impact on reducing homicides and mass shootings in Australia. It is disturbing to hear that there are those who advocate for loosening gun controls laws when I think many Australians actually believe that we are in a far better position than other places. I mention this in the context of today's debate because every time these conversations come up, these are I think sensible and largely administrative changes but the broader policy question often floats around.

I think it is useful to reflect on how fortunate we are in this country at the decisions that were taken some years ago now but which continue to have a very positive impact in this country. As I said in my opening remarks, it is a case of finding the right balance between the legitimate uses of firearms, but making sure that we maximise community safety.

As Mrs Jones has noted, the government does have some amendments. I do not need to speak further to those, other than noting that the Greens will be supporting them today.

**MS CHEYNE** (Ginninderra) (11.37): I am pleased to stand to speak today on the Firearms and Prohibited Weapons Legislation Amendment Bill 2017, which supports the safety of our community. The bill amends our firearms and prohibited weapons legislation to ensure that our regulatory system is capable of protecting Canberrans against potential threats posed by firearms and weapons in the community.

This bill makes a number of minor and technical amendments to firearms legislation and prohibited weapons legislation. These technical amendments were identified in consultation with key stakeholders and they will ensure that the ACT continues to maintain a strong regulatory system to manage the possession of firearms and other articles in the territory.

The minor and technical amendments that are made by this bill include providing that the owner or operator of a zoo may hold a category C composite entity licence for the management of animals at the zoo; providing that the registrar may issue evidentiary certificates to prove that a person has been given approval to possess ammunition as a collector; and making editorial amendments such as updating names of law enforcement agencies.

Importantly, the bill also prohibits the possession of a knife or blade that is disguised to look like something else. An example of a weapon targeted by the new law is a credit card knife. It is a bit scary, but they do exist; knives that are designed to look like credit cards. They are small in size and can easily be carried in wallets, pockets and small bags.

Credit card knives are easily purchased online and they pose obvious dangers. Prohibition on credit card knives aligns the ACT with the laws of the other jurisdictions and keeps us up to date by prohibiting the possession of any knife or blade that is disguised to look like something else. That is just one example.

This bill also contains provisions to make it easier for ACT firearms licensees to store their weapons in New South Wales if that is where they work. The Firearms Act 1996 currently provides that a licensee must store each registered firearm held under the licence at the registered premises in the ACT. Some licensees in the ACT request to store their firearms at a New South Wales address.

This includes, for example, ACT residents who are employed on a rural property in New South Wales, and who currently have to transport their firearm over the border each day. The Firearms Registrar currently has no power to approve an application to store a firearm at an interstate place of work. These amendments will mean that the registrar will be able to allow people to store their firearms in New South Wales, making storage and transport requirements easier for these Canberra residents. It is more efficient and it just makes sense.

Finally, the bill also makes amendments relating to the importation and use of body armour. The amendment to the Prohibited Weapons Act and regulation brings the description of body armour into line with the national definition used for customs purposes. The bill defines body armour as an article that is designed for antiballistic or antifragementation purposes to be worn on or to cover the human body.

The commonwealth has prohibited the importation of body armour into Australia since 1977. This prohibition commenced due to concerns that body armour could be readily available for use in criminal activities. The ACT's laws on this matter will now be consistent with the equivalent commonwealth laws, bringing consistency and clarity in their implementation, thus making sense across a number of jurisdictions.

It is of utmost importance that our laws on firearms and prohibited weapons effectively protect our community while remaining workable for those who are licensed, responsible owners of firearms. We need to make sure that we continue to update our legislation to be consistent with changes in the field out there. I believe this bill strikes the appropriate balance to improve the operation of our firearms laws, make them more consistent across the board and effectively ban dangerous items. I commend this bill 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) (11.42), in reply: I thank colleagues for their input into this bill; it is a very important piece of legislation. The Firearms and Prohibited Weapons Legislation Amendment Bill 2017 makes several significant amendments to the Firearms Act of 1996, the Firearms Regulation of 2008, the Prohibited Weapons Act 1996 and the Prohibited Weapons Regulation 1997.

This bill was developed following recommendations made by several stakeholders, including the firearms consultative committee, ACT Policing, the Rural Landholders Association and firearms manufacturers located in the ACT. These stakeholders are committed to ensuring that the operation of firearms and prohibited weapons legislation remains relevant and workable. These stakeholders share an interest in ensuring that our firearms legislation strikes a balance between public safety and the interests of licensed and legitimate firearms users. It is in this context that these amendments have been drafted and remain consistent with the principles underlying firearms regulation in Australia: that firearm possession and use are privileges conditional on the overriding need to ensure public safety.

The government acknowledges that the overwhelming majority of firearms users are law-abiding citizens. There are many valid uses of firearms in the community, including target shooting, pest animal management and primary production. The government values its positive working relationship with these stakeholders and recognises the valuable contribution they make to the community and the economy.

The amendments in the bill are intended to reinforce community safety from firearms crime in several important ways while allowing greater access to firearms for legitimate users under specified circumstances. Some of these amendments include: increased storage requirements for firearms of category A and B licence holders who possess more than 10 firearms, meaning that they will be required to store their weapons in a metal, brick or concrete safe; a prohibition on detachable centre-fire rifle magazines with a capacity of more than 10 rounds; technical amendments to provisions which relate to firearms instructors; and greater protection for

security-sensitive information used by the Firearms Registrar to inform decisions about firearms licence applications.

Increased storage requirements will commence six months after the bill is notified to ensure that licensees have sufficient time to make arrangements for the storage of their firearms in line with the new requirements. These categories include air guns, shotguns, other self-loading rim-fire and centre-fire rifles, and muzzle-loading firearms other than pistols. All category A and B firearms licensees, that is, people who are licensed to possess more than 10 category A or category B firearms, will be required to store their firearms in a metal, brick or concrete safe. Ultimately, this amendment increases community safety by ensuring powerful firearms in the territory are stored safely.

The bill also makes technical amendments to the provisions in the Firearms Act which relate to firearms instructors. The Firearms Act authorises a person to possess and use only firearms for which they are licensed. In the case of firearms instructors, the law has had the unintended effect of prohibiting an instructor from legally using a firearm belonging to another person. Therefore, an instructor cannot pick up a student's firearm to demonstrate how to use the firearm properly and safely, and the bill resolves this issue.

The bill also makes amendments to firearms legislation to allow the Firearms Registrar to withhold the reasons for which they refuse to issue a licence in circumstances where revealing the reasons would also reveal security-sensitive information. A similar power to withhold security-sensitive information is available in the Births, Deaths and Marriages Registration Act. In this act the relevant director-general can refuse an application to make a change of name and elect to withhold the reasons for doing so if revealing the reasons would also reveal sensitive information.

Security-sensitive information is defined in the bill as information held by a law enforcement agency, the disclosure of which would be reasonably expected to prejudice a criminal investigation, enable the discovery of the existence or identity of a confidential source of information relevant to law enforcement, and endanger a person's life or physical safety.

This government always turns its mind to the impact law reform decisions have on human rights, and the government understands that withholding the reason for refusing to issue a firearms licence may limit the rights of a person applying for a firearms licence to procedural fairness. However, the bill ensures that the registrar is still required to explain to the applicant why their application for a firearms licence has been refused. The registrar can withhold their reasons only to the extent that giving those reasons would disclose security sensitive information. Therefore, all other reasons and information must be communicated.

To ensure that this process has adequate oversight, an applicant who has his or her application for a firearms licence refused on the basis of security-sensitive information has the right to apply to the ACT Civil and Administrative Tribunal or the ACT Supreme Court to have the decision reviewed. The bill provides that the registrar

may choose to allow certain parts of any information to be released to the applicant in a hearing, for example, a tribunal hearing, despite the fact that the information is held to be security sensitive. I am confident that this reform is proportionate. Although it limits the right to procedural fairness, it does so only to protect public safety.

The bill also makes several minor and technical amendments to the wording in the Firearms Act 1996 and Firearms Regulation and the Prohibited Weapons Act 1996 to ensure consistency across the ACT statute book. Amendments to the Prohibited Weapons Act 1996 and the Prohibited Weapons Regulation 1997 will strengthen our laws around dangerous bladed weapons and clarify the definition of body armour. The amendments prohibit the possession of credit card knives or other bladed weapons disguised to look like non-weapons and amend the description of body armour to adopt the definition that is recognised nationally for customs purposes. These minor amendments have been made with the support of our stakeholders, and I thank them again for their assistance with this bill.

This type of law reform should be an inclusive process and one that fosters a shared understanding and respect for the interests of stakeholders. As well as stakeholders who advanced their ideas for the bill, the government consulted widely on the amendments with members of the firearms community such as the licensed shooting range operators, martial arts clubs and justice stakeholders including the Director of Public Prosecutions, the ACT Bar Association and the ACT Law Society.

I particularly mention the important role that the ACT community have played in developing not only this bill but also the important proposed government amendments. Our positive and productive working relationship with stakeholders involved in the firearms community has meant that the bill has been continually worked on and revised to be the best firearms legislation in the ACT. The willingness of stakeholders to proactively identify and work with us on the proposed government amendments has been especially appreciated, and I note the valuable recommendations and feedback from a number of stakeholders in this regard.

This bill provides greater clarity for firearms owners on their rights and responsibilities to protect public safety. The bill strikes a balance between ensuring public safety and respecting the valid uses of firearms by licensed and legitimate firearms users, which include the use of firearms in businesses which deliver economic benefits for the Canberra community. The government is committed to building safer communities in Canberra, and the amendments in this bill greatly contribute to this. I thank members for their input into this, and I commend the bill to the Assembly.

Question resolved in the affirmative.

Bill agreed to in principle.

### **Detail stage**

Clauses 1 to 18, by leave, taken together and agreed to.

Clause 19.

**MR GENTLEMAN** (Brindabella—Minister for Police and Emergency Services, Minister for the Environment and Heritage, Minister for Planning and Land Management and Minister for Urban Renewal) (11.53): I move amendment No 1 circulated in my name [*see schedule 1 at page 102*]. I also table a supplementary explanatory statement. We have talked about this in earlier conversation. This amendment is to insert the term “an antique firearm” into section 6(1)(a).

**MRS JONES** (Murrumbidgee) (11.54): I ask the minister to clarify that amendment 2 is on the same topic.

**MR GENTLEMAN** (Brindabella—Minister for Police and Emergency Services, Minister for the Environment and Heritage, Minister for Planning and Land Management and Minister for Urban Renewal) (11.54): Yes, Mrs Jones, through you, Mr Assistant Speaker. Amendment No 2 is the definition of “an antique firearm”. This is to insert “an antique firearm” in the legislation. The next amendment will be the definition.

**MRS JONES** (Murrumbidgee) (11.54): The Canberra Liberals support amendment No 1.

Amendment agreed to.

Clause 19, as amended, agreed to.

Clause 20.

**MR GENTLEMAN** (Brindabella—Minister for Police and Emergency Services, Minister for the Environment and Heritage, Minister for Planning and Land Management and Minister for Urban Renewal) (11.55): I move amendment No 2 circulated in my name [*see schedule 1 page 102*]. As discussed, this inserts a new definition, of “antique firearm”, which means a muzzle-loading pistol, including a percussion-lock pistol that is muzzle loading, that uses black powder to propel the projectile but does not include a breach-loading pistol with a rotating cylinder or that accepts metal cartridges.

**MRS JONES** (Murrumbidgee) (11.55): The Canberra Liberals will support the amendment today, however, we will be watching closely the practical impact of it. Obviously my suggested amendment that firearms manufactured before 1900 for which ammunition is not readily commercially available would be a clearer definition, however, that means somebody has to be monitoring a list, as the New South Wales government does, of which firearms fit and do not fit into that category. So I understand why the government has gone to the option it has. The minister’s office assures me that, in consultation with key stakeholders, this is a position that has been arrived at. However, we do not want to see a situation where collectors of antique firearms have to register their weapons as a result of this change and potentially spend

time and money on a regular basis to get a licence for a weapon that will never be used.

Amendment agreed to.

Clause 20, as amended, agreed to.

Clause 21 agreed to.

Clause 22.

**MR GENTLEMAN** (Brindabella—Minister for Police and Emergency Services, Minister for the Environment and Heritage, Minister for Planning and Land Management and Minister for Urban Renewal) (11.57): The government will not be supporting clause 22 as it is no longer relevant in the legislation.

**MRS JONES** (Murrumbidgee) (11.57): The Canberra Liberals support this position.

Clause 22 negatived.

Clauses 23 to 33, by leave, taken together and agreed to.

Clause 34.

**MR GENTLEMAN** (Brindabella—Minister for Police and Emergency Services, Minister for the Environment and Heritage, Minister for Planning and Land Management and Minister for Urban Renewal) (11.58): I move amendment No 4 circulated in my name [*see schedule 1 at page 102*].

**MRS JONES** (Murrumbidgee) (11.58): We support this change which rectifies a drafting error.

**MR GENTLEMAN** (Brindabella—Minister for Police and Emergency Services, Minister for the Environment and Heritage, Minister for Planning and Land Management and Minister for Urban Renewal) (11.58): I thank Mrs Jones for her support of this amendment. The amendment omits proposed new item 8A and substitutes it with:

... a detachable centre-fire rifle magazine (other than a centre-fire self-loading rifle magazine) with a capacity of more than 10 rounds.

Amendment agreed to.

Clause 34, as amended, agreed to.

Remainder of bill as a whole, as amended, agreed to.

Bill, as amended, agreed to.

**Sitting suspended from 11.59 am to 2.30 pm.**

## Ministerial arrangements

**MR BARR:** Madam Speaker, the Attorney-General is absent from question time today. I will endeavour to assist members in the attorney's portfolios.

## Questions without notice

### Health—elective surgery

**MR COE:** The question I have is for the Minister for Health and Wellbeing. Minister, a few days ago, on 10 February, the *Canberra Times* reported that there are significant hidden waiting times for patients to see a specialist before they are booked for elective surgery. Some patients have to wait up to five years to see a specialist before they can get an appointment and in turn have to wait for a year further for an operation. The *Canberra Times* noted that Victoria posts quarterly updates on waiting times to see specialists in the public system but “An ACT Health spokesman could not provide ... waiting times to see specialists in the ACT”. Minister, what is the extent of the hidden waiting times here in the ACT to see a specialist?

**MS FITZHARRIS:** I thank Mr Coe for the question. Like him, I read the article that appeared in the *Canberra Times* on the weekend. It is certainly a priority of this government to improve access and timeliness of access to all health services. Access to surgery has been boosted today, but I am particularly focused also on making sure that every person who is referred, both within the ACT and, of course, in the surrounding region, to a specialist in ACT Health is immediately triaged and will be contacted by ACT Health within a 10-day period to inform them of when they may see a specialist. We want to make sure, of course, that they will be contacted within 10 days of that referral being received by ACT Health from their GP. Then they will be informed of the time that it may take them to see their specialist depending on the clinical urgency. It is also important to note that not everybody who will see a specialist will necessarily be on the elective surgery waiting list. For example, in the specialty of urology only approximately 30 per cent of patients who may see a specialist will then go on to receive surgery.

On access to data, that is a great question and one I am pleased to answer. As has been an important part of the ACT-wide health data review, a very important pillar of the six pillars of that review is the information that we provide to consumers about ACT health data. That is an important component of the data review which will be completed late next month. I look forward to informing the Assembly on progress in that review and also subsequently the recommendations of the review and the government's response. Access to timely information for consumers is a priority for me.

**MR COE:** Minister, why is the ACT government unable to provide waiting times to see specialists in the ACT system? Does the data actually exist? If so, will you report on it in the future?

**MS FITZHARRIS:** Yes, we will be, as part of the data review referred to in my previous answer, looking very closely at significantly increasing the data that we

provide to health professionals across the territory, and notably to those within ACT Health as well as, importantly, access to consumers in the broader community.

**MRS DUNNE:** Minister, how many Canberrans have died while waiting to see a specialist or to have their elective surgery in the last three years?

**MS FITZHARRIS:** I am tempted to say that that outrageous question should not be dignified with a response and I will—

*Mrs Dunne interjecting—*

**MADAM SPEAKER:** Mrs Dunne, please! You have concluded your answer?

**MS FITZHARRIS:** Yes.

### **Health—nurse-led walk-in centres**

**MRS DUNNE:** My question is to the Minister for Health and Wellbeing. Minister, on 31 January 2018 the *Canberra Times* reported that you had said that the government's investment in more nurse-led walk-in centres would "ease pressure on emergency rooms". Minister, in your answer to question on notice 611 to me you said:

A direct correlation between hospital Emergency ... activity and Walk-in Centre ... activity is not possible, because the issue is multifactorial.

Minister, how do you know that the walk-in centres will ease pressure on emergency departments when you are unable to measure the correlation between the two?

**MS FITZHARRIS:** What we do know about walk-in centres is that the opposition spokeswoman thinks they are "a criminal waste of taxpayers' money".

**Mrs Dunne:** I stand by that.

**MS FITZHARRIS:** I am very pleased to hear that, because this government believes that investment in nurse walk-in centres is important. For 36,000 patients—

**Mrs Dunne:** At \$188 dollars a throw—

**MADAM SPEAKER:** Mrs Dunne, you asked a question. The minister is providing an answer. Please have respect and hear that in silence.

**Mrs Dunne:** On a point of order, Madam Speaker, my question was about whether they had the information to tell whether walk-in centres would ease the pressure on emergency departments. The minister has not answered that question or attempted to.

**MADAM SPEAKER:** The minister has over a minute left, and there was a series of interjections, so the minister has a minute left to answer.

**Mrs Dunne:** On the point of order, there is a substantial body of ruling which says that it is out of order to use an answer to attack other parties' policies in this place, especially when this question is directly about this government's policy.

**MADAM SPEAKER:** Mrs Dunne, I recognise your experience in these matters but I am not going to provide that as a point of order. The minister does have a minute left to answer the question.

**MS FITZHARRIS:** We know that increased access to primary healthcare services, which includes walk-in centres and GPs, does assist in taking pressure off emergency departments because it gives people another option.

**MRS DUNNE:** Minister, what did the business case for existing walk-in clinics say about their impact on the presentation at emergency departments and on what basis was that analysis made?

**MS FITZHARRIS:** As indicated in my answer in response to a question on notice, it is multi-factorial. The health system is a complex system if people do not otherwise have an option to present to a nurse walk-in centre. I repeat that 36,000 Canberrans did in the previous year and I am looking forward to more Canberrans having access to walk-in centres in the Gungahlin region, in the Weston Creek region and also in the inner north. This government's commitment to nurse walk-in centres is absolute. We will continue to work with other stakeholders to make sure that we can integrate primary health care and get value for money for ACT residents.

