



Debates

WEEKLY HANSARD

Legislative Assembly for the ACT

NINTH ASSEMBLY

15 AUGUST 2018

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Wednesday, 15 August 2018

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Wednesday, 15 August 2018

The Assembly met at 10 am.

(Quorum formed.)

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.

Petition—ministerial response

The following response to a petition has been lodged:

Bridge paths—petition 2-18

By **Ms Fitzharris**, Minister for Transport and City Services, dated 14 August 2018, in response to a petition lodged by Ms Le Couteur on 8 May 2018 concerning a dedicated bike path between Commonwealth and Kings Avenue bridges.

The response read as follows:

Dear Mr Duncan

Thank you for your letter of 8 May 2018 attaching petition No 2-18 from Ms Caroline Le Couteur MLA regarding a dedicated bike path between Commonwealth Avenue and Kings Avenue Bridges.

The walk around Lake Burley Griffin is one of Canberra's most popular recreation areas and it's great to see so many locals and tourists enjoying this space. The Central Basin route, which is affectionately known by locals as 'Bridge to Bridge,' can be very busy at various times during the day.

It's a space for everyone to enjoy and as a shared space, there is a need for everyone to display courteous and safe behaviours. Cyclists should always slow down and sound their bell when passing pedestrians and all users should keep to the left.

The National Capital Authority (NCA) is wholly responsible for the Central Basin loop and the ACT Government works closely with the NCA to ensure that walking and cycling infrastructure meets the needs of the community and that it is safe for all users.

The ACT Government is working with the NCA to explore capital upgrades to the highest need areas to improve safety and visitor experience.

There is an ongoing campaign to encourage all users to share the path. Key messages of this campaign include observing safe speeds, staying left, being visible and behaving predictably.

As part of this educative approach, the ACT Government partnered with the NCA to install signage and pavement markings as well as distributing visitor information to encourage people riding bikes and other recreational equipment, such as in-line skates and scooters, to use the paths responsibly and give way to pedestrians, while encouraging all users to keep left.

The ACT Government also works closely with cycling and walking groups to ensure we understand people's needs and concerns and consider them in prioritising and implementing activities that support active travel.

I encourage everyone to be patient and mindful of each other when using the paths around Lake Burley Griffin. It truly is a space for everyone to enjoy and we all need to play a part to ensure this area is safe and enjoyable.

I appreciate your assistance in presenting my response to the Assembly.

Reproductive health products and advice—access

MS CODY (Murrumbidgee) (10.02): I move:

That this Assembly:

(1) notes that:

- (a) the ACT Government has been an historical leader in abortion law reform, having entrenched in legislation that abortion is a health matter and not a criminal matter, thereby protecting women and their reproductive choices;
- (b) law reforms including legal and regulated access to abortion to make abortions safer for those who access this service; and
- (c) ACT Government actions have created exclusion zones around the ACT's legal abortion facility to ensure safe and accessible healthcare have been provided to women;

(2) further notes:

- (a) the stigma which continues to exist in some sections of the community in relation to women's reproductive rights;
- (b) pharmacies may refuse to supply any prescription, medicine or item based on the particular religious or ethical views of the particular pharmacist; and
- (c) the apprehension of rejection for women seeking access to reproductive health services, products and advice; and

(3) calls on the ACT Government to:

- (a) explore options for the introduction of a requirement for health practitioners and pharmacies who choose not to, or choose to, supply relevant reproductive health medications, products and procedures, to display clearly visible signage:
 - (i) to inform consumers;
 - (ii) in plain language; and
 - (iii) outline which particular reproductive health medications, advice and products they do or do not supply;

- (b) work with pharmacists, health practitioners and their relevant representative organisations to ensure that their professional standards are met in the supply of reproductive health medications by allowing people, particularly women, to access these products and services without fear of intimidation, humiliation or embarrassment; and
- (c) remind health practitioners of their ethical obligations in dispensing reproductive health medicines and that this is best practice to ensure continuity of care for a patient.

At the start of this speech I think it is only polite to notify members that I will be including references to menstruation, reproductive health, sexually transmitted infections, awkward teenagers and the supernatural.

I have moved this motion today because everyone deserves to be able to go to their pharmacist for confidential and non-judgemental advice. I know I can. I have the most amazing pharmacists who I speak to about all of my healthcare needs—and, let me tell you, there are a few of them.

Unfortunately, a small number of Canberrans are not quite so lucky. There are times when a woman needs the support of a stranger; there are times when people go somewhere expecting kind, supportive advice; and there are times when you are faced with what feels like a crisis, and being confronted with lectures and negative judgement means that women will not necessarily get their health needs met.

I am not saying pharmacists do not get to have a conscience. I am saying they do not get to entrap vulnerable people with their views. This motion is the start of a conversation on how we can all be more respectful, on how everyone deserves the right to access the best healthcare advice our community pharmacies have to offer, and on how nobody deserves to feel intimidated or humiliated when accessing health products, services and advice.

As I have mentioned many times in this place, I have teenage boys. I raised them to say, “If it’s not on, it’s not on.” Not every family shares my parenting views. I have heard of situations where young people raised in families which are a little more awkward about sexuality might get themselves into a bit of trouble. They find themselves a lovely partner, they think this love will last forever, and they decide, respectfully and together, that they will do what many consenting people do every day. I think they should be safe to do so.

But before they do that, we need to do everything we can to ensure that there are places they can go to which will not make the sense of embarrassment and confusion worse, so that they can feel no pressure when walking into a pharmacy and asking for advice about condoms, sex and protection. And if, afterwards, they have an STI, we need them to be able to go somewhere safe to get it treated and get advice about what to do about it, without judgement and without moralising.