**MR WALL:** Minister, what does the business case for the two new walk-in clinics say about their likely impact on presentations at emergency departments at the hospitals?

**MS FITZHARRIS:** They have not been fully completed yet, but we look forward to opening the Gungahlin walk-in centre later this year.

*Opposition members interjecting—*

**MADAM SPEAKER:** Members of the opposition, please.

### **Budget—2017-18 update**

**MS ORR:** My question is to the Chief Minister. Chief Minister, what does the 2017-18 budget update show about the strength of the ACT economy and the territory's improving financial position?

**MR BARR:** I thank Ms Orr for the question. It is indeed pleasing to see that the territory's nation-leading economic growth, the 10,000 new jobs that were created in our city last year, is flowing through to business confidence across the territory and that we are also seeing a very strong outcome for the territory budget.

Our economy expanded by 4.6 per cent last year. That is higher than was projected in the budget and we are expecting further growth of around four per cent this year. This means that the government's policy settings are working effectively in the ACT and that this is as a result of the settings of this government. When we—

*Opposition members interjecting—*

**MADAM SPEAKER:** Chief Minister, please, can you resume your seat? Alistair—sorry, Mr Coe; I do apologise—Leader of the Opposition. Mr Wall, I add you to the list. Mr Hanson! Welcome to question time 2018, I say to members. How about a bit of silence from the bunkers of the opposition, thank you. Chief Minister.

**MR BARR:** It is also very pleasing to see that the territory's rate of population growth continues to increase. All of this would not be occurring if this government had not adopted the suite of policies that we have over the past few years. We remain very confident and optimistic about the territory's economic outlook over the forward estimates period. Indeed, the mid-year budget update reflects that confidence both in the economic forecasts and the territory's underlying fiscal position.

**MS ORR:** How is the government continuing to deliver on its election commitments and boost services for Canberrans through the budget update?

**MR BARR:** We have this week completed a further suite of election commitment delivery through the midyear update. Clearly, there have been significant investments in health and education infrastructure, as well as a range of municipal and community service investments.

The budget update delivers on more of our election commitments, including the rollout of laptops to students in ACT public high schools ahead of schedule, the recruitment of a new full ambulance crew to help meet rising demand in that area, strengthening our community engagement efforts, and, of course, an election commitment we made to upgrade the Mark Webber track.

We laid out a very big agenda at the last election, and we are delivering on that progressively through this parliamentary term. At the same time we are also strengthening the territory's budget position. This gives us capacity to invest more in front-line service delivery across the range of state and municipal service delivery responsibilities that we have. We look forward to delivering more surgeries this year and to continuing our very significant infrastructure program throughout 2018 and beyond.

**MS CODY:** Chief Minister, given that this is the sixth budget update in which the government has maintained a projected return to balance in 2018-19, does the government remain committed to delivering a balanced budget?

**MR BARR:** Yes, we are.

### **Aboriginals and Torres Strait Islanders—Ngunnawal Bush Healing Farm**

**MR MILLIGAN:** My question is to the Minister for Health and Wellbeing. Minister, last year we learned that there were large numbers of Indigenous clients waiting to be treated at drug and alcohol rehab centres in Canberra. Many have to travel interstate to get this treatment. Minister, how many clients have been treated at the Ngunnawal Bush Healing Farm since it opened in August last year?

**MS FITZHARRIS:** I thank Mr Milligan for his question and note that it is not a fact that many have to travel interstate. In fact, that has not been made clear to me. But, in terms of the Ngunnawal Bush Healing Farm, there have been 31 clients who have been referred or identified and approximately 20 applicants from the through care program were interested in participating in the Ngunnawal Bush Healing Farm. A five-week, non-residential program was delivered from 14 November to 14 December. Programs were delivered four days a week; they were offered to male and female clients aged between 18 and 40 years of age who identified as Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander.

There remains strong interest from clients to make meaningful changes. I will take the specific number of participants on notice.

**MR MILLIGAN:** Minister, what has been the hold-up for accepting more clients at the bush healing farm?

**MS FITZHARRIS:** I am not aware there has been a hold-up. I will take the question on notice.

**MRS DUNNE:** Minister, when will you address the need for an Indigenous residential drug and alcohol facility in the ACT to meet the needs of Canberrans?

**MS FITZHARRIS:** As I believe was discussed in last year's annual report hearings, residential detox and withdrawal facilities are something that we are giving consideration to.

### **Planning—Curtin master plan**

**MS LE COUTEUR:** My question is to the Minister for Planning and Urban Renewal and relates to master plans. Given the community panel engagement process undertaken by ACTPLA in relation to the draft Curtin master plan last year, when will the Curtin community be able to see the revised draft master plan?

**MR GENTLEMAN:** I thank Ms Le Couteur for her question. Indeed, the community panel process has worked well, I think, in this situation. We tried it, of course, in other situations, and it did not work well, but we are up for trying different communication models as we go forward in looking at master planning and other planning issues.

The directorate advised me on Monday that they are almost ready to finalise the master plan for the area. There are a few more additions to go in. We want to ensure

that we have all of the community interest and comments on board before we finalise that.

**MADAM SPEAKER:** Do you have a supplementary, Ms Le Couteur?

**MS LE COUTEUR:** I would really like to say: please answer my first question, because—

*Members interjecting—*

**MS LE COUTEUR:** I was actually about to stand up and take a point of order to say that: please answer the first question.

**MADAM SPEAKER:** Ms Le Couteur, there is no point of order, unless you have something to add to that, minister?

**Mr Gentleman:** No.

**MADAM SPEAKER:** A supplementary, Ms Le Couteur.

**MS LE COUTEUR:** When can the community expect the draft Territory Plan variation which implements the Belconnen master plan, and, as I said, when can we expect to see the Curtin draft master plan?

**MR GENTLEMAN:** As soon as they are finalised.

**MS LAWDER:** Minister, can you provide advice on the finalisation date of other master plans that are not yet finished, including the Tharwa draft master plan?

**MR GENTLEMAN:** The Tharwa one is just about finished.

**Mrs Dunne:** They are all just about finished.

**MR GENTLEMAN:** These are detailed master planning processes that, of course, involve the future planning for these areas. The community wants to have a great deal of comment on these master plans. It is important that we bring that comment on board. We take knowledge of that comment and, of course, put that into the master planning process and any variations that occur after that.

### **Education—school device rollout**

**MS CODY:** My question is to the Minister for Education and Early Childhood Development. Minister, can you update the Assembly on the rollout of devices to ACT public secondary students?

**MS BERRY:** I thank Ms Cody for the question. Yes, I can provide an update. In fact, last week the Chief Minister and I visited Kingsford Smith School in west Belconnen, where we were able to hand out some of the Acer Chromebooks that have been provided to years 7 to 11 secondary public school students in the ACT. I can tell you

that it was a really great experience for us to be able to be taken through, from the students who will be using the Chromebooks, exactly how the Chromebooks will work and how they will assist in the child's learning.

I have had very positive feedback already from the families of students who are receiving the Chromebooks as well as from students and teachers. In fact, yesterday I had a parent tell me how enthusiastic her daughter was to receive a Chromebook and how she was already planning her educational outcomes for the 2018 year. Some teachers have already put all of their work for the year on the Chromebook, available for the students. For some people, that might put them off a bit, but the students whom we were talking to were very happy to see the work already out and planned, and happy that they could go ahead and start using their Chromebooks effectively within their schools.

I will be visiting some other schools to check in with the Chromebook rollouts, 15,000 of them to years 7 to 11 secondary students in public schools. I look forward to hearing stories from students who receive them.

**MS CODY:** Minister, how will these devices support student learning?

**MS BERRY:** It will change the way that students learn in our schools. It will give teachers the opportunity to support students as well. Teachers have already received a lot of training—in November last year—on how the Chromebooks will be able to support students, and teachers, in their learning in school. There will be more pedagogical support training this year on how to better use the Read&Write for Google programs in schools.

If you have not seen how Chromebook works, I have a display model in my office and I would be happy to have my office or somebody from the directorate take members through the Google Classrooms and how they help students learn academically, and also how they can connect with each other and with their teachers every step of the way as they learn their schoolwork and also do their homework activities on the Google Chromebooks.

Being able to have their work plans on their Chromebooks has been a really great outcome for students: to be able to see where they have come from, where they want to go to and how they can achieve even better outcomes with their academic and other learning experience in our schools.

**MR STEEL:** Why is the government providing devices to public secondary school students?

**MS BERRY:** At the very forefront of the delivery of this excellent education election commitment is the very strong focus on equity to ensure that every student in year seven to 11 in public schools gets the same access to technological-assisted learning no matter what their background, that every family will not have to have the financial burden of purchasing a device or even having to decide what device would be the most appropriate and that every teacher will not have to be an expert across a number

of devices. That will free up their time to spend with the children doing what they do best, giving our children the best education possible.

### **Health—ministerial priorities**

**MS LAWDER:** My question is to the Minister for Health and Wellbeing. Minister, I refer to an article in the *Canberra Times* on 2 January this year in which you said:

... as minister I don't need to know everything that's happening. That is why there are seven and a half thousand people working in health. I see my role as providing clear priorities for health ...

Minister, how can you set clear priorities for health when you are unaware of the key issues in your portfolio?

**MS FITZHARRIS:** I am aware of the key priorities in my portfolio.

**MS LAWDER:** Minister, why have you not known about key issues in your portfolio including data, poor levels of maintenance, waiting times in the emergency department and flammable cladding?

**MS FITZHARRIS:** I have known about all those issues and I have responded with urgency to them.

**MRS DUNNE:** Minister, has your lack of knowledge of your portfolio resulted in wrong priorities being set in health?

**MS FITZHARRIS:** Absolutely not.

### **Alexander Maconochie Centre—mail policy**

**MRS JONES:** My question is to the Minister for Corrections. Minister, on 5 February 2018, ABC news online revealed that a convicted paedophile sent a letter from the Alexander Maconochie Centre to one of his victims. The report stated, and I quote "The family asked the government how he was able to send it from prison as they believed they were on a no-contact list." Minister, why and how was a convicted paedophile allowed to send a letter from the AMC to his victim?

**MR RATTENBURY:** Yes, I was disappointed to read that report as well. I am sorry for the family for what happened there. I have written back to them this week. My advice is that they were not on a no-contact list. That has now been remedied. They are now on a no-contact list. That was, of course, for written postage. What I can inform the Assembly is that for email, it is a positive vetting process in the sense that you cannot send emails to particular addresses until it has been approved. So this was exclusively an issue with written postage.

The process for getting on the no-contact list actually requires people to opt in. In this case the family had not done that. I think this has raised some important questions about how people opt in. At the moment, shortly after the completion of the court

proceedings and sentencing of somebody to custody, people are sent a letter inviting them to join that list. But, on reflection, in light of this matter I think we will now re-examine that process because that is possibly not the best time for people to be focused on those sorts of matters at the end of an undoubtedly difficult court process. We will now review that.

The other part of it is that I think we need to reflect on whether in fact it is an opt-out process either for all offences or some categories of offences. We need to be careful in thinking about this because for some people they will not be wanting to receive updates about the person who has been convicted. They may not want to get any contact. So we need to work some nuance into that system.

What I can also inform the Assembly is that this is exactly why we are working on a victims charter, trying to improve the experience of victims in the ACT to make sure that they are getting the support they deserve and need from the ACT government.

**MRS JONES:** Minister, how many disappointments have you experienced as a minister in this system?

**MR RATTENBURY:** I am sure Mrs Jones feels she has a longer list than I do.

*Mrs Jones interjecting—*

**MADAM SPEAKER:** Mrs Jones, your newest member is keen to ask her first supplementary.

**MISS C BURCH:** Minister, what did you learn from this incident, and what changes have you made to protect victims and their families?

**MR RATTENBURY:** I invite Miss Burch to reflect on the answer I gave to the initial question, in which I went into some detail about the reflections on this incident.

### **Health—report on government services**

**MR STEEL:** My question is to the Minister for Health and Wellbeing. Compared to the national averages in the recent report on government services, in what areas has the ACT been able to show that Canberrans are healthier?

**MS FITZHARRIS:** I thank Mr Steel very much for his question. It is a pleasure to share with the Assembly that the latest report of government services data released at the end of January confirmed Canberra's status as one of the healthiest cities in Australia. It shows ACT residents are healthier and live longer when compared to the rest of the nation. It also highlights that when they do get sick, they have access to a world-class health system to help them get better.

Let me go to some of the highlights from the report. In 2014 the ACT had a lower incidence of all cancers except cervical cancer compared to national figures. Excluding 2013, when it was the second lowest, the ACT had the lowest rate of potentially avoidable deaths between 2007 and 2016. In 2015-16, the ACT had the

highest life expectancy in Australia, and we have had the highest or equal highest life expectancy in Australia since 2005. Between 2008 and 2016, the ACT has had the lowest age-standardised all-cause mortality rate across the states and territories. Not only are we living longer; we have a lower incidence of death compared to the rest of the country. This does not come by accident; this comes from having a high quality health system. We have high levels of immunisation. In the last financial year, the ACT was the only jurisdiction to achieve at least 95 per cent immunisation coverage for every antigen for children aged 12 months to less than 15 months. In 2015-16, the ACT had a lower rate of potentially preventable hospitalisations and selected vaccine preventable conditions compared to the national figure.

This government will continue to invest in our health system, promote healthy lifestyles and expand existing health services and preventative programs here in the ACT.

**MR STEEL:** Minister, in the report on government services information, how well is the ACT served with health professionals?

**MS FITZHARRIS:** The ACT has a very strong record of investment in our health system and our health workforce. In 2015-16 the ACT had the highest overall rate of full-time equivalent medical staff. We have committed \$36 million in investment to increase and develop the ACT Health nursing workforce.

We have also been developing a targeted approach to attracting medical specialists to come and work in our wonderful health service and city, letting them know about the significant investments this government will make in health infrastructure and health services. This is in response to some specific specialist skill shortages but will target the broader medical profession.

As I mention our highly skilled workforce, I do want to acknowledge the hardworking and dedicated doctors, nurses, health professionals, other allied health staff and teams who work very hard every day to ensure that the Canberra community receives the highest level of health care. We simply cannot be the healthiest city in the country without having a high quality health service. We also have high rates of dental therapists. Our primary healthcare providers, GPs and allied health professionals who work in the primary healthcare space are often the first point of contact for health care.

Now we know, of course, that they have been let down by the only remaining remnant of that appalling 2014-15 Liberal budget, the Medicare rebate freeze, but the ACT government is committed to supporting our GPs. Just yesterday we saw the opening of bulk-billing grants to support additional access to increased bulk-billing services in the Molonglo Valley and the Tuggeranong Valley. Nurses, of course, are integral to our healthcare services at the tertiary-community level as well as in our popular nurse-led walk-in centres. I look forward to the ACT health workforce continuing to grow and provide excellent healthcare services to our community.

**MS CHEYNE:** Can the minister expand on the ACT showing improvements in elective surgery waiting times, as demonstrated in the report on government services information?

**MS FITZHARRIS:** The ACT government has done a lot to increase access to elective surgery, with record numbers of surgical procedures being delivered. In the last financial year our target was 12,500, and 12,826 procedures were performed. Although it is pleasing to see that we are reaching our targets for the number of procedures performed, we know that demand for both emergency and elective surgery continues to grow.

As a result of this demand, the ROGS report did show that the ACT has higher median wait times for certain elective surgery procedures than the national median wait times. We recognise that getting on top of this wait list is a challenge for us. It will be a priority this year.

To build on the work that has been done in recent years to increase access to surgery, we have today announced another funding boost to elective surgery, with an additional \$6.3 million for more surgeries, taking our surgeries, and elective surgeries in particular, this year to over 13,000—a record number of surgeries. This investment will bring another 600 Canberrans off our waiting list. We have begun cross-territory planning to complete a range of surgeries for patients, with a key focus on those who are currently waiting beyond the recommended time frames. We are committed to addressing elective surgery wait lists so that more people can come off these wait lists.

### **Roads—traffic management study**

**MS CHEYNE:** My question is to the Minister for Transport and City Services. Can the minister update the Assembly on the outcomes of the local area traffic management study on Tillyard Drive and the surrounding streets in Fraser, Flynn and Charnwood?

**MS FITZHARRIS:** I thank Ms Cheyne for her question and her interest in this particular intersection in her electorate of Ginninderra. Of course achieving safer speeds on our road network is an essential element of the safe system approach outlined in national and ACT road safety strategies. A range of integrated speed management measures, covering engineering, enforcement, encouragement and education, are part of the ACT road safety strategy. One of these measures is to conduct local area traffic management treatments in residential areas.

Roads ACT, as members know, uses a traffic warrant system to objectively assess the need for and priority of traffic management and road safety measures on residential streets. The intersection of Tillyard Drive and Ginninderra Drive ranks relatively highly in this warrant system.

Roads ACT engaged engineering consultants to undertake a local area traffic management study on Tillyard Drive and surrounding streets in Charnwood, Flynn and Fraser. As discussed in last year's annual report hearings, this principally looked at just the length of Tillyard Drive and not at major intersections. But the study at that point did include a technical component analysing traffic speed, volume and crash data, as well as seeking the views of local residents. Following extensive community

consultation with residents of Charnwood, Flynn and Fraser in particular, issues were identified that concerned the community.

The study has been completed and a final scheme for improvements on Tillyard Drive has been determined, with priorities assigned for the proposed treatments. This study will guide the implementation of all the elements proposed in the scheme over a number of years.

**MS CHEYNE:** Minister, has the government considered the signalisation of the Tillyard Drive intersections with Ginninderra Drive and Lhotsky Street?

**MS FITZHARRIS:** Yes, the government is currently looking at that signalisation. As was also discussed in last year's annual report hearings, a detailed study of the Tillyard Drive intersections with Ginninderra Drive and Lhotsky Street has also been completed, in addition to the local area traffic management study. It has recommended the installation of traffic lights. Intersection improvements and upgrades are significant investments, and we have a strong track record of delivering investment in roads infrastructure right across the territory, and principally also in Belconnen. I would like to reassure Ms Cheyne and other members that this study is now being carefully considered by government.

In addition the government will get on with implementing the high priority safety measures over the coming financial year along the length of Tillyard Drive, as identified by the community draft consultation. This includes improvements to intersections with Crawford Crescent, Spalding Street, Kerrigan Street and Daley Crescent south; lane narrowing between Covington Crescent and Crawford Crescent and between Barber Crescent and Kuringa Drive; a pedestrian refuge island adjacent to the bicentennial trail; improvements to pedestrian signage near Charnwood shops and to line marking and signage on Kuringa Drive; lane narrowing and line marking improvements on Spalding Street; lane narrowing between Tillyard Drive and Shakespeare Crescent and improvements to pedestrian signage on Kerrigan Street; speed cushions in Shakespeare Crescent and Cartwright Street; and a pedestrian refuge island near Rouse Place.