What happens if—I am sure no-one wants this to happen but we all know of incidents where it does—the condom breaks? Maybe you need the morning-after pill. Shouldn’t everyone be able to feel they can walk into their closest pharmacy and have access to

all the information they need to make an informed choice, to make an informed decision, to be able to ask all the questions they might want to ask in order to feel safe and protected? There are many people, particularly women, who can do this, but there are also some who cannot.

The same goes for the pharmacist who may have an ethical objection to discussing these sorts of reproductive matters. Everyone has a choice. Everyone deserves a choice.

There may be some members of this place who could be uncomfortable about discussing periods in public. I moved this motion because nobody should feel that way. The answer to awkwardness is not suppression, it is expression. As a young woman, I remember how embarrassing it was when you started to menstruate, when you got your first period. I remember it all too well, even though it was over 30 years ago. For some young women, it all starts out pretty normally. Well, you think it does, because generally you do not speak about it. Then they get heavier. It gets to a point where you are sitting in class, you feel that familiar rush, you cannot get up and leave, you know that your pants or skirt are stained, and you just have to deal with it.

Getting your period is difficult enough, but with them getting heavier, it is hard. A doctor advises to go on the pill, which often assists, but to be confronted by a pharmacist who does not agree with this choice can leave women conflicted and not knowing what to do or where to go. No-one needs this. No-one deserves this. People of all genders deserve the right to receive respectful advice from a pharmacist.

Earlier this year I spoke about National Condom Day. For those members who may have forgotten, it is on 14 February. As part of my speech I noted, from Sexual Health and Family Planning ACT, or SHFPACT, that the rates of gonorrhoea and syphilis are rising. The best way to combat STIs—or, for those who may not like acronyms, sexually transmitted infections—is to use a condom or dental dam. These are very simple and painless methods of protection, but if, when accessing them from your local pharmacy, you are confronted with negativity or humiliation, that is not on.

As members of the Legislative Assembly for the ACT, we have a place of leadership in the community. If we can put a sign on a pharmacist's door, and a young person chooses to use that sign to find a pharmacist rather than being too embarrassed and ending up with syphilis, that is what I reckon leadership looks like.

I am not saying that pharmacists who do not want to give that advice should be forced to. If I did, the opposition would be able to fairly criticise the proposal as being a restraint of trade. I am saying that the pro-life should be out and proud with their position, so that those who want to buy what they do not want to see can seek it elsewhere: a free market at its best, where consumers are well informed.

This motion is about exercising freedom. Freedom for consumers to not feel embarrassed about asking for haemorrhoid cream, thrush treatment, condoms, dental dams, STI medication, the pill or the morning-after pill just makes sense.

This motion asks the government to have a conversation, to help people of all genders to access respectful advice from a pharmacist. I look forward to hearing what other members of the Assembly have to say about this motion.

MS LE COUTEUR (Murrumbidgee) (10.11): I will speak only briefly, in deference to the fact that my voice is not much better than it was yesterday, and I want to save a bit of voice for the debate on the bus network.

Of course, the Greens are in total agreement with Ms Cody's motion. We have always stood firmly by our belief that women and men have the right to exercise their reproductive freedoms and their reproductive health rights without fear of discrimination or impediment.

That is the reason why I introduced legislation into the Assembly earlier this year to improve access to abortion, which is a key reproductive health service, although, fortunately, not as common as the reproductive health services that Ms Cody has spoken about in her speech. I look forward to talking more about abortion-related issues in that debate, when my voice will have recovered.

I am well past menopause; it is a long time since these issues were really part of my day-to-day life. I cannot remember there ever being any issues with getting products to deal with menstruation, for instance, and condoms are freely available in supermarkets. Maybe the problem is not as bad as it seems from Ms Cody's motion. Certainly, we are in favour of the intention to provide information to people, and if there are pharmacists who are finding this problematic then a better conversation with them and better information for their clients have to be a good thing.

MS FITZHARRIS (Yerrabi—Minister for Health and Wellbeing, Minister for Transport and City Services and Minister for Higher Education, Training and Research) (10.13): I thank Ms Cody very much for moving this important motion today and for bringing to this place discussion of things that, as has been acknowledged, are part of our day-to-day lives, particularly for women who are at different stages of their lives. It is a great reflection on this place that we can have a discussion about things that really do matter in the day-to-day lives of women, and I acknowledge Ms Cody's outstanding commitment to women's health rights in bringing forward a motion like this.

It really does matter, particularly for women in this place, to talk about many of these issues. I reflect on a discussion during the estimates committee hearing as well when Ms Cheyne talked about sexually transmitted infections, something that is having a real impact in our community. If we are not talking about this openly in this place, young women and young men in particular will think it is something that cannot be spoken about more broadly in the community. So this is a really welcome debate. It is exactly the kind of thing we should be talking about here.

Madam Speaker, we know that many women seek advice from a range of professionals in the health sector to assist them to stay healthy and well. Certainly when it comes to reproductive medicines and access to medicines relating to

reproduction, menstruation and sexual activity, many professionals will play an important role in many young women's lives and young men's lives as they start on their life journey.

It can often be a confusing journey and one in which advice from trusted health professionals is very important. Just the hint of judgement or stigma relayed to a young person when seeking advice, particularly in a very public setting like a pharmacy, can really have an impact, particularly on a young person seeking quite personal advice.

In the context of the motion, and after discussions with both Ms Cody and Mrs Dunne, I will be circulating an amendment. It is coming. It has not yet been tabled for others to see. I know that it has been discussed informally. I hope we can seek a resolution here that allows us to continue this conversation in the community and particularly with pharmacies and pharmacy representative organisations.

We must be careful that we do everything we can to make sure that young women and men in particular have the support they need to access important health care and healthcare products. We on this side of the chamber certainly support the rights of women to manage their own health, especially their reproductive health, and we support initiatives to reduce barriers that prevent access to health services and products.