It is important to note that the final scheme is an overall master plan for the area, and that not all proposed safety measures will necessarily be installed at once. The master plan will guide implementation over a number of years.

**MR PETTERSSON:** Minister, how was the community consulted during the development of the study and how is the government addressing their areas of concern?

**MS FITZHARRIS:** I thank Mr Pettersson for the supplementary question. In November and December 2016, Roads ACT collected feedback about issues of concern from residents, in particular in Charnwood, Flynn and Fraser. This included over 600 survey responses and eight phone or written submissions, with 120 people attending information sessions.

A range of areas of concern was identified, including safety at intersections. Notably, residents did raise concerns over the intersections on Tillyard Drive and Lhotsky Street. Residents also raised concerns around speeding, safety at midblock intersections, peak hour congestion and safety around Fraser Primary School. Speeding and intersection safety were identified as requiring alternative solutions.

More recently, the residents of Charnwood, Flynn and Fraser have been informed of the outcomes of the study, the final scheme for improvements and the priority of treatments through a newsletter distributed to all households earlier this year. Information is also available on the TCCS website.

The design of recommended high-priority measures will be undertaken in 2018. Implementation will commence in the 2018-19 financial year. We will continue to consider intersection signalisation as well.

### **Housing—homelessness**

**MR PARTON:** Madam Speaker, my question is to the Minister for Housing and Suburban Development. Minister, on 29 January this year, the *Canberra Times* reported that numbers sleeping on the pavement in Civic near the Uniting Church's early morning centre had "shot up" with what they described as a "semi-permanent camp" appearing. Minister, how many people are homeless or sleeping rough in the inner city and in other areas such as Mount Ainslie and the Cotter?

**MS BERRY:** I was aware of the story and I met some of the individuals who were sleeping rough up near the Uniting Church at the early morning centre late last year. In fact, at the moment my advice is that there are around 30 to 40 people who we have data on who are sleeping rough in the ACT. All of these people are being supported in different ways by organisations like St Vincent de Paul through their street to home program. And of course the ACT government announced an expansion of hours at UnitingCare at the early morning centre so that rough sleepers or people who were living in the city could go and get support if they needed it at the early morning centre.

At this stage, those are the numbers that I have been advised of. I have double-checked and sought to make sure that that is the number of people whom Housing ACT and the street to home program are aware of. I continue to keep a very close eye on the situation.

**MR PARTON:** Minister, how many people have been displaced onto the street or into couch surfing situations from the closure of the ABC flats in Civic due to the public housing renewal program?

**MS BERRY:** I believe I have had questions about this in the past in this place. My response has been that, for the people who were living in some of the older apartments in Civic who are now being rehomed, we asked tenants to let us know who the rough sleepers were, or who the people couch surfing were, so that we could put them in touch with services or give them the support that they needed.

When I investigated this, when the reports were first made last year, it was very difficult to get the numbers because none of these people came forward to get support. But that does not mean that Housing ACT and the street to home program do not work actively to ensure that, if they are aware of people who are sleeping rough, who are couch surfing or who are not the actual tenanted person within a residence, they are supported in any way that they can be. We invite the tenants, if it is the case that they have somebody couch surfing in their residence, to let us know, so that Housing ACT can support them appropriately.

**MS LAWDER:** Minister, why were these impacts not more adequately addressed and mitigated in the assessments you conducted prior to the closure of the complexes, given that the numbers at the EMC have shot up?

**MS BERRY:** The numbers have not shot up, as I have explained on a number of occasions in this place. We continue to have the lowest number of rough sleepers in the country. The people who attend the UnitingCare early morning centre are not necessarily all rough sleepers. A lot of them are tenants of Housing ACT and go to the early morning centre to get the different kinds of support that the early morning centre provides to everybody, not just to people who are experiencing rough sleeping.

### **Public housing—Braddon**

**MR HANSON:** My question is to the Minister for Housing and Suburban Development. Minister, on 28 December the *Canberra Times* reported that a five-year-old public housing block in Lowanna Street, Braddon has stood vacant for almost two years. Minister, why has this complex been vacant for so long when there are desperate homeless people throughout the inner south and the inner north of Canberra?

**MS BERRY:** Yes, I am aware of that report and I do have some information that I can provide the Assembly on the reasons why that particular group of Housing ACT residences has been vacant for some time. What I might have to do, because I cannot easily put my finger on it right at this moment, is take that question on notice and I will provide some more information very shortly.

**MR HANSON:** Thank you, Minister. What actions have you taken personally to deal with this problem?

**MS BERRY:** Sorry, Madam Speaker, I might just have to get an explanation. The problem of Braddon or—which problem?

**MR HANSON:** The problem of the vacant public housing in Braddon. What have you done about it?

**MS BERRY:** I have done a number of things, and I have sought advice and have received advice every step of the way from Housing ACT, and from planning as well, to ensure that the housing that we provide for people who need it is the best possible, most sustainable housing all across the ACT, including here in the city.

**MR PARTON:** Minister, when will this complex in Lowanna Street, Braddon be available to meet homelessness needs?

**MS BERRY:** I will have to take that question on notice too.

### **Schools—composite model**

**MS LEE:** My question is to the Minister for Education and Early Childhood Development. Minister, Mawson Primary School has a population of 460 students, according to the February 2017 school census. Parents at that school learnt that classes had moved to a composite model only when their children returned to school last week. Why has the composite model been introduced at Mawson Primary School?

**MS BERRY:** I cannot provide any information about that particular school, and why that particular model was introduced. I would suggest that if schools were making decisions about the different kinds of models that they were implementing, they would be made based on the make-up of the school community. With respect to that particular school, I will take the question on notice and see if I can provide some advice to Ms Lee.

**MS LEE:** Minister, does the Education Directorate have a policy guiding composite class decisions and, if so, what is it and how is it implemented?

**MS BERRY:** Schools generally have some autonomy about how they create their school learning environment and composite classrooms are not uncommon across the ACT, across a number of schools, depending on the school community and the make-up of the school community in achieving the best learning outcomes for their students. So those decisions are generally made within the schools.

**MR HANSON:** Minister, what does the policy say about consultation with parents and ultimately who has the say about whether or not classes are made composite?

**MS BERRY:** Again, these are generally decisions that are made by the schools based on the make-up of their school communities.

### **Schools—mobile phones**

**MISS C BURCH:** Madam Speaker, my question is to the Minister for Education and Early Childhood Development. Minister, on 7 February 2018, the *Canberra Times* reported you as confirming that banning mobile phones in any ACT public school was “not on the cards”, notwithstanding that both the federal and Queensland ministers for education have expressed concern and want them banned. Minister, on what basis have you come to your decision, and with whom did you consult?

**MS BERRY:** I spoke to a number of teachers in schools and also people within my local community about whether or not phones or devices should be banned within the classroom. All of the reports that I have been hearing from school principals in the ACT are that schools are very careful to ensure that devices are used appropriately.

Sometimes these devices, like phones, are used for providing different supports for education for different students' needs. I know that some students use the mindfulness app on their phones so that they can listen to whatever music or noises help them with their study in the classroom. These are the kinds of things that we need to be very careful about in making decisions across the board, denying students and other people access to phones when they are very clearly a part of our community and our society. It is more about making sure that they are used appropriately and that students, schools and families know that appropriate use of phones in schools is the best way forward rather than a prohibition completely.

**MISS C BURCH:** Minister, what protocols on the use of mobile phones in schools are in place, and do they differ between primary and secondary schools?

**MS BERRY:** For mobile phones, schools generally will make decisions about whether or not phones are handed in, in primary schools, at the front gate or whether they can take them into the classrooms. Generally, students are not allowed to use their iPhones in the classroom without there being some agreement with the teachers or within the school communities.

I do not understand why people are wanting to prohibit something which is clearly part of the lives of everyone in our community, and within our schools as well. There is no point in taking that away from students when it will be a part of their lives now and well into the future. If it is such a problem, and perhaps if people are of the view that devices, iPhones or other things are not important to achieving academic outcomes in schools, I have a bucket here, and I ask members to donate their technology into the bucket; then I can take it—

**Mr Hanson:** Madam Speaker, on a point of order, can I ask whether presenting a bucket is the use of a prop?

**MADAM SPEAKER:** Suffice to say that I was going to call the minister to order and say that you know my views on that. There are no props or stunts allowed. Do you have anything further to add in your remaining 38 seconds?

**MS BERRY:** Well, if I can't use the bucket—

**MADAM SPEAKER:** No, you can't.

**MS BERRY:** I am very happy still to take members' devices and recycle them, if they are of no use to anyone.

**MS LEE:** Minister, do principals have autonomy to decide on mobile phone use in their schools?

*Members interjecting—*

**MADAM SPEAKER:** Members!

*Mr Hanson interjecting—*

**MADAM SPEAKER:** Mr Hanson, your colleague has asked a question. I will call the minister to answer.

**MS BERRY:** School principals and school communities work to ensure the best outcomes for students in their schools, as I have explained and tried to explain—and certainly it is the case with children that I know in my local neighbourhood—on when is the appropriate time to use a device within a school and how it can be appropriately used to improve academic outcomes for students in schools.

Prohibition does not work. Isolating young people from a device that plays such an important part in their lives is not the solution. The solution is ensuring that these devices, iPhones, which every single one of us has, are used appropriately in the schools. Adults actually have a very important role to play in ensuring that these devices are used appropriately and that what they are used for is appropriate, and setting a very good example for young people in our community as well.

### **National Multicultural Festival—consultation**

**MRS KIKKERT:** My question is to the Minister for Multicultural Affairs. Minister, in a media release on 30 August last year, you spoke of, and I quote, “the ACT government’s commitment to strengthen community consultation”. Which community organisations did the ACT government consult with before deciding on a blanket ban on community organisations selling alcoholic beverages at this year’s Multicultural Festival?

**MS STEPHEN-SMITH:** I thank Mrs Kikkert for her question. Each year festival organisers seek feedback from all stakeholders. That includes stallholders, festival goers and ACT government agencies that participate in helping to organise and run the festival.

The festival organisers have a reference group or a steering committee—I cannot remember the exact title of it—that includes the showcase organisers from a range of communities. People would be aware that there are a number of showcases—at least half a dozen showcases; I cannot give the exact number off the top of my head—organised by different cultural communities. Those showcase organisers are consulted by the festival organising group in aspects of the organisation of the festival.

So it is an ongoing consultation process following each festival and in the lead-up to each festival with a range of community organisations. I can take on notice the exact detail of who those are.

**MRS KIKKERT:** Minister, why did you not you consult community organisations that were selling alcohol at the 2017 Multicultural Festival before making a decision which has robbed many of them of a large part of their income?

**MS STEPHEN-SMITH:** As I said, community organisations are consulted about organisation of the festival in an ongoing way, and I have certainly committed that following this festival we will actively seek feedback, as the festival organisers do

every year, not only from stall holders but from festival participants and from ACT government agencies but, of course, particularly from stall holders, to see what the impact of this policy is, to see if we need to review it for next year. We will be reconsidering this policy for next year's festival.

**MR COE:** Minister, in what form will that consultation take place, following this year's Multicultural Festival, and how much do you expect that community organisations will lose as a result of their inability to sell alcoholic beverages?

**MS STEPHEN-SMITH:** I thank the Leader of the Opposition for his supplementary question. A range of consultation mechanisms is undertaken with community organisations, both in the lead-up to and subsequent to the festival. There are surveys of festival-goers. Obviously, that will include volunteers working on community stalls as well; that is my understanding. There are then feedback sessions with stallholders following the festival. I will take the detail of the question on notice, as to exactly what those mechanisms comprised; and, again, commit to ongoing consultation in the lead-up to the next festival.

As to the second part of the question, which I think was about whether or not community organisations will be losing money as a result of this decision, I would point out that we have had feedback from a small number of stallholders expressing concern about that aspect. There are two concerns that stallholders have raised that we have taken on board. One concern is about them losing opportunities to raise revenue through the sale of alcohol. The festival organisers have been actively engaged with communities who have raised that particular concern, to support and encourage them to diversify their activities, and to look at other ways of raising money. I certainly encourage them to do that, or to partner with the commercial stallholders who are able to sell alcohol, to ensure that their culturally appropriate alcohol is available on the footprint, which is, of course, the second concern that stallholders have raised with us.

I should emphasise that this condition was part of the stallholder application process, the participation policy, which was made available in September. The amount of feedback we have had from actual stallholders in relation to this matter has been quite small.

### **Business—Local Industry Advocate**

**MR WALL:** Madam Speaker, my question is to the Minister for Economic Development. Minister, part of the role of the Local Industry Advocate is to ensure that work that can be done by local businesses stays in the ACT through the procurement process. Minister, what input has the Local Industry Advocate had on the procurement process for green waste collection services in light of the recent rollout of green bins across parts of the territory?

**MR BARR:** The Local Industry Advocate does play a role in advising government on a range of procurement matters. I will need to seek some information in relation to whether the Local Industry Advocate has played a significant role in relation to that particular procurement. But I think the issue in question was a very clear election commitment from the Labor Party at the last election.

*Mr Hanson interjecting—*

**MR BARR:** There was a very clear commitment.

*Opposition members interjecting—*

**MR BARR:** I would be surprised, Madam Speaker, if I could get a word in without the constant interjections from the *Muppet Show*—

**Mrs Dunne:** Point of order, Madam Speaker.

**MR BARR:** That gets them on their feet, doesn't it?

**MADAM SPEAKER:** Yes.

**Mrs Dunne:** Madam Speaker, the point of order is about—

**MADAM SPEAKER:** Use of language.

**Mrs Dunne:** Appropriate language. That will always get me on my feet, whether it is this side or the other side that does it. I would ask that the minister withdraw the comment. There has been a ruling in the past.

**MADAM SPEAKER:** Minister, I recognise that you were suffering a serious level of interjection, but I do ask you to withdraw “muppets”.

**MR BARR:** May I stand on the point of order? The *Muppet Show* is indeed a much loved children's television show.

**Mrs Dunne:** This is frivolous, Madam Speaker. The minister needs to withdraw immediately and without reservation.

**MADAM SPEAKER:** I understand the rules, Mrs Dunne. Chief Minister, can you withdraw, and without explanation.

**MR BARR:** Thank you, Madam Speaker. I withdraw, Madam Speaker.

**Mrs Dunne:** Perhaps use the adjournment debate—

**MR BARR:** As I was saying, the *Muppet Show* is indeed a—

**MADAM SPEAKER:** Mrs Dunne, the Chief Minister was about to get to his answer and you are interjecting again.

**Mrs Dunne:** I did not interject. Madam Speaker, seeing that you have raised the matter with me, I raised my hands in a questioning way because I still have not heard the Chief Minister withdraw the comment, which you have asked him to do at least twice.

**MADAM SPEAKER:** He has withdrawn, and I heard your comment from here. Chief Minister, you have 13 seconds left on the clock if you desire to answer.

**MR BARR:** It would appear to be down to about four seconds now, Madam Speaker, so my time has expired on this question.

**MR WALL:** Minister, how many times did the local advocate meet or engage with locally owned green waste collection businesses as part of the procurement for the green waste service?

**MR BARR:** I will need to take that on notice.

**MR COE:** Chief Minister, how many times have you met with the Local Industry Advocate in the past 12 months? Did you chat with her about the impact of green waste collection businesses and your nationalisation policy?

**MR BARR:** I have met with the Local Industry Advocate on I think at least half a dozen occasions over the—

**Mr Wall:** Outside Labor Party meetings?

**Mrs Dunne:** Outside Labor Party meetings?

**MR BARR:** Oh, Madam Speaker—course of the past 12 months—

*Mr Coe interjecting—*

**MADAM SPEAKER:** Mr Coe, please! Let the Chief Minister answer the question.

**MR BARR:** It is only day one of the parliamentary year, Madam Speaker, and already those opposite can barely contain their inner stand-up comedian. It is perhaps disappointing, Madam Speaker.

In response to Mr Coe's question, I have met with the Local Industry Advocate on around half a dozen occasions over the past 12 months. Mr Coe's description of the government's policy, whilst it might be wryly amusing for the most conservative leader of a political party in this country, is a long way from the truth.

### **Tourism—international flights**

**MR PETTERSSON:** My question is to the Chief Minister. Chief Minister, can you please update the Assembly on the recent major expansion of international flights to Canberra?

**MR BARR:** Yes, it has been a particularly interesting couple of month in international aviation and particularly as it impacts on Canberra. We now have daily services connecting our city to both Singapore and Doha provided by two airlines that are, I think, universally accepted as being amongst the very best in the world.

Today we have obviously had the opportunity to attend a series of events with Qatar Airways, who have commenced their new service to Canberra. This service, a Boeing 777-300, for members who are interested, carries just short of 360 passengers. The total seat capacity coming into Canberra now has, with the combination of both Singapore Airlines' announcement of daily flights together with these announcements, added around 170,000 seats coming into Canberra each year. That is a very significant boost to international aviation capacity for our city.

It is very pleasing to see that what has been a long-term campaign by my government, together with Canberra Airport and tourism industry partners, has delivered a further boost to international aviation capacity. We are seeing that flow through into investment in the tourism and hospitality sector, a sector which, I would remind members, employs more than 16,000 Canberrans.

In 2017 we achieved an all-time record level of both domestic and international visitors to our city and, with this announcement and the commencement of daily services Canberra-Doha, we will add significantly to our tourism numbers in the years ahead. It is a very exciting time for aviation and tourism in Canberra.

**MR PETTERSSON:** Chief Minister, how will the daily service by Qatar Airways build on Canberra's reputation as a city to visit in 2018?

**MR BARR:** This announcement comes on top of the wonderful endorsement from *Lonely Planet* of Canberra as a very desirable tourism destination, indeed one of the top three cities that people should visit in 2018. I think it gives a further boost to confidence within the tourism and hospitality sector. We have already seen a significant number of announcements of new investment, a new hotel product and new tourism experiences not just within the borders of the ACT but also in the broader Canberra region.

We look forward to seeing further commitment from the airlines. The government will continue to pursue our focus on low-cost carriers in the domestic and international markets as well as looking to international routes that head east to New Zealand and then on to North and South America, and north with a connection through to China. They will be the priorities in aviation growth over the coming years. We look forward to working closely with Canberra Airport and our tourism industry partners to achieve those outcomes.

**MS ORR:** Chief Minister, how does increased global connectivity affect the territory economy?

**MR BARR:** It certainly improves our city's capacity to export both goods and services, and we see, particularly in higher education, for example, where this increased connectivity makes it easier for our territory's single largest export industry, higher education, to be able to attract and retain students. It is also a wonderful opportunity for producers in the broader Canberra region, and indeed a quite extensive footprint south of the ACT, as getting goods to market through Canberra airport is a more efficient and cost-effective practice than going to the congested Kingsford Smith airport in Sydney.