This is evident through the significant range of sexual health services available to women that are funded by this government, including education and information services; sexual health testing and treatment; access to contraception; counselling and information relating to sexual activity; pregnancy; prenatal and postnatal care and support; and cervical screening.

Further to this, as we know, the ACT Labor government has been progressive in these areas, particularly in relation to abortion law reform. This is a jurisdiction and a government that have led on women's reproductive and women's sexual health rights for decades. We are committed to continuing to be in this space.

Specifically with regard to Ms Cody's motion, as I mentioned earlier we must make sure that we work with all sectors of the community and all sectors of industry. I know that pharmacists are very important health professionals in the lives of Canberrans. I know, having met many pharmacists in my professional job and in my personal life, that they are compassionate and dedicated professionals. They are dedicated both to their profession and to their customers. Increasingly, our pharmacists are playing an important role in the health care of Canberrans. They provide many specialist skills that enable them to provide advice to their customers. But we also know that more and more Canberrans are seeking advice from pharmacists. I welcome that, as I know pharmacies and pharmacists also do, as an important part of our health sector.

But, in saying that, we need to make sure that we keep conversations like this alive. We know that there are regulatory, legislative and professional obligations that community pharmacists in particular have. I certainly acknowledge those. But we

want to make sure that we can continue to have this conversation. There may be instances where certain pharmacies are unwilling to provide certain prescriptions or medications to women, and potentially to men, in our community. We look forward to exploring those issues in more detail based on Ms Cody's motion today.

My amendment to her motion has been circulated. Arising from my discussions with Ms Cody, it clarifies that the intent of this motion is around pharmacies and the very widespread access that members of our community have to pharmacies and the advice that they seek from pharmacists. It calls on the government to explore a range of options to introduce a requirement for pharmacists who choose not to supply relevant reproductive health products to clearly display signage informing consumers in plain language about which particular products they either do or do not supply and to work with dispensers and their relevant organisations to ensure that their professional standards are met in the supply of reproductive health products.

I gather that there will be an amendment to this amendment. I welcome discussion about other opportunities to provide information through signage and potentially through an online mechanism. I thank Ms Cody very much. This is a good conversation. It is a conversation in our community that will make a difference, particularly to young men and women. I look forward to the debate concluding. I move the amendment circulated in my name:

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

"(1) notes that:

- (a) the ACT Government has been an historical leader in abortion law reform, having entrenched in legislation that abortion is a health matter and not a criminal matter, thereby protecting women and their reproductive choices;
- (b) law reforms, including legal and regulated access to abortion to make abortions safer for those who access this service; and
- (c) ACT Government actions have created exclusion zones around the ACT's legal abortion facility to ensure safe and accessible healthcare have been provided to women;

(2) further notes:

- (a) the stigma which continues to exist in some sections of the community in relation to women's reproductive rights;
- (b) pharmacies may refuse to supply any prescription, medicine or item based on the particular religious or ethical views of the particular pharmacist;
- (c) the apprehension of rejection for women seeking access to reproductive health products and advice;
- (d) that there are a number of strict legislative requirements in relation to the advertising of medications such as the Therapeutic Goods Act 1989 (Cwlth) (the Act) and Regulations, the *Competition and Consumer Act 2010* (Cwlth), and other relevant laws;
- (e) that most dispensers display practices that model their professional standards; and

- (f) the intent of this motion is to ensure that the dispensing of products occurs without fear of intimidation, humiliation or embarrassment for those seeking assistance; and
- (3) calls on the ACT Government:
 - (a) to explore options for the introduction of a requirement for pharmacies who choose not to supply relevant reproductive health products to display clearly visible signage:
 - (i) to inform consumers;
 - (ii) in plain language; and
 - (iii) outline which particular reproductive health products they do or do not supply; and
 - (b) to work with dispensers and their relevant representative organisations to ensure that their professional standards are met in the supply of reproductive health products by allowing people, particularly women, to access these products and services without fear of intimidation, humiliation or embarrassment.”.

MRS DUNNE (Ginninderra) (10.20): I welcome the minister’s amendment to Ms Cody’s motion. I must say that when I first saw Ms Cody’s motion, quite frankly I was struck by how well thought out it was. I was also struck by what appeared to me to be an attempt by Ms Cody to cut the grass from under Ms Le Couteur, who has a bill before this place about access to abortion.

It seems that the tone of Ms Cody’s original motion and the tone of the issues that she was discussing on radio yesterday have been quite transformed today. I welcome that approach. I welcome the approach in the minister’s amendment, which seems to take away a lot of the language that was critical, mainly of pharmacists. I thought that was unwarranted and it gave the opposition considerable concern.

The opposition still has concern because the crux of the matter still lies in paragraph 3(a). It does not matter which version of paragraph 3(a) you look at. It still is an attempt to require pharmacists to display a certain amount of signage in relation to whether they do or do not provide a particular service. There are problems with this. I have highlighted them this morning with the minister. Section 66 of the ACT Medicines, Poisons and Therapeutic Goods Act makes it quite clear that it is illegal to advertise particular prohibited or restricted drugs. Most of the drugs that relate to reproductive health are S8 drugs and you cannot advertise that you sell them; so it may be problematic to advertise that you do not sell them, that you do not dispense them.

It is also, as members should know, quite onerous to be a dispenser of schedule 8 drugs. As a result of that, many pharmacists choose not to do so. The Liberal opposition has real concerns about paragraph 3(a). It says, “explore the options.” The aim seems to be that in the end there should be signage. That puts the onus on the small business owner, and a pharmacist is a small business owner. If the small business owner puts up a sign that says, “I do not dispense drugs in relation to

reproductive health,” or in particular for medical abortions, it may open them up to criticism for a variety of reasons.

One of the reasons they may not dispense that drug is simply because they do not have enough people calling on them to do so to justify the onerous regulation around that. Lots of pharmacists do not dispense methadone for exactly the same reason. We are not asking pharmacists to put up signs about whether they do or do not dispense methadone.

Madam Speaker, I move my amendment to Ms Fitzharris’s amendment:

Omit paragraph (3)(a), substitute:

“(a) in consultation with medical practitioners, pharmacists and their representative organisations, explore options for development of an on-line resource to assist the Canberra community to access information about reproductive health medicines, procedures and products;”.

MADAM SPEAKER: The amendment having been moved, the question is that Mrs Dunne’s amendment to Ms Fitzharris’s amendment be agreed to. Mrs Dunne.

MRS DUNNE: Thank you, Madam Speaker. The Canberra Liberals think that this is a better way of doing it. As a colleague said to me yesterday, most people these days will google what they want to know about a lot of these drugs and a lot of these procedures. So having an online mechanism would be a good way of giving maximum access, essentially to young people who are switched on electronically.

This would remove the burden from individual small business owners to provide signage which, as the president of the Pharmacy Guild said, could be quite problematic. It might depend on which pharmacist is on duty at the time. There might be somebody who has a conscientious objection who would not want to dispense. They would therefore be in a situation where they would be putting signs up and taking them down, depending who was on duty. That may create problems.

I think that if Ms Cody had done what I did and had actually rung the Pharmacy Guild before she moved this motion—

Ms Cody: I used to work for the Pharmacy Guild. I spent a lot of time working with the Pharmacy Guild.

MRS DUNNE: It is interesting. When I rang the Pharmacy Guild or, to be precise, when my office rang the Pharmacy Guild about this on Monday, my office’s approach to them was the first that they had heard about this. They had considerable concerns about the motion and the implications it would have for pharmacists.

That was relayed yesterday in the media by the ACT president of the Pharmacy Guild, who said that he did not believe that this regulation was necessary. I think it is quite clear that the minister’s amendment today is actually a tidy up and a fixing up of the relationship with the pharmacists. Ms Cody has gone off half-cocked—that is the expression—and has not got the full story before she has moved this motion.

I am glad to see the walking back in respect of the language here today. I am glad to see the minister's amendment but it still does not go far enough for the Liberal opposition. The Liberal opposition believes that there should not be a further impost on small business people in relation to this. If the government thinks it is worthy that we have a resource and we can direct people to where they think they need to go, I think an online resource is the way to go. I commend the amendment to the Assembly.

MS FITZHARRIS (Yerrabi—Minister for Health and Wellbeing, Minister for Transport and City Services and Minister for Higher Education, Training and Research) (10.27): I would like to assure the Assembly that based on my discussions with Ms Cody I know she has thought long and hard about this. As she has said, she previously worked at the Pharmacy Guild; so she does understand the business of pharmacies. She has also spoken to many consumers.

Madam Speaker, it is important to recognise that, yes, of course we must speak to pharmacists and to the Pharmacy Guild about this, which collectively we have done. I know that Ms Cody has spoken to a number of people during the course of this week. And you know what is great about that, Madam Speaker? This is exactly what we do here in the Assembly.

Often what private members' day does is raise discussion in the community. It gives us an opportunity to talk about these things. Ms Cody has done that with her community and with pharmacists, and she has raised this issue here in the Assembly today. I think that is great. I also think that this is a real opportunity to have a look at this issue.

My amendment calls on the government to explore options for the introduction of a requirement. I could propose a further amendment to Mrs Dunne's amendment whereby we could add to my original amendment that we also consider an online tool. That gives the government the ability to explore options.

If that were acceptable to the opposition, we could actually have an agreed amendment in this place to allow the government the option to explore a range of different ways to get the outcome that Ms Cody is seeking to achieve, which is to inform consumers about where they can most appropriately receive the health medication that they need. If that were acceptable to the opposition, I would be open to amending the motion. If Mrs Dunne could give me a nod, we could perhaps do the writing on that.

MADAM SPEAKER: I suggest that either someone else speak or that we adjourn the debate and come back to it. Ms Berry, you have the floor.

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) (10.30): I am very happy that this motion has been brought forward by Ms Cody today. As Ms Fitzharris said, having these conversations during private members' business on Wednesdays is very important, particularly

around women's health in the ACT and ensuring that we continue to work on improving opportunities for women to access important health services, particularly when it comes to reproduction and sexual health.

Ms Cody's motion notes that the ACT government has been a historical leader in abortion law reform. I am very proud of the work my father did in introducing that legislation when he worked in this Assembly. Indeed, across this country today that conversation continues, and other states and territories are starting to work on bills and legislation to ensure that accessing abortion is considered a health matter and not a criminal matter and that it protects women and their reproductive choices.

Women should have the right to seek advice and support on their health wherever they need to, whether that is with a medical practitioner or a pharmacist, to ensure the support and the health supports they need are freely available without judgement wherever they need it. As Ms Le Couteur referred to, condoms, tampons, pads, reproductive support services, pills, IUDs and various other reproductive health medications are generally freely available. But, unfortunately, there remains a stigma when it comes to women seeking abortion, whether medical or surgical. That conversation still needs to occur.

I know women in the ACT are keen to ensure they get the chance to access other kinds of health services, particularly when it comes to abortion. The law reforms that regulate access to abortion mean that women in the ACT are not harassed or made to feel uncomfortable when seeking a legal abortion. We have a legal abortion facility in the ACT to ensure that women have safe and accessible health care. This is very important health care for women in the ACT and something that I, the Labor Party and the ACT government are keen to ensure continues. We will continue our work to make sure that women continue to have access to this service without being harassed or made to feel uncomfortable, stigmatised or judged in any way.