Tourism and hospitality, as I have mentioned, is a very significant industry for the ACT, and is coming off a period of record growth and opportunity. This increased global connectivity assists our city in attracting new investment from a variety of different sources, as well as new visitors and new people coming to Canberra. We all know, as residents of this city, that it is one of the world's greatest cities to live in. Perhaps it is a secret that has been kept from the rest of the world for too long, but there is now a wonderful opportunity off the back of the *Lonely Planet* endorsement. These additional flights mean we will be able to share, with the rest of Australia and the rest of the world, all of the wonderful experiences that we perhaps sometimes take for granted about our city and our region. It is a very positive experience and an opportunity for our city, and one that I hope we can all celebrate.

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

## Papers

**Madam Speaker** presented the following papers:

Auditor-General Act—Auditor-General's Reports Nos—

11/2017—2016-17 Financial Audits—Financial Results and Audit Findings, dated 6 December 2017.

1/2018—Acceptance of Stormwater Assets, dated 31 January 2018.

2/2018—ACT Government strategic and accountability indicators, dated 1 February 2018.

Acting Speaker—Instruments of Appointment, pursuant to standing order 6A—

Assistant Speaker Cody (11 and 12 January 2018), dated 18 December 2017.

Assistant Speaker Steel (13 to 21 January 2018), dated 12 January 2018.

Standing order 191—Amendments to the Domestic Animals (Dangerous Dogs) Legislation Amendment Bill 2017, dated 8 December 2017.

**Mr Barr** presented the following papers:

Remuneration Tribunal Act, pursuant to subsection 12(2)—Determinations, together with statements for:

ACT Civil and Administrative Tribunal—Determination 19 of 2017, dated November 2017.

ACT Magistrates Court Judicial Positions—Determination 17 of 2017, dated November 2017.

ACT Supreme Court Judicial Positions—Determination 16 of 2017, dated November 2017.

Director of Public Prosecutions—Determination 18 of 2017, dated November 2017.

Part-time Public Office Holder—

Inspector of Correctional Services—Determination 22 of 2017, dated November 2017.

Management Assessment Panel—Determination 20 of 2017, dated November 2017.

Racing Appeals Tribunal—Determination 23 of 2017, dated December 2017.

Part-time Public Office Holders—Canberra Region Medical Education Council—Determination 1 of 2018, dated February 2018.

Part-time Public Office Holders—Determination 21 of 2017, dated November 2017.

### **City Renewal Authority—quarterly land acquisition report Paper and statement by minister**

**MR BARR** (Kurrajong—Chief Minister, Treasurer, Minister for Economic Development and Minister for Tourism and Major Events) (3.37): For the information of members, I present the following paper:

City Renewal Authority and Suburban Land Agency Act, pursuant to subsection 13(2)—City Renewal Authority—Land acquisitions quarterly report—1 October to 31 December 2017, dated 9 January 2018.

I seek leave to make a statement.

Leave granted.

**MR BARR:** In July 2017, as members will be aware, the government established the City Renewal Authority under the City Renewal Authority and Suburban Land Agency Act 2017. In accordance with this act, I have received the latest quarterly land acquisition report from the authority. This report states that the authority did not undertake any land acquisition during the period 1 October to 31 December 2017.

### **Budget review—2017-2018 Paper and statement by minister**

**MR BARR** (Kurrajong—Chief Minister, Treasurer, Minister for Economic Development and Minister for Tourism and Major Events) (3.38): For the information of members, I present the following paper:

Financial Management Act, pursuant to subsection 20A(2)—Budget 2017-18—Budget review.

I seek leave to make a statement.

Leave granted.

**MR BARR:** I present to the Assembly the 2017-18 budget update, which has been prepared in accordance with section 20A of the Financial Management Act 1996. The budget update I present today confirms what Canberrans can see and feel across this city: that, after a tough few years, our economy is now bounding ahead.

Last year over 10,000 new jobs were created in Canberra. This was the strongest year of job creation in a decade. Over 80 per cent of those new jobs were full time, giving Canberra families the stability and security they need to face the new year with optimism.

Importantly, too, the new jobs emerging in our economy have been in a diverse range of sectors, creating opportunities for Canberrans from all backgrounds, not just office workers. Our education and training sector is powering ahead, adding the greatest number of jobs over the last year. It is now, as I have mentioned, our biggest export industry. Accommodation, hospitality and retail have seen similarly strong growth, while our utilities, IT and health care sectors are also expanding. This is a strong and very encouraging indication of increasing diversity in the territory economy as we make Canberra less reliant on the ups and downs of the commonwealth government for our employment base.

Our economy is growing at 4 per cent, 1¼ percentage points stronger than was forecast in the June budget. Almost 7,000 more people now call Canberra home than a year ago, attracted clearly by the bright opportunities that are here and by our world-beating quality of living.

A thriving economy and our steady work on fiscal consolidation have seen the territory's budget position strengthen too. I am pleased to announce we have more than halved the deficit for 2017-18 compared with the budget forecast and we will deliver a balanced budget and then stronger surpluses over the forward estimates period.

Members in this place will know what a big turnaround this is from the 2014 budget, when the Mr Fluffy response, combined with the deep cuts of the Abbott federal Liberal government, took effect. Ever since then, the government has worked steadily and carefully to return the budget to balance. Today's update confirms, I think for the sixth consecutive budget update, that this plan is very much on track. Certainly we will return to balance and surplus well ahead of the commonwealth.

Canberra is a growing city. As we grow we need to invest in services, in infrastructure and in the community facilities that Canberrans need and rely on. This city is amongst the best places in the world to visit in 2018, and indeed in each and every year, and we must keep investing to ensure that it remains the best place in Australia to live, to work and to raise a family. That is what we are doing through this budget update. We are taking the opportunity presented by a stronger fiscal position to make a series of priority investments in our city's frontline services.

That means more elective surgeries this year, cutting waiting times to get more Canberrans back to health sooner. It means investing in more paramedics to join Australia's fastest responding crew, delivering on our election commitment, and also bringing on additional staff to help meet demand pressures across the service. It means more investment in our courts and community safety to ensure that the justice system continues to work effectively and efficiently while respecting people's rights.

As the budget improves we are also making sure that the most vulnerable Canberrans see this benefit first. The spiking cost of electricity did hit many households hard last year. Whilst the ACT's shift to 100 per cent renewable electricity by 2020 will certainly help insulate our city from future volatility, we understand that many Canberrans, particularly pensioners, will be worrying about their bills in the year ahead. That is why we are increasing the utilities concession by \$50 this year to help eligible households meet their rising cost of living. This will bring the total payment available to \$654 a year, which comes directly off people's electricity bills to reduce their household costs.

Last year it came to the government's attention that some Canberrans who are amongst the lowest income and most vulnerable people in our city were missing out on the concession because they did not have accounts directly with a utility provider. As a result, for the first time we are also making the utilities concession available to residents of long-stay caravan parks and aged care homes with embedded electricity networks. We are addressing this because this is not a community that leaves people behind.

In the 2017-18 budget we started delivering on a significant number of our election commitments, including major new investments in health infrastructure through building the SPIRE centre at Canberra Hospital, expanding the Centenary Hospital for Women and Children and delivering more walk-in centres.

We delivered funding for classroom and facility upgrades at local schools across the city, funding for the expansion of schools in Gungahlin to keep up with population growth, and a new school in the Molonglo Valley. We have made significant investments in the planning and procurement of the second stage of light rail to Woden, the next stage in Canberra's integrated public transport network. With this budget update, Canberrans can see that we are continuing to deliver on the commitments we took to the 2016 election.

The budget update brings forward the rollout of laptops to students in every Canberra public high school. Students from years 7 to 11 have already begun receiving their new Chromebooks, and all public students will have their devices for the 2019 school year. This will ensure that students have the right equipment to thrive at school and to gain the critical literacy they need in this digital age.

We are also supporting the upgrade of Circuit Mark Webber, which I mentioned in question time, which, as members will be aware, is the home of the Canberra Kart Racing Club. We are extending the track to bring it up to an international standard. Our high quality community sports facilities and the local clubs that use them make Canberra so liveable, and we are pleased to be delivering on this commitment in the budget update.

This budget update maps out a range of new investments and new work for the government to undertake, on top of what is a big delivery agenda for 2018. That is because we are determined to take every opportunity to invest in Canberra; to grow the services and infrastructure that our growing city needs; and to ensure that

Canberra keeps on getting better for everyone who lives here. I commend the 2017-18 budget review to the Assembly.

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

**MR BARR** (Kurrajong—Chief Minister, Treasurer, Minister for Economic Development and Minister for Tourism and Major Events) (3.45): For the information of members, I present the following paper:

Financial Management Act, pursuant to section 26—Consolidated Financial Report—Financial quarter ending 31 December 2017.

I seek leave to make a statement.

Leave granted.

**MR BARR:** I am pleased to present to the Assembly the December quarter consolidated financial report for the territory. As I am sure members are acutely aware, this is required under section 26 of the Financial Management Act 1996. I can advise the Assembly that the December quarter 2017 headline net operating balance for the general government sector was a surplus of \$149.5 million. This was a \$32.6 million improvement on the budgeted surplus for this period, which was originally set at \$116.9 million. This improvement mainly reflects lower expenses as the result of timing of payments for projects.

The net debt for the general government sector at the end of the calendar year 2017 was \$1,545.4 million, which was a small net increase of \$92.5 million from 30 June 2017. This variance is mainly due to lower cash and deposits in line with prevailing cash flow requirements.

The territory's net financial liabilities decreased by \$2,891.7 million compared to 30 June 2017, largely reflecting a change in the defined benefit superannuation liability for 31 December 2017, based on a discount rate of 6 per cent, compared to 3.51 at 30 June 2017.

I also wish to advise members that the December quarter 2017 consolidated financial report for the territory includes a signed section 16B instrument under the Financial Management Act 1996 to roll over the princely sum of \$401,000 in undisbursed capital injection appropriation for the Environment, Planning and Sustainable Development Directorate. This instrument was inadvertently omitted, I understand, from the September quarter 2017 consolidated financial report and so is provided today. I commend the December 2017 quarterly report to the Assembly.

## **Education and Care Services National Further Amendment Regulations 2017 Paper and statement by minister**

**MS BERRY** (Ginninderra—Deputy Chief Minister, Minister for Education and Early Childhood Development, Minister for Housing and Suburban Development, Minister

for the Prevention of Domestic and Family Violence, Minister for Women and Minister for Sport and Recreation) (3.48): For the information of members, I present the following papers:

Education and Care Services National Law as applied by the law of the States and Territories, pursuant to sections 301 and 324—Education and Care Services National Further Amendment Regulations 2017, dated 11 December 2017, together with an explanatory statement.

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

Leave granted.

**MS BERRY:** As Minister for Education and Early Childhood Development, I am pleased to table the Education and Care Services National Further Amendment Regulations. The 2014 review of the national partnership agreement on the national quality agenda for early childhood education and care made a number of recommendations for changes to the Education and Care Services National Law and Education and Care Services National Regulations that were agreed by the Education Council on 31 January 2017.

The Education and Care Services National Law Amendment Act 2017 was given royal assent in Victoria on 27 March 2017. This gave effect to certain recommendations from the NQA review. I previously tabled the national law amendments in May last year.

Victoria developed the amending national regulations in two tranches. The first tranche were given effect on 1 October 2017, and were tabled previously in the Assembly. The second tranche have been developed to give effect to changes commencing on 1 February 2018. Tranche 2, the national further amendment regulations, are being tabled today. Both tranches 1 and 2 give effect to the review's recommendations. ACECQA, along with state and territory regulatory authorities, have prepared the sector for all changes commencing from 1 October 2017 and 1 February 2018.

The national quality framework for early childhood education and care was implemented in 2012. The framework included the creation of the Education and Care Services National Law and Regulations. New South Wales is the host jurisdiction for the national regulations, which are adopted by jurisdictions. The ACT adopted the Education and Care Services National Regulations 2011 on 9 December 2011.

The national quality framework has made significant improvement to educational and developmental outcomes for children attending services approved under the national law. The national law empowers the Education Council to review the national quality framework and propose changes to the framework, which includes the national law and regulations. Section 301 of the national law empowers the Education Council to make regulations. In 2014 the Education Council agreed to the terms of reference for a review of the national quality framework.

Following extensive consultation, in 2016 the Education Council considered the review final report and recommended policy changes. The national further amendment regulations were passed by the Education Council on 18 December 2017 and published on the New South Wales legislation register on 22 December 2017. Under section 303(3) of the Education and Care Services National Law Act 2010, any amending regulations which are to be disallowed must occur no later than six sitting days after being presented to the Assembly.

The 52 areas of reform recommended by the review can be broadly categorised into three themes: a simplified and more transparent assessing and rating process under the national quality framework; improved guidance for all services providing care to children over preschool age and authorised officers in relation to documenting child assessments for educational programs; and measures to improve oversight of and support within family day care services to increase the integrity and transparency of delivery and improve outcomes for children.

Extensions to transitional regulations 242 and 264 until 2020 have also been agreed by the Education Council. These transitional provisions relate to the definition of early childhood teacher and the use of replacement staff. This will ensure continuity and stability within the sector.

A substantial amount of analysis, consultation and negotiation went into developing the amending regulations. Thanks go to our Victorian colleagues for consulting closely with jurisdictions on the development of all the amending regulations. I submit the second tranche of amendment regulations to support the changes that commenced on 1 February 2018.

## **National Education and Care Services Freedom of Information and Privacy Commissioners and Ombudsman—annual report 2016-17**

### **Paper and statement by minister**

**MS BERRY** (Ginninderra—Deputy Chief Minister, Minister for Education and Early Childhood Development, Minister for Housing and Suburban Development, Minister for the Prevention of Domestic and Family Violence, Minister for Women and Minister for Sport and Recreation) (3.53): For the information of members, I present the following paper:

National Education and Care Services Freedom of Information & Privacy Commissioners & Ombudsman—Annual report 2016-2017.

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

Leave granted.

**MS BERRY:** As Minister for Education and Early Childhood Development, I am pleased to table the National Education and Care Services Freedom of Information and Privacy Commissioners and Ombudsman annual report 2016-17.

The Education and Care Services Ombudsman, National Education and Care Services Freedom of Information Commissioner and the National Education and Care Services Privacy Commissioner are independent statutory officers established under national applied laws legislation—the Education and Care Services National Law Act 2010 and the associated Education and Care Service National Regulations.

The two commissioners and the Ombudsman positions commenced in 2012 and are established and operate independently of each other for the purposes of the national law. The ECS commissioners are bound by commonwealth legislation, including the commonwealth Ombudsman Act 1976, the commonwealth Freedom of Information Act 1982 and the commonwealth Privacy Act 1988. Each commonwealth act was modified by the national regulations for the purposes of the national quality framework.

The ECS commissioners investigate and respond to complaints by people in relation to the provision of early childhood education and care services. The Education and Care Services Ombudsman receives complaints and assists people who may have been treated unfairly or inappropriately by the Australian Children’s Education and Care Quality Authority—ACECQA—or its officers, staff or contractors.

The National Education and Care Services Freedom of Information Commissioner responds to complaints about the “performance of functions, or the exercise of powers, under the Freedom of Information Act by ACECQA or a regulatory authority”. The role of the National Education and Care Services Privacy Commissioner is to respond to complaints about an “alleged breach of the information privacy principles in the Privacy Act by ACECQA or a regulatory authority”.

The NECS annual report has been prepared in accordance with regulations 198, 207 and 221 of the Education and Care Services National Regulations. These regulations require each minister of the Education Council to table a copy of the annual report within their jurisdiction’s Legislative Assembly. I submit the NECS annual report 2016-17 in accordance with our obligations under the national regulations.

## **Paper**

**Mr Gentleman** presented the following paper:

Planning and Development Act, pursuant to subsection 242(2)—Statement of leases granted for the period 1 October to 31 December 2017.

## **Planning and Development Act 2007—variation No 352 to the Territory Plan**

### **Paper and statement by minister**

**MR GENTLEMAN** (Brindabella—Minister for Police and Emergency Services, Minister for the Environment and Heritage, Minister for Planning and Land Management and Minister for Urban Renewal) (3.56): For the information of members, I present the following paper:

Planning and Development Act, pursuant to subsection 79(1)—Approval of Variation No 352 to the Territory Plan—Changes to various development tables, codes and definitions, dated 2 February 2018, including associated documents.

In accordance with the provisions of the act, this variation is presented with the background papers and copies of the summaries and reports. I ask leave to make a statement in relation to the papers.

Leave granted.

**MR GENTLEMAN:** I am tabling variation No 352 to the Territory Plan, which implements changes as a result of the ongoing monitoring of the Territory Plan. A number of matters were identified across different parts of the plan that required amendment to better meet the needs of government, industry and the community. The changes involved amendments to the types of development permitted in certain zones, including permitting an animal care facility in industrial zones. This will facilitate developments such as dog day care centres, which are an emerging use in the ACT.

Variation 352 includes two other site-specific changes, the first of which involves the removal of the public land reserve/nature reserve overlay on part of block 510 Stromlo that forms part of Greenhills centre on the Cotter Road. The Conservator of Flora and Fauna requested that the overlay be removed as the site is degraded and the use of the site is no longer consistent with a public nature reserve. The second site-specific change allows a place of worship on block 9, section 12, Hackett. This will formalise a long-term existing use on this site.

There are a range of revisions and refinements to provisions in the development codes in relation to boarding houses, allowable encroachments for pergolas, noise attenuation controls, water sensitive urban design requirements for water tanks and plumbing for single dwellings, adaptable housing requirements, open space and associated stormwater run-off requirements for multi-unit developments in the RZ1 and RZ2 zones, courtyard wall setbacks in the RZ1 and RZ2 zones, courtyard wall and private open space requirements at ground floor levels, and privacy and private open space provisions for multi-unit developments.

Finally, variation 352 clarifies and refines a number of definitions, including detached house and attached house, minor use, building line, datum ground level, front boundary, side boundary, rear boundary, habitable room, and setback.

Draft variation 352 was released for public comment from 9 June to 7 August 2017, allowing for extensions of time. The draft variation received 13 public submissions. A report on the consultation was prepared, responding to the issues raised in the submissions. The report is publicly available on the Environment and Planning Directorate's website and will be tabled with the approved version of the variation.

The main concerns raised in submissions related to the proposed prohibition of childcare centres in industrial zones and removing the reference to neighbourhood plans from various development codes. These proposed changes have been removed from the variation to enable further work on the issues to be undertaken.