I am also very pleased to see that the motion explores the requirement for pharmacies to make sure that they clearly display signage to inform consumers in plain language which particular reproductive health products they do or do not supply. The suggestion that that could include online advice is also a good way forward.

The individual Mrs Dunne's office spoke to within the Pharmacy Guild might not have heard about this motion. This is about having a conversation with pharmacists about how we can make sure that women seeking reproductive health products can easily find a pharmacist who will provide those products so a woman does not have to go to a number of different pharmacists to find the support she needs or google away online to find where to go. I am confident that in the ACT many pharmacies will be happy and proud to display in a helpful way information for women to make sure they are able to access these health products.

I am also keen to see how these representative organisations that Mrs Dunne has referred to are engaged in these conversations. I think we will see that these days that there is much more support for women seeking health services.

I am very happy that Ms Cody has brought this conversation to the Assembly today so that we can continue this great work in making sure that women in the ACT can access health services in a way that does not judge them and does not stigmatise because they are accessing a legal health service. I commend Ms Cody for bringing her motion, and I support Ms Fitzharris's amendment to the motion.

MR HANSON (Murrumbidgee) (10.35): To complicate things I have a further amendment to achieve what I believe is being negotiated between the minister and shadow minister in this case. I certainly support the intent of what Ms Cody is seeking to achieve through this motion. I believe in a woman's right to choose; I said that in my maiden speech and I have said it subsequently on a number of occasions.

Taking steps to remove barriers and stigma for women seeking access to medication and some products and so on is a good intention, and I support that intention. However, I support Mrs Dunne's point of view that this has not been done in a particularly good way in this motion. This is a ham-fisted way of doing it. There was a failure to consult with peak bodies to understand the legal complexities of signage in pharmacies. Some of the language in the motion—I am glad that that has been removed by the minister through her amendment—certainly could be interpreted as quite negative and critical and patronising of both pharmacists and doctors. I am glad the motion has been substantially amended by the minister to make sure that the complexities with regard to signage and legalities have been addressed and at least noted and that that particular language has been removed.

Ms Cody, it is good that we are having this conversation in the sense of making sure that we are doing what we can to remove stigma, but I reinforce the point that Mrs Dunne has made that consulting on and understanding the complexities of the issues before moving the motion in the first place would have resolved a lot of toing and froing and problems. I had conversations with the Pharmacy Guild yesterday and with others and I know that consultation before the motion was moved would have removed some of their concerns about the way the motion was originally crafted.

Ms Fitzharris has moved an amendment that cleans up the original motion, and that is a good thing. Mrs Dunne has moved an amendment that removes the requirement for signage in pharmacies, suggesting that that should be online. The understanding now is that that amendment will be withdrawn by Mrs Dunne and I will move an amendment that, rather than omit the requirement for signage, will add what was Mrs Dunne's intention, that is, to make sure that when the government explores this issue it also explores the issue of online resources.

Mrs Dunne's amendment to **Ms Fitzharris's** proposed amendment, by leave, withdrawn.

MR HANSON (Murrumbidgee) (10.39): I move the following amendment to Ms Fitzharris's proposed amendment:

Add paragraph (3)(c):

“(c) in consultation with pharmacists and their peak bodies explore options for development of an on-line resource to assist the Canberra community to access reproductive health medicines and products.”.

Mrs Dunne's amendment, which has been withdrawn, removed paragraph 3(c), which related to signage, and replaced it with the requirement to explore an online resource. Through my amendment, that is now in addition to the government exploring the online resource. That has been achieved by negotiation, and that is good.

In conclusion, the issue of signage within pharmacies, based on my conversations with pharmacists and the Pharmacy Guild, is complex, both legislatively and through the requirements of the TGA, and there are complexities with regards to who is the pharmacist on duty and whether pharmacies stock any of these products for whatever reason.

We also need to be aware that this can be an emotive issue on both sides of the debate. We do not want to unnecessarily cause any sort of conflict within a pharmacy. These are all issues that need to be understood and addressed as the government goes forward to examine how this can best be done.

I think we have ended up in a good place. If these steps can be taken it will improve access, remove barriers, and remove stigma for women seeking access to medications and products or advice, and that is a good thing. I commend Mrs Dunne for moving the amendment that has now been withdrawn, and I also thank the minister for tidying up the motion and working cooperatively on this issue.

MS CODY (Murrumbidgee) (10.41): I reiterate that the idea of my motion was to open the doors to a conversation to talk about the stigma faced by women in the community. For a moment I was quite shocked that Mr Hanson and I were agreeing on several things; I was a bit shaky there for a moment. Mr Hanson raised a very good point that there are employer organisations, such as the Pharmacy Guild and the AMA and all those sorts of organisations that pharmacists and health practitioners deal with every day, that are important, but so are the women in my community. I am important; we are all important.

It is the women in my community and the women in the Labor movement who brought this motion to me and who have been asking for this for quite some time. In my motion I have asked the government to undertake to explore with the Pharmacy Guild, with health practitioners and with their registered and relevant bodies how we can better remove the stigma for women to access the rights they have for reproductive health.

I am really excited and looking forward to the debate that will ensue in the coming month, hopefully, on Ms Le Couteur's bill on abortion. I think abortion is a very topical discussion, and I look forward to standing up for the rights of the women in our community every day who have to face these questions and these concerns.

I find it very interesting that Mrs Dunne had major concerns with my motion yet I had not heard a word from her or her office about any of those concerns. As we all know, my motion has been sitting on the notice paper for a few days. It is interesting that Mrs Dunne raised her concerns in here but did not bother to have a conversation with

me or my office. Perhaps Mrs Dunne is not as invested in her community as she feels she is.

I am glad I moved this motion today, and I am glad we have had a really respectful and open and honest debate in this place. This is what being an elected representative for my community means to me. I am sure many other members of this place would agree with that. It is really important that we continue to have these discussions. Sometimes they are very uncomfortable discussions but they mean the world to the women in our community who have to struggle, sometimes daily, with access to reproductive health.

Being faced with judgment is never a good thing for our young women struggling to ask about condoms, for the young women in our community struggling to talk about their periods or for the young men in our community still dealing with their sexuality. I am really thankful for all the work the minister and her office have done with me to enable me to move this motion today, to enable me to have these conversations, and to enable me to go back to the women in my community and within the Labor movement and tell them that we listened to them, that we believe in what they have to say. Thank you to the minister for health and her staff for helping us to be able to do that and for looking at ways to make it better for the women in our community.

I support Minister Fitzharris's amendment. It changes the motion a little bit, but it is about supporting the women in our community and making it better for them. So any way we can do that in this place is the ultimate goal in my world. I look forward to voting for these amendments.

Mr Hanson's amendment to **Ms Fitzharris's** amendment agreed to.

Ms Fitzharris's amendment, as amended, agreed to.

Original question, as amended, resolved in the affirmative.

Community clubs—taxation

MR PARTON (Brindabella) (10.46): I move:

That this Assembly:

- (1) notes the important contribution made by clubs in the ACT, and:
 - (a) this support includes \$39 million in social contributions through direct community donations as well as access to a range of facilities and meeting rooms for community groups and members, volunteering and involvement of club staff in community organisations;
 - (b) an investment of over \$140 million in local sports teams and sporting infrastructure since 2000 and the maintenance and operation of significant sport and recreational infrastructure, in fact over 400 hectares; and
 - (c) employment opportunities for more than 1745 people, and a valuable community hub for more than 327 000 local Canberrans who are members of clubs in the ACT;

(2) also notes:

- (a) this Government's excess fees, charges and taxes has resulted in a number of clubs closing and many other struggling to stay afloat;
- (b) that NSW clubs and pubs pay a lower percentage of tax than ACT clubs; and
- (c) that the regulatory conditions in the ACT make operating a community club difficult and restrict opportunities for growth, increased employment and greater community benefit; and

(3) calls on the ACT Government to:

- (a) assure ACT community clubs that they will continue to be able to administer their own community contributions in accordance with the desires and interests of their membership;
- (b) commit to the ACT community that any short fall in community contributions as a result of changes will be funded by the ACT Government in the form of sporting and community grants; and
- (c) pledge that the public consultation process will proactively seek community input and assess a range of options—not just taking away the autonomy and decision making of clubs in the ACT.

If you close your eyes and listen, if you be very, very quiet, you can hear the rumble from out in the suburbs. You can hear the sounds of disquiet. Out in the suburbs, they are not happy. They are not happy because of what this government is proposing regarding clubs' community contributions. And I can totally understand why.

My father, Tom, was a very wise man on many fronts. One of the things that he often told me was: "Son, if it ain't broke, don't fix it." When it comes to the community contributions model, it ain't broke. I am not saying that it is perfect, but the reality is that such a system may never be perfect and I fear that we are going to trash what is good in the fruitless search for perfect.

I understand that the parliamentary agreement suggested a review of this system and that at some stage an appendix was added. I am sure that was not there at the start; I would love to know exactly when that was added. This appendix states that the government will establish an independent charitable fund irrespective of its appearance in the parliamentary agreement.

The community are very loudly stating that they are just not going to wear it. Mr Ramsay and others have intimated that there is a scare campaign in this space, that those pesky Liberals are getting the locals frightened and they are all jumping at shadows. How dare we go out into the community and suggest that a club may have all of its community contributions siphoned away into a big brother fund! My message to Mr Ramsay is: minister, yes, this is a scare campaign, but it is a scare campaign of your doing. It is a scare campaign of the highest order, and the fear is real.

The discussion paper that the government released had three possible options. Option 1—right at the top, Madam Speaker—was:

Allocate all community contributions to a centrally administered fund.

Mr Ramsay and everybody in this room knows that if indeed the government were to allocate all community contributions to a centrally administered fund, most of the in-kind donations would go out the window. Virtually all of the local sporting funding would go out the window the Probus clubs, the seniors groups, the dance groups, the social golf clubs, the rugby league clubs, the gymnastics clubs, the Spanish language classes, the jazz clubs and the girls' AFL, we could go on and on; the list of clubs and groups is a thousand strong. Many of them do not fall under the guidelines of what Hands Across Canberra supports. I am sure that many of them would not fall within the scope of what the Chief Minister sees as being important, but they are vitally important to all of those who are involved in them, vitally important.

I love it that the discussion paper says that it favours “a transitional period where changes are phased in ... to ease the burden of adjustment for organisations that have relied on current funding arrangements”. Let me be clear on what the burden of adjustment actually means. The burden of adjustment translates to “You're on your own now, Jack; you've got nothing.” It translates to social clubs and sporting clubs folding. It translates to kids from economically challenged families not playing sport.

Even if all of the clubs' community contributions are not siphoned out for the comrades to deliver to their charities of choice, even if it is only a portion of those funds, the reality of life in this space is that there is only so much money to go round. If a large portion is taken by the government, it ceases to be a community contribution. That is not a community contribution. Let's get serious; what we are talking about here is a tax. It is a tax; it is not a community contribution at all. It is a vindictive tax, Madam Speaker. It is a way to punish the clubs for daring to exercise their democratic right at the last election and have a clear position. That is their right. You can argue all day long as to whether they should have campaigned in that space, but this is what you cannot argue with: the clubs formed a view that they would be much better off if a Canberra Liberals government were elected. I would suggest that they are probably right. I would suggest that that was a pretty good call. Seriously, it is not difficult to see why they went down that path.