In response to a submission, the zoning has been changed for block 9, section 12, Hackett from the urban open space zone to the community facility zone. Previously, it had been proposed to retain the existing zoning and to add “place of worship” to allowable uses on the site. The change of zone better reflects the existing community hall and long-term use of the entire site.

A range of other changes were made to the variation following community consultation. These are intended to improve clarity and workability of the provisions. They are minor in nature and do not alter the policy of the Territory Plan. The full details of these changes are included in the approved variation document.

Following public consultation, I referred the draft variation to the Standing Committee on Planning and Urban Renewal for consideration. The committee subsequently advised that it did not intend to conduct an inquiry into DV 352. Given the nature and extent of changes made to draft variation 352 following public consultation, and in view of the standing committee’s decision, I am satisfied that the issues raised by the community have been addressed adequately.

I believe the changes made through variation No 352 support opportunities for development that meet community needs in some areas and improve the functionality and clarity of certain parts of the Territory Plan.

### **Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Elected Body—report Paper and statement by minister**

**MS STEPHEN-SMITH** (Kurrajong—Minister for Community Services and Social Inclusion, Minister for Disability, Children and Youth, Minister for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Affairs, Minister for Multicultural Affairs and Minister for Workplace Safety and Industrial Relations) (4.01): For the information of members, I present the following paper:

ACT Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Elected Body—Report on the outcomes of the ATSIEB Hearings 2016-17—Seventh Report to the ACT Government.

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

Leave granted.

**MS STEPHEN-SMITH:** I am pleased to table the ACT Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Elected Body report on the outcomes of its hearings for 2016-17. I welcome this report, the seventh prepared by the elected body. The public hearings from which this report was generated were the work of the elected body during its previous term, and I thank those members for their advocacy and their contribution to the vibrancy and voice of the community.

The elected body was established in 2008 under the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Elected Body Act to provide Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people

living in the ACT with a democratically elected voice, which I think it is fair to say has not become a second chamber of parliament. The hearings process used by the elected body refers to a series of hearings in which elected body members ask questions of officers from ACT government agencies. The hearings are modelled on estimates processes used by the ACT Legislative Assembly and the commonwealth Senate.

The elected body hearings have proved to be a successful way for the community to make its priorities clear to the government and have its questions answered. They culminate in a body of advice that can be used to inform improvements to service delivery and policy development leading to better outcomes for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people. As quoted by the chair in the report:

There are programs and services by government and non-government providers that show real promise, and make a tangible difference to the everyday lives of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people in the ACT.

Yet it is also clear that there is more to do. I am convinced that in order to achieve better outcomes for vulnerable Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples it is critical that relevant programs, services, policies and reforms are designed and progressed in genuine partnership with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people and their representative bodies and organisations. The elected body public hearings process provides an opportunity to explore better ways in which we can facilitate co-design and learn how to build on successful programs that are delivering tangible outcomes in the community.

At the annual report hearings in November last year, I indicated that I would be writing to the current elected body chair to seek the body's views on the current hearings process along with any changes members would like to see in the future. I have asked the elected body to come back to me with its views following its first public hearings process for this term of the elected body, which is scheduled to take place on 14 and 15 March this year.

The report, which I formally table today, contains 11 recommendations that are far reaching across a range of ACT government services and programs. It is clear from the report's recommendations that the elected body takes its role very seriously. The recommendations clearly echo the body's identified community priorities for 2014-2017, being health; schooling and early education; safe communities; governance and leadership; economic participation; and healthy homes.

The ACT government continues to demonstrate its commitment towards achieving equitable outcomes and opportunities, and to build an empowered, resilient and sustainable future for all Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people in the ACT.

The 2017-18 budget saw investment in more culturally specific services for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Canberrans. In particular, the \$12 million commitment to a new facility for Winnunga Nimmityjah recognises the fundamental importance of Aboriginal community controlled services. Through this funding we

can continue to work with community leaders to build stronger families and healthier lives.

Madam Assistant Speaker, 2016-17 was the first time agencies' annual reports have contained a dedicated section reporting on Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander programs, policies and initiatives. This initiative provides the community with far greater clarity on the measures undertaken by the government to address and overcome disadvantage for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples. It also enables us to tell the stories of success that are often missing from the narrative in Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander affairs.

The ACT government is committed to "closing the gap" in disadvantage between Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people and non-Indigenous people in our city. While many Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Canberrans achieve much better life outcomes than elsewhere in Australia, we are determined to address and measure progress in the significant areas of disadvantage where it persists in the ACT.

The government's response to closing the gap, and indeed to working with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander individuals and communities, is highly aspirational in that it is about pursuing equitable outcomes, not just halving the gap. This, of course, requires a concerted and sustained effort, the harnessing of available resources, and for all of us to remain focused on a long-term, generational commitment, drawing on the considerable expertise that exists within both government and in the ACT community.

I have asked the Office of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Affairs to coordinate a whole-of-government response to the 11 recommendations in the report, and this work is underway. The government response will be prepared and tabled in accordance with the provisions in the ACT Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Elected Body Act 2008.

In looking forward, the government will continue to champion and promote equitable outcomes and opportunities for the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community in the ACT.

As I talked about this morning, 2018 will be a busy year in Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander affairs, with work shortly to commence on the development of a new ACT Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander agreement, building on our achievements, learning lessons from the previous agreement and seeking to address gaps in our services, policies and programs. There is also work with the commonwealth on the refresh of the closing the gap agenda in addition to the continued delivery of services to support Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples living in the ACT.

I look forward to continuing the positive partnership with the elected body to reduce and overcome Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander disadvantage and to celebrate the community's many strengths and successes.

## **Papers**

**Mr Gentleman** presented the following papers:

Financial Management Act, pursuant to section 30E—Half-yearly performance reports—December 2017, for the following departments or agencies:

Chief Minister, Treasury and Economic Development Directorate, dated February 2018.

Community Services Directorate, dated February 2018.

Education Directorate, dated February 2018.

Environment, Planning and Sustainable Development Directorate.

Health Directorate.

Housing and Community Services, dated February 2018.

Justice and Community Safety Directorate—

Attorney-General portfolio, dated February 2018.

Justice, Consumer Affairs and Road Safety, and Minister for Corrections portfolios, dated February 2018.

Police and Emergency Services portfolio, dated February 2018.

Transport Canberra and City Services Directorate, dated February 2018.

Auditor-General's Act—Auditor-General Report No 8/2017—Selected ACT Government agencies' management of public art—Government response.

**Subordinate legislation (including explanatory statements unless otherwise stated)**

Legislation Act, pursuant to section 64—

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Elected Body Act—Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Elected Body Regulation 2017—Subordinate Law SL2017-34 (LR, 29 November 2017).

ACT Teacher Quality Institute Act—ACT Teacher Quality Institute (Fees) Determination 2017 (No 1)—Disallowable Instrument DI2017-292 (LR, 14 December 2017).

Board of Senior Secondary Studies Act—Board of Senior Secondary Studies Appointment 2017 (No 1)—Disallowable Instrument DI2017-280 (LR, 27 November 2017).

Civil Law (Wrongs) Act—

Civil Law (Wrongs) Certified Public Accountants Australia Limited Professional Standards Scheme 2017—Disallowable Instrument DI2017-310 (LR, 21 December 2017).

Civil Law (Wrongs) Law Society of South Australia Professional Standards Scheme Amendment 2017—Disallowable Instrument DI2017-290 (LR, 11 December 2017).

Civil Law (Wrongs) New South Wales Bar Association Scheme Amendment 2018—Disallowable Instrument DI2018-5 (LR, 18 January 2018).

Civil Law (Wrongs) Professional Standards Council Appointment 2018 (No 1)—Disallowable Instrument DI2018-1 (LR, 2 January 2018).

Civil Law (Wrongs) Professional Standards Council Appointment 2018 (No 2)—Disallowable Instrument DI2018-6 (LR, 1 February 2018).

Construction Occupations (Licensing) Act—

Construction Occupations (Licensing) (Fees) Determination 2017 (No 2)—Disallowable Instrument DI2017-283 (LR, 23 November 2017).

Construction Occupations (Licensing) Amendment Regulation 2017 (No 1)—Subordinate Law SL2017-33 (LR, 23 November 2017).

Construction Occupations (Licensing) Interval Metering Transitional Code of Practice 2017—Disallowable Instrument DI2017-287 (LR, 1 December 2017).

Construction Occupations (Licensing) Regulation—Construction Occupations (Licensing) (Mandatory Qualifications) Declaration 2017 (No 1)—Disallowable Instrument DI2017-282 (LR, 23 November 2017).

Co-operatives National Law (ACT) Act—Co-operatives National Law (ACT) (Fees) Determination 2017—Disallowable Instrument DI2017-271 (LR, 15 November 2017).

Court Procedures Act—Court Procedures Amendment Rules 2017 (No 4)—Subordinate Law SL2017-40 (LR, 18 December 2017).

Crimes (Sentence Administration) Act—

Crimes (Sentence Administration) (Sentence Administration Board) Appointment 2017 (No 14)—Disallowable Instrument DI2017-278 (LR, 23 November 2017).

Crimes (Sentence Administration) (Sentence Administration Board) Appointment 2017 (No 15)—Disallowable Instrument DI2017-279 (LR, 23 November 2017).

Cultural Facilities Corporation Act and Financial Management Act—

Cultural Facilities Corporation (Governing Board) Appointment 2017 (No 1)—Disallowable Instrument DI2017-316 (LR, 21 December 2017).

Cultural Facilities Corporation (Governing Board) Appointment 2017 (No 2)—Disallowable Instrument DI2017-317 (LR, 21 December 2017).

Cultural Facilities Corporation (Governing Board) Appointment 2017 (No 3)—Disallowable Instrument DI2017-318 (LR, 21 December 2017).

Dangerous Goods (Road Transport) Act, Road Transport (Driver Licensing) Act, Road Transport (General) Act, Road Transport (Public Passenger Services) Act, Road Transport (Vehicle Registration) Act and Victims of Crime Act—Road Transport (Road Rules) (Consequential Amendments) Regulation 2017 (No 1)—Subordinate Law SL2017-44 (LR, 21 December 2017).

Energy Efficiency (Cost of Living) Improvement Act—

Energy Efficiency (Cost of Living) Improvement (Eligible Activities) Code of Practice 2017—Disallowable Instrument DI2017-308 (LR, 18 December 2017).

Energy Efficiency (Cost of Living) Improvement (Record Keeping and Reporting) Code of Practice 2017, including a regulatory impact statement—Disallowable Instrument DI2017-309 (LR, 18 December 2017).

Energy Efficiency (Cost of Living) Improvement Regulation 2017, including a regulatory impact statement—Subordinate Law SL2017-41 (LR, 18 December 2017).

Family Violence Act—Family Violence Regulation—Subordinate Law SL2017-32 (LR, 24 November 2017).

Firearms Act—Firearms (Use of Noise Suppression Devices) Declaration 2017 (No 4)—Disallowable Instrument DI2017-284 (LR, 29 November 2017).

Food Act—Food (Fees) Determination 2017 (No 1)—Disallowable Instrument DI2017 272 (LR, 20 November 2017).

Freedom of Information Act—

Freedom of Information (Fees) Determination 2017 (No 2)—Disallowable Instrument DI2017-312 (LR, 21 December 2017).

Freedom of Information Regulation 2017—Subordinate Law SL2017-42 (LR, 19 December 2017).

Gene Technology (GM Crop Moratorium) Act—

Gene Technology (GM Crop Moratorium) Advisory Council Appointment 2017 (No 2)—Disallowable Instrument DI2017-298 (LR, 14 December 2017).

Gene Technology (GM Crop Moratorium) Advisory Council Appointment 2017 (No 3)—Disallowable Instrument DI2017-299 (LR, 14 December 2017).

Gene Technology (GM Crop Moratorium) Advisory Council Appointment 2017 (No 4)—Disallowable Instrument DI2017-300 (LR, 14 December 2017).

Gene Technology (GM Crop Moratorium) Advisory Council Appointment 2017 (No 5)—Disallowable Instrument DI2017-301 (LR, 14 December 2017).

Gene Technology (GM Crop Moratorium) Advisory Council Appointment 2017 (No 6)—Disallowable Instrument DI2017-302 (LR, 14 December 2017).

Gene Technology (GM Crop Moratorium) Advisory Council Appointment 2017 (No 7)—Disallowable Instrument DI2017-303 (LR, 14 December 2017).

Gene Technology (GM Crop Moratorium) Advisory Council Appointment 2017 (No 8)—Disallowable Instrument DI2017-304 (LR, 14 December 2017).

Health Records (Privacy and Access) Act—Health Records (Privacy and Access) (Fees) Determination 2017 (No 1)—Disallowable Instrument DI2017-286 (LR, 4 December 2017).

Legal Aid Act—Legal Aid (Review Committee Panels) Appointment 2018—Disallowable Instrument DI2018-2 (LR, 22 January 2018).

Magistrates Court Act—Magistrates Court (Waste Management and Resource Recovery Infringement Notices) Regulation 2017—Subordinate Law SL2017-37 (LR, 7 December 2017).

Medicines, Poisons and Therapeutic Goods Act—Medicines, Poisons and Therapeutic Goods (Fees) Determination 2017 (No 1)—Disallowable Instrument DI2017-273 (LR, 20 November 2017).

Mutual Recognition (Australian Capital Territory) Act—Mutual Recognition (Australian Capital Territory) Regulation 2017—Subordinate Law SL2017-38 (LR, 7 December 2017).

Nature Conservation Act—

Nature Conservation (Native Grassland) Action Plans 2017—Disallowable Instrument DI2017-288 (LR, 7 December 2017).

Nature Conservation (Protected Native Species) Criteria and Processes 2017—Disallowable Instrument DI2017-294 (LR, 7 December 2017).

Official Visitor Act—

Official Visitor (Corrections Management) Appointment 2017 (No 3)—Disallowable Instrument DI2017-276 (LR, 20 November 2017).

Official Visitor (Corrections Management) Appointment 2017 (No 4)—Disallowable Instrument DI2017-293 (LR, 7 December 2017).

Official Visitor (Mental Health) Appointment 2017 (No 1)—Disallowable Instrument DI2017-319 (LR, 22 December 2017).

Prohibited Weapons Act—Prohibited Weapons (Noise Suppression Devices) Declaration 2017 (No 4)—Disallowable Instrument DI2017-285 (LR, 29 November 2017).

Public Health Act—

Public Health (Fees) Determination 2017 (No 1)—Disallowable Instrument DI2017 274 (LR, 20 November 2017).

Public Health Amendment Regulation 2017 (No 1)—Subordinate Law SL2017-36 (LR, 30 November 2017).

Public Place Names Act—

Public Place Names (Acton) Determination 2017—Disallowable Instrument DI2017-295 (LR, 7 December 2017).

Public Place Names (Denman Prospect) Determination 2018—Disallowable Instrument DI2018-7 (LR, 1 February 2018).

Radiation Protection Act—Radiation Protection (Fees) Determination 2017 (No 1)—Disallowable Instrument DI2017-275 (LR, 20 November 2017).

Road Transport (General) Act—

Road Transport (General) Application of Road Transport Legislation Declaration 2017 (No 9)—Disallowable Instrument DI2017-270 (LR, 16 November 2017).

Road Transport (General) Application of Road Transport Legislation Declaration 2017 (No 10)—Disallowable Instrument DI2017-296 (LR, 14 December 2017).

Road Transport (General) Exclusion of Road Transport Legislation (Queen's Baton Relay) Declaration 2018 (No 1)—Disallowable Instrument DI2018-4 (LR, 22 January 2018).

Road Transport (General) Exclusion of Road Transport Legislation (Summernats) Declaration 2017 (No 1)—Disallowable Instrument DI2017-314 (LR, 21 December 2017).

Road Transport (Public Passenger Services) Act—Road Transport (Public Passenger Services) Regular Route Services Maximum Fares Determination 2017—Disallowable Instrument DI2017-311 (LR, 21 December 2017).

Road Transport (Safety and Traffic Management) Act—

Road Transport (Road Rules) Regulation 2017—Subordinate Law SL2017-43 (LR, 21 December 2017).

Road Transport (Safety and Traffic Management) Regulation 2017—Subordinate Law SL2017-45 (LR, 21 December 2017).

Taxation Administration Act—

Taxation Administration (Amounts Payable—Ambulance Levy) Determination 2017 (No 1)—Disallowable Instrument DI2017-315 (LR, 21 December 2017).

Taxation Administration (Amounts Payable—Loose-fill Asbestos Insulation Eradication Buyback Concession Scheme) Determination 2017 (No 2)—Disallowable Instrument DI2017-289 (LR, 15 December 2017).

Taxation Administration (Amounts Payable—Loose-fill Asbestos Insulation Eradication Buyback Concession Scheme—Eligible Impacted Properties) Determination 2017 (No 2)—Disallowable Instrument DI2017-305 (LR, 15 December 2017).

Trans-Tasman Mutual Recognition Act—Trans-Tasman Mutual Recognition Regulation 2017—Subordinate Law SL2017-39 (LR, 7 December 2017).

Tree Protection Act—Tree Protection (Advisory Panel) Appointment 2017 (No 1)—Disallowable Instrument DI2017-297 (LR, 14 December 2017).

University of Canberra Act—

University of Canberra (Academic Progress) Statute 2017—Disallowable Instrument DI2017-306 (LR, 18 December 2017).

University of Canberra (Medical Leave) Statute 2017—Disallowable Instrument DI2017-307 (LR, 18 December 2017).

University of Canberra Council Appointment 2018 (No 1)—Disallowable Instrument DI2018-3 (LR, 22 January 2018).

Utilities Act—

Utilities (Electricity Network Boundary Code) Revocation 2017—Disallowable Instrument DI2017-277 (LR, 22 November 2017).

Utilities (Water and Sewerage Capital Contribution Code) Approval 2017—Disallowable Instrument DI2017-291 (LR, 14 December 2017).

Utilities (Technical Regulation) Act—Utilities (Technical Regulation) (Electricity Network Boundary Code) Approval 2017—Disallowable Instrument DI2017-281 (LR, 23 November 2017).

Veterinary Surgeons Act—Veterinary Surgeons (Acting Member) Appointment 2017 (No 1)—Disallowable Instrument DI2017-313 (LR, 21 December 2017).

**Petition—Out of order**

Petition which does not conform with the standing orders—Strata residences—Methodology for determining rates and land tax—Ms J Burch (4 signatures).

**Government priorities 2018**  
**Ministerial statement**

**MR BARR** (Kurrajong—Chief Minister, Treasurer, Minister for Economic Development and Minister for Tourism and Major Events) (4.09): I am pleased to outline the government's policy priorities for 2018. Since the 2016 election, we have of course been getting on with the jobs that Canberrans elected us to do. Across our priorities of expanding access to public health services, providing better schools and facilities for our students, a transport system that caters for a growing city, better and tidier suburbs and a strong job-creating economy, we are focused on making the Canberra we love even better.

This, of course, will continue in 2018. The ACT government will focus on strengthening our city and supporting our community. I think it is fair to say that Canberrans are the happiest, healthiest, longest living and best educated Australians. This city is the best place in the world to live. In 2018 Canberra has been recognised as one of the best places in the world to visit.

Of course, this did not happen by accident and we cannot simply maintain it through good luck. We know we need to continue to diversify our territory economy and do more to support job creation for Canberrans from all backgrounds.

Our strategy to strengthen and support sectors such as higher education, research, professional services and technological innovation is working. We now have more jobs in the private sector. We have Australia's lowest unemployment rate and, as I have mentioned more than once today, more than 10,000 new jobs were created in the territory last year.

Our city's population is growing because people are finding secure, well-paid jobs here. They can move with their family and they can settle here. This government is ensuring that local companies that do the right thing by their employees are not disadvantaged in bidding for government work. That is why this year we will introduce a secure local jobs package. Included in that package will be a code that requires the highest ethical and labour standards.

We are now a city of 410,000 people and it is important that we plan now for our population to reach half a million over the next decade or so. We are taking important decisions now on how to make our city even stronger, to make our city more livable and to make it an even more enjoyable place.

We are building the infrastructure and expanding the services needed to make a growing Canberra even better. We are rising to the challenges created by Canberra's growth in our city's second century, but it is important that we protect the fundamental elements of Canberra that people love: our lifestyle, our natural environment, our inclusiveness and, I think critically, our progressive approach to social issues.

Canberrans are among Australia's most active, we have more patent applications per capita than any other city, and our residents volunteer their time more than those in any other Australian city. In summary, I think we are proud to be Canberrans and we are working hard to make it better for all residents.

Through 2018 the ACT government will continue to promote Canberra to the world. As I have outlined, we will continue to work to secure more international flights and better and cheaper connections, both aviation and land transport, to other Australian cities. With *Lonely Planet* recognising that Canberra is in the top three cities to visit in the world in 2018, now is a very significant opportunity for us to harness this global exposure.

The ACT government is actively repositioning Canberra as an emerging global city, whilst maintaining a focus on implementing nation-leading progressive policies. As I have mentioned, our economy is performing very strongly. Last year employment grew in the territory by 4.6 per cent. I think that a 4.6 per cent growth rate is worth mentioning again in the context of what has been the 10-year average growth rate of 1.4 per cent. So there are now more Canberrans working than ever before; 10,000 new jobs created in a single year is the strongest year of job creation in more than a decade.

The jobs are coming in sectors that fit our strengths as a city: in education and training, in health care, in the energy sector and in information and communication technology. Pleasingly, 80 per cent of these positions were full-time. I am old enough to remember, Madam Assistant Speaker, that it was not that long ago young people simply had to leave Canberra as soon as they could to further their careers. In fact, most of the people I went to school with had to do that. Fortunately, those times have now gone.

From Macgregor to Manuka, from Casey to Calwell, young people are able to forge their own careers in this city, to become leaders in their field of work, right here in Canberra. Whether that is in creative industries, in hospitality, in research and development or within our thriving care sectors, they are staying here because Canberra has the opportunities, but importantly also the lifestyle that they desire. There is no doubt that this youthful positivity is spreading right across our city.

The government has achieved these outcomes whilst balancing the territory budget, continuing to invest in transport and social services, and implementing a long-overdue progressive taxation reform agenda at the state and territory level to ensure a fairer distribution of the tax contribution.

The budget update that I have delivered shows an improved bottom line across the all future years. As I have mentioned, we have halved the deficit forecast for the current fiscal year, with a balanced budget forecast from 2018-19 and strengthening surpluses in the years beyond.

This is a result that we have been working towards since 2014—returning the budget to balance whilst at the same time continuing to make the major infrastructure investments our city needs. We do this because Canberra is a growing city. We invest more and we invest in better services and infrastructure to ensure that the city keeps on getting better for everyone who lives here.

Maintenance of our core and social infrastructure is incredibly important. Members in this place are rightly focused on investment in roads, in parks and playgrounds, and in some of the bigger infrastructure projects that the government is responsible for. Over the course of 2018, Canberrans will see further improvements in our municipal services, from a rollout of green bins that is of such great interest to those opposite, to help with the maintenance of our own yards, to the more frequent mowing of parks and the cleaning of public spaces.

Through the budget update, we are delivering more elective surgeries, more paramedics and more ambulances. There is more investment in our courts and community safety and, of course, better local schools. Importantly, we retain our focus on the delivery of our election commitments, including providing every student in our public high schools with a high-quality device to enhance their learning, no matter the financial circumstances of their family.

Equality of educational opportunity is a core value for my party and for this government. I want to take this opportunity to congratulate the Deputy Chief Minister for making this important reform a reality for thousands of students this year. Already I am pleased to note that we are seeing other states and territories following our lead. Reforms such as this build on our investments through the 2017-18 budget to deliver on our election commitments for a better Canberra.

The government will always lead the fight for a fairer and more equitable Canberra and a fairer and more equitable Australia. From standing up for equitable and life-changing services through to being the first jurisdiction to fully roll out the national disability insurance scheme, to leading the way on marriage equality, the ACT has a track record of promoting inclusion and fairness locally and nationally to achieve changes that matter for Canberrans and for Australians.

This year I am chair of both the Council for the Australian Federation and the Council of Capital City Lord Mayors. This offers an unparalleled opportunity to strengthen our city's voice on issues of national importance at both state and local government levels and to draw on Canberra's socially progressive values to deliver meaningful change across this city and across the country.

During 2018 I will use these roles to work with supportive federal MPs and senators from all political parties, along with the Northern Territory Chief Minister Michael Gunner, to advocate for the repeal of the Andrews bill that deprives Australian

territories of our democratic right to make decisions about end of life choices. Canberra is a mature, educated and engaged community. We are ready and more than capable of having a mature discussion about voluntary assisted dying in this jurisdiction. I welcome the commencement of work by the Assembly select committee on this fundamental issue.

Madam Assistant Speaker, no matter your personal views—I acknowledge that people will have very different views—everyone should surely support the right of Australia’s territories to make our own laws. This barrier is particularly absurd, given that the state of Victoria has now legislated in this area. I look forward to the support of members across the Assembly on the principle of standing up for the democratic rights of the people we represent.

In 2018 the government and each of its members will continue to deliver for Canberrans on the issues that matter to them. We are going to further increase our use of online engagement to reach more Canberrans. We will continue to cut stamp duty and to increase housing supply to put home ownership within the reach of more young Canberrans and particularly those on low and middle incomes. First and foremost, housing is about shelter and security. So we will continue our efforts both locally and through pursuing national reforms to see more Canberrans owning their own homes, maintaining stable rental tenancies, and ensuring that those experiencing the risk of homelessness are supported into secure accommodation.

This is demonstrated practically by our work to design and commence construction of Common Ground 2 in the Dickson precinct over the coming 18 months. We will show how better designed and smarter cities can increase productivity, social inclusion and grow more good jobs. We will improve transport links with other Australian cities, expand on our expertise in renewable energy, and continue our investment in the digital innovation that Canberrans so enthusiastically embrace.

Madam Assistant Speaker, to ensure that Canberra continues to be a modern and confident city, the government will bring forward important pieces of legislation this year. Our legislative priorities impact on Canberra’s families and how they move around the city. They safeguard our most vulnerable and improve the efficiency of government. During this sitting period we are protecting Canberra’s most vulnerable by tightening firearms legislation, improving the efficiency of the court system and providing new mechanisms to support urban renewal and adaptive re-use of ageing buildings.

The Attorney-General will introduce legislation to establish a drug and alcohol court, as well as addressing recommendations from the Royal Commission into Institutional Responses to Child Sexual Abuse. We will continue to protect children and young people through amendments to further implement the step up for our kids strategy, whilst we establish a legislative mechanism for reviews into family violence deaths.

Meanwhile, as we reform Canberra’s public transport sector, the government will introduce a framework for the operation of light rail, including ticketing and enforcement powers. Before the end of the year, we also intend to legislate reforms to Canberra’s compulsory third party insurance scheme that are the recommendations of

this city's first citizens jury. The insight we gain in working with the citizens jury will also inform our efforts through this year and beyond to engage more directly with the Canberra community.

The government's work over the next 12 months is focused on what Canberrans value most and what they want from their city. There is no doubt that great cities work when they deliver essential services, are sustainable but, importantly, are open to new ideas. Canberra is a positive, progressive city. It is a city that is making things happen, and I am pleased that more and more people are recognising what is on offer here. Our government continues to focus on delivering on our commitments to build a better Canberra. During 2018 we be focused on delivering today but also on building for tomorrow. I present the following paper:

Government priorities 2018—Ministerial statement, 13 February 2018.

I move:

That the Assembly take note of the paper.

Question resolved in the affirmative.

## **Ministerial delegation to New Zealand Ministerial statement**

**MR BARR** (Kurrajong—Chief Minister, Treasurer, Minister for Economic Development and Minister for Tourism and Major Events) (4.25): It gives me great pleasure to report to the Assembly on my visit to our sister city Wellington and to Auckland from 19 to 22 November last year. The signing of the sister city agreement between Canberra and Wellington in July of 2016 formalised our commitment to work together to continue to grow both our city economies, support our respective business communities and further enhance the cultural and social fabric of two cool little capitals, Wellington and Canberra.

The commitment includes programs that seek to facilitate enhanced business partnerships, tourism promotion, education and cultural exchange, research and knowledge sharing. The sister city agreement also outlines our intent to collaborate in areas such as community services, affordable housing, sustainable transport solutions and mutual exchange regarding renewable and sustainable energy supply, and programs which support opportunities for First Peoples and Indigenous exchange.

A lot of activities have been undertaken and progress made since the signing of the sister city agreement back in 2016. Some early achievements in the first 12 months of the relationship include: an MOU signed between our own innovation network and the Wellington Regional Economic Development Agency; an MOU signed between the Canberra Business Chamber and the Wellington Chamber of Commerce; and an MOU signed between the Zealandia nature reserve and our own Mulligans Flat Woodland Sanctuary.

Constant cultivation is, of course, essential for any sister city relationship to continue to flourish. So apart from celebrating the second Canberra Week in Wellington, the New Zealand mission aimed to further strengthen the relationship with the Wellington City government. The development of the New Zealand mission program was led by the Commissioner for International Engagement, with specific elements of art, business and tourism being jointly coordinated across agencies within Enterprise Canberra. The element of Indigenous affairs was coordinated by the office for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander affairs, with assistance from the commissioner.

The program offered a series of excellent networking and collaboration opportunities for ACT businesses as well as government representatives at a range of key events. I will report on the visit under the following streams: city-to-city relations; creative industries; business and innovation exchange; visitor economy; and First Peoples and Indigenous cultural exchanges.

Firstly on city relations, I met with the Mayor of Wellington City, Mr Justin Lester, to discuss the direction of future collaboration opportunities between the two cities, in particular, a 12-month activity plan for the sister city relationship. I also had the opportunity to meet, congratulate and speak with the new New Zealand Prime Minister, Ms Jacinda Ardern, whilst attending a function hosted by the Chairman of Air New Zealand. I met with the New Zealand minister for tourism, Mr Kelvin Davis, to discuss our tourism agenda including further direct flight opportunities between Auckland and Canberra, as well as with the New Zealand minister for finance and Wellington Central MP, Mr Grant Robertson, to discuss the Canberra-Wellington relationship, aviation and government procurement.

The creative industries are taking a much stronger role in our city's life, and there is no doubt this is making Canberra a better place. So it was fantastic to witness the signing of an MOU between Screen Canberra and Screen Wellington to develop mutually beneficial working relationships, programs, projects and activities in the screen sector. The MOU will help develop on-screen and post-production talent, enhance working relationships between the creative sectors of our two capitals, and promote Canberra as an ideal location for both film and television projects. Increasing opportunities for on-screen and off-screen talent is at the heart of the MOU, with talent development and exchange an integral part of the agreement.

I am sure members would be aware of the award-winning crews, facilities and talents from Wellington which have produced, amongst other films, *The Hobbit*, *Avatar*, and *The Lord of The Rings* trilogy, amongst many blockbusters. So this will help Canberra's creative sector to flourish.

*Mr Hanson interjecting—*

**MADAM ASSISTANT SPEAKER** (Ms Lee): Mr Hanson, why does it get noisy when you come in? Chief Minister, please continue.

**MR BARR:** That is a question we all ask, Madam Assistant Speaker, the answer to which will remain a mystery.

**MADAM ASSISTANT SPEAKER:** I think that is for the best.

**MR BARR:** Thank you, Madam Assistant Speaker, for bringing me back to the script. Through Screen Canberra the recent TV series *The Code*, *Rake* and *Secret City* have all been filmed in Canberra, while feature films such as *Joe Cinque's Consolation*, *Rip Tide* and *Galore* have all benefited from support both from the ACT government through Screen Canberra and the work we have been undertaking. Innovation in the screen sector in both Canberra and Wellington will seek to put our combined industries at the heart of a growing international market, while both entities will develop content through co-production opportunities.

There is no doubt our city's natural setting offers a vast array of locations for directors, and this MOU will help strengthen mutual international strategic relationships and further enhance our city's brand overseas. There is a very practical and tangible example of the Canberra-Wellington relationship and evidence of our growing business and cultural ties.

In the area of business and innovation change, this year's Canberra Week in Wellington focused on specific activities to encourage both cities' business communities to come together for greater collaboration and to foster innovation exchange. I mentioned earlier that the innovation network and the Wellington Regional Economic Development Agency have an MOU signed in 2016, and we had the pleasure of activating the MOU during this visit.

The business chamber locally has partnered with the territory government and the Wellington Chamber of Commerce to offer a business program, including market briefings and hosting a roundtable discussion for businesses under the pre-existing capacity and capability growth program for ACT exports businesses agreement. So seven ACT businesses travelled in the delegation and participated in the business programs. The delegation was welcomed by our friends at the Australian High Commission, at a networking function, and the event provided another opportunity for Canberra businesses to build stronger ties with the Wellington business community and the New Zealand government.

In the visitor economy, visitors to Canberra contributed \$1.9 billion to the territory economy in the 2016-17 fiscal year. The ACT government will continue to support the industry as we work towards our goal of growing that visitor contribution to \$2.5 billion by 2020. New Zealand is a key tourism market for Canberra and was the fourth largest inbound market for visitors. In 2016-17 more than 15,000 New Zealanders visited Canberra and contributed over \$15 million in visitor expenditure. These numbers are significant and we want to continue their growth.

I am sure, Madam Deputy Speaker, you and other members are aware that, sadly, in recent weeks Singapore Airlines announced that it will not be servicing the Canberra-Wellington part of its capital express. Offsetting that, of course, is the increase in frequency from four flights a week to daily between Singapore and Canberra. This daily service to Singapore is great news, undoubtedly, but it does come with a level of compromise. The seven-day-a-week service does not allow the

connection with Wellington to remain and the direct services to Wellington will cease on 30 April this year.

I note that Singapore Airlines had been clear that the performance of the Wellington route was not the issue, and the ACT government has been in active communication with the Wellington mayor's office since the Singapore Airlines announcement. We pledge our firm commitment to work with Wellington to pursue opportunities for alternative airlines to pick up this route, perhaps in a slightly smaller aircraft that might be better suited to going across the ditch. I will keep members posted on the latest developments in our negotiations with alternative airlines.

I will also continue to advocate for opportunities around other aviation links between Canberra and New Zealand. For example, a Canberra-Auckland direct service with onward connections to international flights from Auckland would be very strongly supported by both leisure and business commuters. Accordingly in this context, the delegation, with the support of Mr Stephen Byron, the managing director of the Canberra Airport Group, we met with senior executives from Air New Zealand and the Auckland Airport corporation to raise the prospect of direct flights between Canberra and Auckland. Back in Wellington on the same evening I also had the opportunity to meet the Chairman and CEO of Air New Zealand at the chairman's function.

In the area of First Peoples and Indigenous cultural engagement, as part of the Wellington-Canberra sister city agreement both governments have agreed to work together on issues concerning the Indigenous citizens of both cities. During a recent visit to Canberra the deputy mayor of Wellington discussed the establishment of close ties between Indigenous communities of both cities, and the New Zealand mission provided the opportunity to commence a dialogue with Wellington officials to explore options for connecting both communities.

The visit offered an opportunity to connect at a cultural level between the government and the Wellington City Council, particularly to explore an Indigenous people's program focusing on arts, communities, major events and meaningful exchanges. Some specific matters being considered included everything from a penpal program for high school students, attendance at leadership programs and the World Indigenous Business Forum, exchanges to attend NAIDOC and, of course, Maori new year, arts exchanges, shared storytelling and a visit to Canberra. Such collaboration fosters and enhances the key focus area of cultural identity articulated in the ACT Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander agreement, which aims to better the quality of life for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people here in the ACT.

This developing partnership is also a practical example of reconciliation in action. Given that the ACT is the first Australian jurisdiction to gazette a Reconciliation Day public holiday, it is also a great opportunity to showcase this major event beyond the boundaries of our country and to give reconciliation a worldwide context.

The primary objective of this mission was to grow and enrich the sister city relationship with Wellington, and the annual Canberra Week in Wellington provides a platform to fulfil this commitment. It commits both cities to a series of activities to

promote opportunities to work together, to seek ways to continue to grow our respective economies, support our respective business communities and continue to enhance the cultural and social fabric of the two cities.

The mission also helped to further the interests of the ACT government and our ACT tourism sector in the aviation area with the meetings held with Air New Zealand and the Auckland Airport corporation. As with the rerouting of the Singapore Airlines Wellington service, I am confident both Canberra and Wellington will work successfully to turn this challenge into an opportunity and to emerge with an even stronger bond.

Finally, I acknowledge the support provided to the New Zealand mission by the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade, Austrade, the Canberra Business Chamber, the CBR Innovation Network, Screen Canberra and the Canberra Airport Group, particularly through its managing director, Mr Stephen Byron.

I present a copy of the statement:

New Zealand Mission—November 2017—Ministerial statement, 13 February 2018.

I move:

That the Assembly take note of the paper.

Question resolved in the affirmative.