To the clubs—and when I say “to the clubs”, I mean the clubs boards, their grassroots members and all those who have a connection to their local club, and I note that some are in the gallery today—the thing that stings most out of all of this, the thing that hurts the most, is that Mr Barr, Mr Rattenbury, Mr Ramsay and, by definition, every single elected Greens and Labor member of this place do not trust them. They do not trust you to make the correct decisions in serving the communities that you have served for years; they do not trust you to do it. They do not believe that you have your community at heart. I can understand why so many have been offended by this. I think this is outrageous.

In the discussion paper, one of the risks mentioned in option 1 is the “need to ensure clubs can still meet the purposes for which they were established”. Even the government have indicated that if they follow through with some of these proposals, some clubs may not actually meet the purpose for which they were established. The

very reason for their existence is under challenge. It is a scare campaign; my oath it is: if you take away the very reason that a community club was established, that is worth getting frightened about.

I note that the Auditor-General, in her report into the clubs' community contributions scheme, implies that there was some questionable expenditure associated with the operation of semi-professional sporting teams. The government, of course, have trumpeted these quotes all over the place: this in a jurisdiction where the government has made a \$23 million community contribution to a fully professional football team that is not even from Canberra! It is not even from Canberra! I would say that the professional structure of these semi-professional sporting teams provides a genuine pathway for our talented athletes and gives our kids some real-life role models who are playing sport where we live.

And I would say that those contributions are within the guidelines that have been provided by the government. If you do not like the guidelines, change the guidelines. The Auditor-General's report was much more critical of the government for not providing active guidance on how to interpret the Gaming Machine Act 2004. None of the Auditor-General's recommendations amounted to the trashing of the scheme that has been suggested by this government.

I draw members' attention to the 2015 KPMG national club census, which showed that our clubs in the ACT contributed \$39 million to the community in 2015 through community donations, subsidised access to facilities and volunteering. I would urge those opposite to go out to their local club at some stage this week or over the weekend to see what local community actually looks like. I would urge them to listen to the cacophony of voices that are imploring them to leave their club alone.

Peter and Christine Reynolds from the Tuggeranong Valley Cricket Club wrote to me earlier this week. They said:

We submit further that the proposed model will only serve to inject uncertainty in respect of budgeting. We will likely be reliant on an additional, unpredictable layer of bureaucracy removed from direct contact with our club. Under our direct relationship with Vikings Group, their sponsorship is contingent on performance and delivering maximum value to our community from each dollar contributed. Transparency, accountability, and community benefit are the "benchmarks" in receiving funding. We question what benchmarks will apply under the proposed arrangements.

This is Tuggeranong Valley Cricket Club, who have provided the facility for so many kids to play cricket. They have also provided a couple of stars in recent years. The Floros boys have come through Tuggeranong Valley; Jason Behrendorff, who has represented Australia, has come through Tuggeranong Valley as well.

Here is another. Sue Faulkner is the president of Austrian Choir Canberra. She wrote to us and said, to summarise: "If we do not continue to receive at least the current financial contribution from the club, and if the club is required to levy a hall hire charge on the choir, we would find it very difficult or almost impossible to continue to exist as a choir. We are keen that the Austrian Australian Club continue its support

and sponsorship. Consequently, we strenuously oppose the changes that are being proposed.”

And let me give a final quote from Rhys, from the Ginninderra Cricket Club, which I think really hits the nail on the head. Rhys says:

You must understand that the funding we receive directly reduces the costs to members, young people and our families for their children to participate in our sport. Without this funding our registration fees will have to increase and we know that we have members and families who will not be able to afford this. This is especially concerning given we are trying to keep fees at a minimum to retain the female players recruited as part of our women’s team that was established last season. The outcome will be fewer participants across age groups and genders in an activity that keeps them healthy, teaches teamwork and social skills, provides them a community and network that is important for social and mental wellbeing. The benefits to society of having people active in sports is well documented and we are extremely concerned and upset that this is now at risk.

The current model is not broken—

says Rhys, who is a voter in the Ginninderra electorate—

If our local club ... is unable to support us then who will? We are too small to be on the radar of the Minister’s proposed charity and we will simply end up with less funding and a reduced ability to offer our sport to many families in our area. This will lead to reduced participation numbers and more problems in other areas of our community.

Can you please reconsider this approach to funding community organisations such as ours that are already stretched and are operating off limited resources.

I understand that we have an amendment coming which trashes the original motion almost as much as it trashes the community contributions scheme. It completely changes it and basically puts the government’s agenda on it. Please, Labor and Greens MLAs, let it be known that I am asking that you listen to the voters in your electorates. All I am asking is that you do what you were elected to do, and that is to represent your constituents. They could not have made themselves any clearer.

When we get to the vote on the amendment—which obviously is going to be the crucial vote, because by the time we get to that amended motion it is not going to resemble anything at the start—we will divide. We will divide, and I can guarantee that your vote on this motion will be recorded and I will highlight it at every possible moment. If you are not comfortable with that, grow a backbone and listen to the people who voted for you.