## **Gender in legislation and policy**

### **Discussion of matter of public importance**

**MADAM DEPUTY SPEAKER:** Madam Speaker has received letters from Ms Cheyne, Ms Cody, Mr Coe, Mrs Dunne, Mrs Jones, Mrs Kikkert, Ms Le Couteur, Ms Lee, Ms Orr, Mr Parton, Mr Pettersson, Mr Steel and Mr Wall proposing that matters of public importance be submitted to the Assembly for discussion. In accordance with standing order 79, Madam Speaker has determined that the matter proposed by Ms Le Couteur be submitted to the Assembly, namely:

The importance of considering gender when developing legislation and policy.

**MS LE COUTEUR (Murrumbidgee) (4.39):** Today we are discussing the importance of considering gender when developing policy and legislation. Noting of course that the parliamentary agreement specifies that disability and gender impact analysis will be undertaken as part of the triple bottom line assessment process, I just want to highlight why this is important.

A gender perspective is important for the simple reason that gender in all its forms shapes our interactions in society. Sometimes the impact of policy and legislation is gender neutral but more often than not it is not if we take time to look. Gender is one of the most fundamental aspects of a person's personal and social identity. Women

are not a minority or a special needs group. We make up more than half the population, and our gender should be a primary consideration in public policy.

We can and should also consider the impacts from an Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander cultural background of intersectional disadvantage such as being a woman, a woman with a disability, a lesbian or trans woman, a woman with non-Christian religious beliefs, a woman experiencing some other kind of marginalisation or disadvantage. Often there are multiple layers to a woman's identity which can in many instances compound the inequity which is being faced by being female.

Let us look at some basic facts. There is still a gender pay gap in Australia and the ACT. While we do better here than in most of the nation, that gap has widened by 1.5 per cent in the past year. The federal government's workplace gender equity agency showed that the ACT's pay gap stood at 12.4 per cent in May 2017, up from 10.9 per cent a year earlier. What this means is that, on average, for every hundred dollars a male earns in Canberra, a female earns only \$87.6. Women will have less disposable income and then in the fullness of time less superannuation in their retirement years. This gap exists partly because women are more often in part-time employment or employed in traditionally female industries such as child care, aged care, disability support and community services, which, being traditionally female, are traditionally low paid.

Even in the Australian public service the gender pay gap exists. The 2016-17 *Australian Public Service Remuneration* report considered this gap for the first time, finding across the entire workforce that the average base salary for women was \$84,104, well below the \$92,000 base salary for men. The 2016-17 *State of the service* report for the ACT also showed a gender pay gap of 3.1 per cent, with women on average earning \$89,000 compared to men on \$92,000. While we do have a higher proportion of women earning over \$120,000 and 44.7 per cent of women in senior executive positions, there is still a way to go. Nationally, women are significantly under-represented on company boards and in senior management roles and the proportion of women on company boards is stuck at just under 25 per cent while only 38 per cent of managers are women.

But considering this gender gap goes beyond wages and income, we should look at services and use. Who uses the various modes of transport? Who uses social housing and homelessness services? And, importantly, who is benefiting from various policy decisions? For example, we know that women bear a disproportionate burden of experiencing family violence. Men are more than twice as likely as women to report feeling safe walking alone at night: 72 per cent of men compared to 34 per cent of women. More men with a disability access services and support than women with a disability, despite the fact there are more women with disabilities.

Almost 90 per cent of single-head households in the ACT are headed by females, and nationally and locally more women are clients of homelessness services than men. Females in the ACT were 57 per cent of all the clients supported by homelessness services in 2016-17.

But I want to emphasise that considering gender does not always mean considering women. We know that men are more likely to complete suicide, despite the fact that just as many women attempt it. We know that more boys than girls are diagnosed with ADHD or being on the autism spectrum. Examining gender is not just about women and girls, it is also about men and boys and it is also about those who identify as somewhere in between.

Understanding these gender differences is important to governments and policy makers alike. For example, women use transport differently from men. Because women have a more varied pattern of movement around, they are the ones who are primarily dropping off the kids to school, looking after elderly parents, attending medical appointments with family members or buying groceries, whereas men more often commute in predictable patterns to and from work each day.

Simply widening footpaths, providing additional lighting at bus and light rail stops and installing ramps for prams can make public transport and moving around the city a lot more accessible. Considering gender means considering inclusion. If adjustments are made on gendered needs, then fewer people are excluded from participation in community life.

Research in Brisbane shows that 81 per cent of cyclists are men, with similar statistics in Melbourne. Nationally, only 23 per cent of commuting cyclists are women. When we design bike paths we must ensure that they are adequately lit, they do not wind through dark parks where there are few people. We must make sure they are safe, particularly for women, but of course, if they are going to be safe for women, they will be safe for all of us.

Use of women's safety audits, such as I understand is now being done with the Multicultural Festival, can influence the design of an event, taking into account the need for prams, quiet spaces or security. Because this is safe and accessible for women it will mean it is safe and accessible for people with a disability, older people or very young people.

When it comes to urban planning, Vienna provides a shining example. There, city administrators create laws, rules and regulations that benefit men and women equally. They have adopted gender mainstreaming approaches to education and healthcare policy, but nowhere has had more impact than the field of urban planning.

Before projects begin they collect data to determine how different groups of people use public space. They define the needs and interests of the people using public space, and the planning is done to suit those needs. For example, they set about designing and building housing that would make life easier for women. Time-use surveys showed that women spent more time on household chores and child care than men, so they built a series of apartment buildings surrounded by courtyards with circular grassy areas, allowing parents and kids to spend time outside without having to go far from home. The complex has an on-site kindergarten, pharmacy and doctor's clinic and is in close proximity to public transport to make running errands and getting to and from school easier.

This project's success rests on first defining the needs of the people using the space, then looking at solutions, instead of the usual way around where you look at the technical solution first and then that determines the end result. And because Vienna has been so good it has been taken as part of the project for the United Nations' human settlements program in its registry of best practices to improve living environments. This is just a small example of how using a gender lens or considering gender can make a difference. It would take much more than my speech today to touch on all the areas where it can be applied.

The point is that we need to actively seek out the views of women. There has been much research to suggest that women are less heard and less respected for their views. It is changing but we are still not there. We have to keep up the dialogue and make deliberate attempts to create awareness of why the system needs to change because it disadvantages us as women. And all our community, regardless of gender, will be improved and will benefit by this.

We have seen lots of examples of this, for instance at meetings. All too often a woman can make a suggestion, it gets nowhere, but if a man makes the same suggestion everyone hears him. In particular, a joint study by Brigham Young University and Princeton shows that, at a mixed table, men will dominate the conversation, taking up 75 per cent of the conversation, and leave just 25 per cent of the talking to women.

In Canada the federal budget has a chapter 5, which is a gender-based analysis, and in Justin Trudeau's words, "This means that any initiative we put forward looks at whether it is positive or negative for women."

I would just like to say that I hope that all the women in the Assembly, and in fact all the men in the Assembly, regardless of their political alliances, will support attempts to ensure that gender differences are considered in policy and legislative reforms.

**MS LAWDER** (Brindabella) (4.49): I am pleased to talk on this issue today. It is an issue that affects not just us in the Assembly but many, many of our constituents. This morning we heard the Minister for Women's ministerial statement about the work being done and that remains to be done to allow women to aspire to equality.

In our case, on our side, we focus particularly on equality of opportunity, and it would be remiss of me not to point out at this point that we are now the first Liberal party room in Australia with a majority of women members. We have achieved this together through encouraging women, removing any disadvantages those women may face in getting preselected and elected. Our party members, our women's council and our MLAs have all worked together to encourage equality and opportunity for women, and to see many of these elected is now a fantastic result for us.

Of course, this has all been achieved without any heavy-handed or patronising approaches to force party members to fill targets. It is a credit to every Liberal Party member. What we find now is that we are reflecting the views of our community, as we always have, here on merit, whether it is through gender balance, diversity of background, culture, religion et cetera.

We talk a lot about gender in this place, and there is a need for a compassionate and fair approach in response to this. It is important to pass, if you like, the gender lens across many areas of government policy and legislation, because we know, for example, from the 2015-16 year, that in the ACT there were 240 victims of violence per 100,000 persons, which was an increase of 33 per cent. In the ACT women were three times more likely to suffer violence at the hands of an intimate partner than men, according to a report in the *Canberra Times* of June 2017.

Compared with their peers, women with disability experience significantly higher levels of all forms of violence and they are subjected to violence by a greater number of perpetrators. Women with disability are 40 per cent more likely to be a victim of domestic violence than women without disability. Twenty per cent of women with disability report a history of unwanted sex, compared to 8.2 per cent of women without disability. More than a quarter of rape cases reported by females in Australia are perpetrated against women with disability, and 90 per cent of Australian women with an intellectual disability have been subjected to sexual abuse, with more than two-thirds having been sexually abused before they turned 18 years of age. This is from a fact sheet prepared by Women with Disabilities Australia about violence against women with disabilities.

That is just one example, to start with, of where women bear a disproportionate brunt of instances of violence in our community. Violence is not appropriate in any situation, but for it to be perpetrated against women with disability seems even worse, for some reason.

Another area where it is important to pass a gender lens over policy and legislation is housing and homelessness. We know that 34 per cent of single women over the age of 60 live in permanent income poverty, and by the age of 65 women retire with about one-third of the superannuation that men accumulate. A problem that has been facing us for centuries is that women are generally lower paid, if they are paid at all, for their labour; they have fewer assets and they have less superannuation in more modern times. And the dire financial situation of older women is well documented and well established.

Financial and economic insecurity, combined with a lack of affordable housing, something we hear about a lot here in the ACT, increases the housing risks for older single women. As they are teetering on the brink of this financial insecurity and this structural vulnerability, another event in their life such as a relationship breakdown, job loss, change in their health circumstances or the death of a partner can be all it takes for an older single woman to become homeless. Once they become homeless there are very few exits for them from that predicament. According to the Brotherhood of St Laurence, one of the most disadvantaged demographic profiles for a person to have is to be old, single, poor, female and in private rental accommodation.

Of course, it is not only about older women. We have heard of studies at universities in relation to young women. For example, the 2017 national report on sexual assault and sexual harassment at Australian universities found that 21 per cent of students were sexually harassed in a university setting in 2016. Women are three times more

likely than men to have been sexually assaulted in a university setting. And the University of Canberra had five assaults on campus in 2015 and 2016. The ANU had 52 sexual assaults in 2015 and 2016.

We know from community surveys here in the ACT, Australia and worldwide the way women feel about safety in public places, especially at night. For example, the national survey of community satisfaction with policing revealed that 62.5 per cent of women do not feel safe while alone, walking or jogging in their neighbourhood during the night. This is pretty worrying and we need to get the government to address what practical steps can be taken to address this, whether it is better street lighting, CCTV, addressing blind spots, police presence, derelict buildings et cetera.

This is something that I know I have raised with the minister in the past. For example, in a question on notice in September last year, I think, I asked the Minister for Transport and City Services about lighting behind the CIT in Tuggeranong, a newly opened CIT in Tuggeranong. I had reports from locals as well as from the Tuggeranong Community Council about their fears about a lack of additional lighting in the car park behind that building. This was not long after the report about sexual assault at universities had come out. This is an area where there is still much to do.

It is important to look at many, many issues from the perspective of gender. And I know my colleague Mrs Jones has put a lot of focus on this in her work. She has looked at the lack of accommodation and work programs for women in the AMC. She has forced the government to address the topic of breastfeeding rooms in public sector workplaces. She has forced the government to look at the needs of women firefighters with respect to having portaloos onsite and has also talked about the small number of women who are employed in the fire brigade.

There are many things that are yet to be done. It is sometimes difficult to meet the needs of everyone. There is the emerging politics or agenda of gender which is rising in popularity and there is a need, absolutely, for a compassionate and fair response for people dealing with diverse gender identity.

One of the things that I have thought about quite a bit is the case of a female AFL player who sought to play in the women's league and was not given permission. It is a really interesting case—the many pros and cons from those people involved in women's football, those who are keen followers of the sport as well as various other stakeholders. It is not an easy topic, but it is something that we all need to think about and address in a compassionate and logical way. It seems sometimes that compassion and logic do not always go hand in hand.

But the struggle of centuries, which has been so important for women and men, over the economic, social and personal wellbeing of women is something that I think we here in this place all agree on and we have all been trying to work to progress that wellbeing for everyone—men, women and people of diverse gender.

**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) (4.59): I am very happy to have the opportunity to address this important issue in the Assembly this afternoon. As I have said on a number of occasions, it is up to each of us. If we are not consciously taking steps forward to strive for equality in our community, the impacts on women, transsexual, intersex and gender diverse people in particular can be significant. These groups of people can be overlooked during the making of policy, and subsequently this can lead to backward steps for many. Clearly, this is not the outcome that we are seeking. In fighting for equality, the government has achieved a great deal already, but if we are honest, we know, each of us knows, that there is still much work to be done.

Historically, legal regulation in Australia and other Western nations has operated on the premise that all people are, categorically, either male or female. Given the realities of human biology and identities, the most productive framework for use by the ACT legislature and ACT policymakers is one that acknowledges the continuums of biological sex and of gender identity, thus accurately reflecting the reality of the human condition. The ACT government's recognition of LGBTIQ people comes in many forms and includes consideration of sex and gender diversity, looking beyond the binary when developing legislation and policy. This is critical to ensuring the legal recognition of, and protection for, gender diverse Canberrans.

The ACT government has made a number of legislative changes that aim to remove discrimination from our legislative framework and improve legal recognition of, and protection for, gender diverse Canberrans. This includes introducing recognised details certificates, which set out personal information, including gender, and allow for intersex, transgender and gender diverse people who are residing in the ACT, who were not born here, to have their gender identity officially recognised in the same way as people who are born here in the ACT; giving parents greater choice as to how they are referenced on their child's birth certificate; providing flexibility in documenting name changes; and allowing for proof of identity cards to assist people who do not have other forms of identity and where a proof of age card is not appropriate.

The ACT government's continued aim is to achieve, so far as possible, equal legal status for lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender and intersex people by eliminating discriminatory references in ACT legislation. Members will recall that the ACT government recently established the office of LGBTIQ affairs and the LGBTIQ ministerial advisory council. This group provides direct advice to the Chief Minister, and is made up of diverse Canberrans who assist the government in developing and implementing policies that support the LGBTIQ community and improve the lives of people who identify as LGBTIQ and promote an inclusive Canberra.

As Minister for Women, I have made a very vocal commitment to valuing and investing in women and girls, and promoting and safeguarding the freedoms and rights necessary for them to participate in all areas of Canberra life. Considering gender when developing legislation and policy is key to addressing gender inequality and promoting the needs of women and girls in the ACT.

The government's triple bottom line assessments have been a standing requirement for preparing most types of cabinet submissions, including budget submissions, since 2013. This process is designed to identify and integrate social, environmental and

economic factors into the policy development cycle and ensures that these decisions are informed by assessments of all potential impacts, including those impacts on women.

Despite this focus and the significant improvements to the status of women in the ACT, it is clear that gender inequality persists. Through the ACT women's plan for 2016-26, the ACT government is driving targeted outcomes to support women and girls in our community. The first action plan for 2017-19 was launched in March last year, following extensive consultation with all directorates, the community sector and the Ministerial Advisory Council on Women, and promotes gender equity, wellbeing and the physical and mental health of women and girls. It is the first part of the three action plans which will be developed from the ACT women's plan and is a key driver for a specific focus on gender equity and for improving the way that we develop and inform policy and legislation to better support the needs of girls and women.

Included as an action in the first plan is to research and develop appropriate gender impact statements for use across all directorates. This will be complemented by an action to review past training modules on gender impact statements and develop recommendations for whole-of-government implementation. In addition, the government will be collecting and analysing gender disaggregated data for ACT government services, programs and events, including analysis of the types of programs and events that women are more likely to attend. The government will also establish a central repository of relevant gender-based research for use across government policy development.

Under this plan, we are working to ensure that women are valued and empowered contributors to the ACT community and the public service. We have committed to holding biannual forums between the government and the community to support collaboration and improved engagement, and we held the second of these forums just yesterday. Key members of the ACT government and community organisations came together to share inspirational stories and details of their experience implementing practical solutions that have resulted in positive outcomes for women. The forum also considered the ways in which these activities could be applied to other community, business and government practices.

The ACT government is committed to ensuring that women in the ACT and the community sector are encouraged to be active participants in developing policy and in decision-making processes. We are also committed to ensuring that we have the data and knowledge base to support gender equality and that the impacts on women and girls are thoroughly considered.

The ACT government has made significant improvements in this area. The reduction in our gender pay gap and the representation of women in leadership positions far exceeds the national average. As at October 2017, the ACT had the largest percentage of women holding positions on government boards and committees, at 45 per cent. This is an excellent result, a product of tangible measures taken by the ACT government, mandating that all ACT boards and committees consult with the ACT office for women, to ensure gender balance when appointing members.

As Minister for Sport and Recreation, I have also set a requirement for peak sporting organisations funded by the ACT government to reach at least 40 per cent women's representation over the next three years. And we have undertaken a considerable amount of work to get more women and girls participating in sport, through initiatives such as infrastructure upgrades and social networking hubs for women and girls to meet, share and collaborate online about sport and recreation.

The ACT government recognises and values our diverse community. It is important that this diversity is reflected in appointments to boards and committees, and in leadership roles, to ensure that the voices of women and people with diverse backgrounds are heard.

Work is currently underway to finalise the development of the ACT diversity register, which is designed to connect people interested in being on boards and committees with opportunities that arise in the ACT. The register will be open to all people but with a focus on women, people with a disability, people with culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people, and people that identify as lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, intersex and queer. The register will supersede the ACT women's register and is anticipated to be finished by early 2018.

The ACT government recognises that people from different backgrounds and with different experiences bring different perspectives and skills. All of these measures implemented by the ACT government show that the government takes seriously its responsibility to consider gender when developing legislation and policy.

Madam Speaker, I would like to close by noting the strong female representation and leadership that we have at the highest levels in the ACT. For the first time, a majority of colleagues in this place are women, and women lead the majority of our directorates. I look forward to working with all women across the ACT government as this focus on gender in policymaking continues to improve outcomes for women, men, boys, girls, transgender, intersex and gender-diverse Canberrans.

**MS CODY** (Murrumbidgee) (5.08): I thank Ms Le Couteur for raising this ongoing important matter. For far too long, indeed for decades, women in this country and this city were poorly represented. Women's status in the community, their access to services and their rights as citizens suffered. But today we are lucky. Not only are we an Assembly with a majority of women members but it is easy for us to believe that the glass ceiling, as we hear it being referred to, is being smashed or at the very least cracked. I am not a fan of the expression "glass ceiling". It is a term that women with resources and capacity talk about. This glass ceiling is one that only women with the means, the capacity and the support can break through. We must go further and be more inclusive.

We have seen this government prioritise better access to services, with an emphasis on community services and support for women to better engage in their community. One such initiative is the return to work program offered at the CIT Tuggeranong campus. This program supports women to return to work with the skills and

confidence to be competitive in the labour market. I have had the opportunity to meet and work with some of the graduates of this program. They loved it, and so do I.

Even with the wonderful programs of this government, we should never forget that there remains a silent, almost forgotten group of women in our community. These women are seldom in a position to access or enjoy such initiatives. For this group of women, the idea of a glass ceiling is a mystery and breaking it almost impossible.

For full-time mothers with a life of running between school drop-offs or caring for children, elderly parents or both, all while trying to hold down a job, it is difficult. The thought of a glass ceiling for women working as low paid hospitality workers or retail workers is unimaginable. These workers are now paid far less than they were 12 months ago, due to cuts to penalty rates, and are too often forgotten.

While we may refer to the gains that women as a group have made over the years, it is the concrete ceiling that remains an impenetrable boundary for today's women. The glass ceiling may be seen by some as an effective euphemism for the economic, political and social barriers between men and women. The concrete ceiling is an embedded, structural barrier that separates women on the basis of class.

It is women stuck beneath this barrier who I spoke of when I first came to this place, and it is those women who will remain the focus of my time in this place. It is these women who fight every day to put food on the table, to pay the bills, to replace worn-out and too-small school shoes and clothing. It is these women who count every cent they have in a fortnight to make sure it goes as far as it has to. And it is these women who former Senator Jacqui Lambie spoke of when she spoke to the shame and frustration that comes with telling your child that they cannot go on that school excursion or they cannot play sport this season because you just cannot afford it.

I know that feeling. These are the women for whom taking the kids to a women's football match on a Friday night just does not happen. These are the women who want to take the risk of applying for that better paid job or upskilling to change career paths but for whom these are just dreams they have in the daily grind. Any minute they are not running around with their children, doing the school run or working weekends, they are run down, exhausted and mentally fatigued, while probably listening to the on-hold music during a Centrelink call that now takes up more and more of their already limited time. It is these women who are now forced to undergo a humiliating eligibility requirement for parenting payments, such as filling out affidavits proving their status as single parents. For these women, diminishing income will soon make services such as child care, a service that is intended to assist their re-entry into the workforce, simply unaffordable. These are the women for whom getting the policy balance right is critically important.

Incorporating gender in policy and legislation development is just one part of that balance. The other is recognising the differences that still exist between women in our society and recognising that good-hearted policy to improve the opportunities, recreation or upskilling for some women will not necessarily have a distinct impact on the lives of others. I remain committed to making sure the experiences of these women are considered. I look forward to making more policy and legislation to

improve outcomes for women. But let us also widen the circle to include the experiences of those forgotten women on the underside of the other ceiling, the concrete ceiling.

*Discussion concluded.*

## **Revenue Legislation Amendment Bill 2017 (No 2)**

Debate resumed from 26 October 2017, on motion by **Mr Barr**:

That this bill be agreed to in principle.

**MR COE** (Yerrabi—Leader of the Opposition) (5.15): The opposition will be supporting this bill. The bill itself is largely administrative in nature, clarifying and correcting references in legislation or otherwise repealing sections which are no longer relevant. It is worth noting that a number of clauses that are being amended have either been out of date for some time or are unnecessary, given that other legislation has passed and some schemes ended in 2015. We are glad to see that the government has tidied up and clarified the legislation, even if it is a couple of years after the fact.

The opposition recognises that refinements are needed for the barrier-free transaction model on this occasion. The government has advised that declarations of trust and grants of a commercial lease with premium are not registrable or are only optionally registrable with Access Canberra, which therefore makes the current process and model impractical for these transactions. The Canberra Liberals support good administrative practice and hope these amendments will improve the effective execution of these transactions for members of the public, as well as for the public servants and officials who have responsibility for overseeing the barrier-free transaction model.

I wish to put on the record that one of the reasons provided in the bill's explanatory statement for the inclusion of new section 14A in the Taxation Administration Act 1999 is IT system constraints. The government has identified that some crown leases which cover multiple blocks or sections are sometimes only recorded using a single block or section number. This Assembly has previously touched on the need for improvements to the ACT government's IT systems, especially where data that ought to have been captured has not been. This appears to be another area where further investigation may be warranted to ensure the government is making full and best use of the software available to it.

In conclusion—I note that it is good timing for the Treasurer, who walks in to follow up and continue debate on this, I expect—the opposition is pleased to support this legislation.

**MS LE COUTEUR** (Murrumbidgee) (5.17): The Greens also support this legislation. We basically support red tape reduction, provided it does not impact on our key values in areas such as social justice and environmental protection. We are satisfied

that this bill does not have this sort of impact. As Mr Coe also said, we support regular tidying up of legislation. We are happy to support this bill.

**MR BARR** (Kurrajong—Chief Minister, Treasurer, Minister for Economic Development and Minister for Tourism and Major Events) (5.18): I thank members firstly for their contribution to the debate, their support of the legislation and their forbearance in allowing this matter to come on this afternoon, as I was at a somewhat important event this morning that prevented me from being here for the debate. I thank members for their support of a bill that simplifies and improves the administration of the territory's taxes, something that we can all agree on.

Various taxation acts of the territory, including the Duties Act 1999 and the Payroll Tax Act 2011, have been amended by this bill. It brings greater certainty and stability to the administration of the barrier-free conveyance duty model. For instance, certain dutiable transactions now do not need to be registered with the registrar-general. These transactions are not captured under the barrier-free model, where registration triggers the obligation to pay duty. The bill applies the pre-barrier-free conveyancing time frame to these types of transactions, as this time frame is more sensible. It provides clear distinctions between barrier-free and non-barrier-free transactions and ensures smooth and consistent operation of the territory's conveyance model. It also makes it explicit and clear that the Commissioner for ACT Revenue is able to assess duty liabilities before duty becomes payable. This does not become payable until the property transfer is registered.

These amendments aim to encourage the registration of property transfers. Importantly, they will also reduce the risk of dispute about duty payment on a dutiable transaction that fails to be lodged for registration, thereby protecting the territory's revenue. In addition, the bill introduces amendments to achieve a greater level of harmonisation in the payroll tax regime between the ACT and other jurisdictions. Having sat on perhaps more than my lifetime's quota of these ministerial councils, I can say that harmonisation of payroll tax regimes is one of the greatest hits of the Council of Australian Governments. Any amendments that achieve a greater level of harmonisation are, I am sure, welcomed by businesses that operate across borders.

The Payroll Tax Act will be amended to implement commonwealth changes to the exempt rate for motor vehicle allowance by adopting New South Wales's definition of the exempt rate. This will benefit employers operating in both the ACT and New South Wales by providing a more consistent administrative arrangement. Hallelujah for that.

Lastly the bill amends the legislation to update references and correct errors. We, of course, want no errors, so correcting them is a good thing. And it repeals provisions for schemes that have ceased operation or have not been actively used. This improves the clarity and the quality of the ACT's taxation legislation and ensures the legislation effectively supports the current administrative practices of government. It also ensures that tax legislation is kept up to date and reflects the current practices of both ACT taxpayers and the ACT Revenue Office. In conclusion, it complements the essential changes introduced by the revenue collection transformation program and

ensures the effective implementation of these changes. The bill may be very dull, but it is worthy. I commend it to the Assembly.

Question resolved in the affirmative.

Bill agreed to in principle.

Leave granted to dispense with the detail stage.

Bill agreed to.

## **Adjournment**

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

That the Assembly do now adjourn.

## **St Vincent de Paul doorknock appeal**

**MR PARTON** (Brindabella) (5.22): I rise to pay tribute to the hundreds of Vinnies volunteers across our city who have been trudging up and down footpaths and knocking on doors right across our town, raising money for the annual St Vincent de Paul doorknock appeal. As a part of that, my message to all those in this chamber and beyond is that the doorknock continues until the end of February. Please be kind to the volunteers and please give generously.

For a number of years my wife and I have had the great privilege of doorknocking two sections of Calwell. I want to thank the residents of Calwell for their kindness and generosity. We knocked off our commitment on the first two weekends. Let me tell you, they are very hilly sections of Calwell. I was discussing this with my good friend Mr Gentleman earlier in the week, because these streets are pretty close to his place, and he was well aware of the incline on Mountain Circuit and Downard and Outtrim. When you are doorknocking either for Vinnies or for the Liberal cause—not so much Mr Gentleman—one of the things you quickly discover is that the street itself is not the biggest killer; it is the driveways. Up and down, up and down—it certainly gets your heart pumping.

The money raised through the doorknock appeal goes to help fund a range of services provided by Vinnies, from the unique home visit service through to emergency accommodation and the young carers program. I commend Vinnies for their ongoing work in our community. I would like to again share that doing the doorknock is an extremely rewarding exercise. Please consider putting your hand up to do it next year.

Let it be known that it is actually not too late to put your hand up for this year. When I was talking to the good people from Vinnies earlier today, they assured me that if you can assist in the final two weeks of Feb you should please come forward. I have put contact details on my Facebook page, and I would urge you to come forward and have a go. Your commitment, should you do that, would be no more than two hours.

## **Sexual health**

**MS CODY** (Murrumbidgee) (5.25): Tomorrow is Valentine's Day, a day for the lovers, whoever they are and whatever stage of life they are at—be they young sweethearts, our LGBTIQ brothers and sisters, those amazing elderly couples that maintain their passion after decades together, the social conservatives who believe in waiting for marriage and sticking with one partner, and the social conservatives who say they believe in waiting for marriage and sticking with one partner and then stray. We need not mention any examples from across the lake.

Tomorrow is National Condom Day and, just like Valentine's Day, National Condom Day is for everyone. Last week I had the pleasure of launching this year's National Condom Day at the offices of Sexual Health and Family Planning ACT. SHFPACT is a leader in reproductive and sexual health promotion and clinical service delivery, providing advice, education and health assessments for members of the public.

Tomorrow SHFPACT staff and volunteers will be bringing awareness to National Condom Day by handing out silk roses with a specially developed condom pack to celebrate the event. This year's beautiful silk roses were collated through the hard work and skills of the staff and clients at LEAD—an ACT community disability service provider. The message on the condom pack is, "You know where to put it".

You should not just wrap your willy because an unexpected pregnancy can damage your career or reputation. It will also stop all sorts of spots, itches and many other worse things. The rates of sexually transmitted infections, including HIV, gonorrhoea and syphilis are rising. It does not matter how discriminating you are about sexual partners; infections do not discriminate.

So why condoms? Because they work; because despite all the advances in screening technology and PrEP for HIV, condoms remain the cheapest and most readily available form of protection. Also, condoms are one of the cheapest, most readily available and fun forms of protection.

SHFPACT is also addressing another underlying reality: people are often embarrassed or ashamed of talking about safe sex or buying condoms. Buying condoms should be as painless as buying a bunch of roses on Valentine's Day. Nobody should feel shame about their sexuality. I commend SHFPACT for their work and remind all members present to put on their raincoats.

## **Orange Sky Laundry**

**MS CHEYNE** (Ginninderra) (5.28): For many of us, showering or doing our laundry is just one of our regular household chores. But for 1,700 people in Canberra who might be experiencing homelessness it is not so easy. Back in 2014 two 20-year-olds, Nic Marchesi and Lucas Patchett, saw this problem and wanted to create a solution. They installed a couple of washing machines and dryers in the back of an old van and drove to local parks around Brisbane to offer free clothes washing services to people who might be sleeping rough.

Orange Sky Laundry was born. Orange Sky Laundry has now spread right across the country, and it launched in Canberra in early 2016. The mates behind the organisation were recognised as Young Australians of the Year in 2015 and are now expanding their services from clothes washing to personal showers. Last Monday I was honoured to help welcome their new hybrid van to Canberra. The new hybrid vehicles are a one-stop shop for washing machines, dryers and a shower. The capacity of what this vehicle can provide means the old laundry-only vehicle that was in Canberra—*Dasher*—can be redeployed to another of Orange Sky’s many locations in Australia.

The most important thing of all, of course, is that the bright orange chairs that are associated with Orange Sky Laundry remain. You see, Madam Speaker, Orange Sky Laundry is not just about providing some basic hygiene services that we often take for granted. Above all else, it is about restoring dignity to people who are too often overlooked, judged or sidelined.

When Orange Sky Laundry friends are waiting their turn to take a shower or for a load of washing to finish, they can sit on the bright orange chairs and have a chat with one of the volunteers. It is a chance to befriend volunteers and others and to share their stories. The power of being heard and valued in these circumstances cannot be overstated. Similarly, it is an incredible opportunity for the Orange Sky Laundry volunteers to take a walk in someone else’s shoes and to shelve some preconceptions many of us hold about homelessness.

Orange Sky Laundry is testament to how a simple idea, well executed, can make a real change in our communities. If you are interested in being part of the growing Orange Sky community, you can help out by volunteering your time or donating some funds. You can help someone do a load of washing for a donation of only \$6 or you can sign up to volunteer on the Orange Sky website. I encourage everyone to get behind this great cause if you are able to. There are big things happening for this organisation.

### **Lunar new year**

**MR COE** (Yerrabi—Leader of the Opposition) (5.31): Madam Speaker, on Friday evening I had the honour of hosting members of Canberra’s Chinese community here at the Assembly to celebrate the upcoming Chinese new year. The event celebrated the rich contributions made to Canberra by the Chinese community, and I was very thankful that leaders from peak ACT Chinese community organisations were able to attend.

The Chinese community in the ACT is one of the fastest growing multicultural communities in our city, and it continues to play a significant role in our city. Through their efforts in business, innovation and education, and involvement in cultural and community groups, Chinese Canberrans have greatly contributed to life in the territory.

I greatly respect the strong entrepreneurial spirit of the Chinese, as well as their deep commitment to family, especially their reverence for elders and past generations.

China is steeped in many wonderful traditions that continue to exist within the community that has migrated to Australia. Australia and China have a long history of trade, cooperation and cultural exchange.

In particular, I would like to thank Mr Sam Wong and Mrs Chin Wong for their ongoing contribution to our city. They will be front and centre in this week's Multicultural Festival. Their charisma and energy made it a successful evening enjoyed by all.

I would also like to recognise the wonderful performers on Friday evening. They included Ms Victoria Wang, an accomplished arts teacher from the Australian School of Contemporary Chinese. She enchanted attendees with her performance of *Melodies of Spring* on the guzheng. The Canberra Prosperous Mountain Lion Dance troupe, led by Mr David Wong, provided an energetic grand finale with their extraordinary lion dancing. I believe this was the first time a lion dance has been performed at the Assembly, and if anyone was in the building on that night they certainly would have heard them. I thank them for entertaining and bringing good luck to everyone who attended.

Once again, I thank all the community groups that attended and contributed to an amazing evening, and I wish all Chinese Canberrans a prosperous and happy new year. Xin nian kuai le.

### **National Multicultural Festival**

**MRS KIKKERT** (Ginninderra) (5.34): I want to thank the members of the ACT's multicultural community organisations for all they have been doing and will yet do to make this year's Multicultural Festival an enjoyable experience for all attendees. I also wish them all best success. Canberra is a richly multicultural city, with organisations that provide both security and identity to tens of thousands, serving long-established migrant communities, recently arrived refugees and everyone in between. The one thing they all have in common is a love of their culture and a passion for sharing it with others, through food, drink, performances and so forth.

For more than two decades, the festival has given small but determined and hardworking community groups an opportunity to generate much-needed income for the support of their members and for various projects. For these organisations, participation in the festival is not just about three days of food and fun; it is about financial viability.

Sadly, a number of multicultural groups in the ACT find that their enthusiasm for this year's event has been weakened. Some of these organisations have been a part of the Multicultural Festival literally since its beginning. Their participation over the years has shaped both its format and its flavour.

But changes this year have left them feeling wounded and worried. For the first time in the festival's history, non-profit community organisations have been banned from selling the alcoholic beverages that form an important part of their cultural identities. The concerns expressed to me have taken a number of forms.

First, multiple community organisations have assured me that they were not warned or consulted about this change; instead, they learnt about it when the new terms and conditions were released. This has left them feeling that, as culturally and linguistically diverse people, their voices have not been heard and their experience has been ignored.

Second, despite ACT Policing publicly praising the behaviour of attendees at last year's festival, this year's alcohol ban has been repeatedly justified by the ACT government as a safety measure. But on what basis? Nine people were arrested for intoxication on New Year's Eve a few weeks ago. How many were detained for intoxication during the three days of the 2017 Multicultural Festival? Three. Once again, this makes our culturally and linguistically diverse Canberrans feel that they have been unfairly targeted and blamed.

Last, the revenue raised by some community groups has been so dependent on the sale of culturally specific drinks that some organisations now wonder how they will fund their activities in 2018.

The ACT government's implementation of this change has been clumsy and heavy-handed. People from our multicultural communities do not want to be dictated to. Real consultation that respects the wisdom and experience of our diverse cultural communities could have reached a solution that left everyone feeling happy, important, valued and not excluded.

In question time today, Minister Stephen-Smith highlighted that this issue is unimportant because only a small number of stallholders have complained. I remind this Assembly, however, that the number of liquor permits from last year to this has dropped from 65 to 21. Besides, this would be a problem if it were just one community organisation. That is what it means to be a community.

Madam Speaker, I personally have faith in Canberra's multicultural communities. I call on Minister Stephen-Smith to make sure that this year they are involved from the beginning in real consultation. I am confident they will make the best they can out of this year's festival despite the government's missteps. I know from personal experience that migrant communities are resilient. We can all be glad that they are.

Question resolved in the affirmative.

**The Assembly adjourned at 5.38 pm.**

## Schedule of amendments

### Schedule 1

#### Firearms and Prohibited Weapons Legislation Amendment Bill 2017

##### Amendments moved by the Minister for Police and Emergency Services

1

##### Clause 19

Page 10, line 2—

*omit clause 19, substitute*

19 Not firearms—Act, s 6 (2) (a)

Section 6 (1) (a)

*substitute*

(a) an antique firearm;

2

##### Clause 20

Page 10, line 9—

*omit clause 20, substitute*

20 Section 6 (2), new definition of *antique firearm*

*insert*

*antique firearm—*

(a) means a muzzle-loading pistol (including a percussion-lock pistol that is muzzle-loading) that uses black powder to propel a projectile; but

(b) does not include a breech-loading pistol—

(i) with a rotating cylinder; or

(ii) that accepts metal cartridges.

3

##### Clause 22

Page 11, line 3—

*[oppose the clause]*

4

##### Clause 34

Schedule 2, proposed new item 8A

Page 15—

*omit proposed new item 8A, substitute*

8A a detachable centre-fire rifle magazine (other than a centre-fire self-loading rifle magazine) with a capacity of more than 10 rounds