MR RAMSAY (Ginninderra—Attorney-General, Minister for Regulatory Services, Minister for the Arts and Community Events and Minister for Veterans and Seniors) (10.59): The ACT Liberals will certainly not be supporting a motion that is based on scare campaigns, as has been actively stated today. So I move the amendment to the motion that has been circulated in my name:

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

- “(1) notes the importance of a diverse, sustainable, and community-focused clubs sector, and commends the Government for its efforts to support clubs, particularly small and medium clubs, to move away from gaming machines as a source of revenue;
- (2) notes the Government’s commitment to reducing harm from gaming through the Parliamentary Agreement for the 9th Legislative Assembly, including by:
- (a) reducing the number of electronic gaming machines licenses in the ACT;
 - (b) exploring harm minimisation measures such as mandatory pre-commitment and bet limits;
 - (c) increasing the Problem Gambling Assistance Fund levy; and
 - (d) reviewing the current community contributions scheme with a view to maximising the direct benefit to the community from the scheme;
- (3) notes the importance of a transparent, community-focused community contributions scheme that maximises benefits to community organisations from the regulation of the gambling industry;
- (4) recognises that all clubs were established to promote particular community objectives, including many sporting and cultural groups, and notes that the Government has committed to support clubs to meet those important community purposes as part of its review of the community contributions scheme;
- (5) recognises the issues raised with the current scheme in the following reports:
- (a) the Auditor-General’s Report No 5 of 2018 into ACT Clubs’ Community Contributions, which found that guidelines for the scheme needed to be tightened, to prevent things like mobile phone bills for professional sports players being counted as a community contribution;
 - (b) the September 2017 Community Contributions Scheme Impact Analysis by Price Waterhouse Coopers, which found that more could be done to hold clubs accountable and make more community organisations aware that they could be accessing contributions; and
 - (c) the May 2017 Report by Dr Charles Livingstone for the Foundation for Alcohol Research and Education, which underscored the need for community contributions regulations to be strengthened; and
- (6) calls on the Government to:
- (a) take action to ensure that the ACT’s community contributions scheme is transparent, maximises returns to community organisations, and the clear failings identified in the Auditor-General’s report are addressed; and
 - (b) continue working with clubs to deliver more and more robust harm minimisation measures, to reduce the number of gaming machine authorisations in the Territory to 4000, and to support a diverse, sustainable, and community-focused clubs industry.”.

Let me begin by saying unequivocally that the government is firm in its commitment to a diverse, sustainable and community-focused club sector. We introduced tax rebates last year to support small and medium clubs to diversify their business. We

provided \$10,000 grants to clubs for the same purpose. The suggestion in Mr Parton's motion that the government's agenda is against clubs simply does not stack up against the facts. Again, sadly, facts and the opposition's statements on gaming policy have a very tenuous relationship.

Today I rise to give the Assembly factual information about the community contribution scheme and to voice firmly and very proudly the government's support for our clubs and for ensuring that our gambling industry serves Canberra appropriately. There have been many inaccurate allegations made in this chamber and beyond about the government's policy on gambling. The Canberra Liberals have made and continue to make all manner of claims, and those claims are, more often than not, contradictory.

But when you boil down their argument, it is about maximising pokie profits. In order to maximise pokie profits, they consistently oppose harm minimisation. They trivialise gambling harm by comparing it to eating chocolate, and their behaviour shows that they have no credibility when it comes to gambling policy.

This is not a behaviour that is confined just to their latest scaremongering on the community contributions. Their clearly, strongly, pro gambling spokesperson has been both for and against having poker machines at the casino. Additionally, Mr Parton does not seem to be concerned with anything at the moment other than ensuring that pokie machines remain as lucrative as possible. He has consistently supported watering down harm minimisation rules across the gambling industry.

The reason why it is so hard to understand the Canberra Liberals' position on poker machines is that it is not guided by a vision for the community or by principle. Donations, political winds and whoever happens to stand for their party are the determinants of their policy. Their attempts to confuse the government's clear agenda of reform need to be corrected; so I will correct them.

It is important to clarify the situation about the community contributions scheme. The government's review was not some random step. It was promised openly at the 2016 election. Looking at the scheme, whether it should include a central fund, is part of the parliamentary agreement, though it would seem that Mr Parton has only just bothered to notice. I am very pleased to be able to reassure the parliament that we will do what we were elected to do, and the review is just one part of a comprehensive set of reforms. We will ensure that the gaming machines in the territory are regulated to maximise the returns to the community and to minimise the impacts of gambling harm.

From the time that that commitment was made, we have been developing an evidence base because, again, unlike the Canberra Liberals, we will legislate on evidence, not on whim or scare. The Canberra community deserves so much better than the Canberra Liberals so regularly provide. That evidence base that we are developing shows that we need to do more to support the groups who depend on the community contributions scheme.

The Gaming Machine Act says that a community contribution is one that contributes to or supports the development of the community or raises the standard of living of

the community or part of the community. These are clearly worthy principles, and regular review is needed to make sure that, in practice, the scheme lives up to those principles.

The Auditor-General's report in 2018 found that there was a lack of guidance on how to interpret the legislation. Consequently, "a broad and diverse range of expenditure" has been approved under the scheme, to quote the report. And it is often not possible to evaluate those expenditures against the community purpose of the scheme.

Here are some examples of the way that the scheme is currently broken: one club claimed 56 separate contributions totalling \$663,755 in its annual return as sports donations to a single senior sports team directly associated with the club, without giving any further information on the nature of the expenditure. Note that they were counting this as a community contribution, separate from any of their constitutional commitments to sport.

Another club counted 330 separate contributions, totalling over \$360,000, related to the private sportsground owned by that club. This included payments for rates, electricity, maintenance, vehicle registration and repairs, telephone, wages, salaries, security and insurance. Again, they class this as a community contribution. Another club gave \$1.5 million to its own sport and recreation, and that money included balloons for a presentation night and entertainment at a team function. These are all activities that these clubs exist to fulfil. Their community contributions should go beyond the club's main purpose and genuinely improve the lives of the broader community.

Today Mr Parton has again managed to argue both for and against the proposition, for and against improving the scheme. Mr Parton's approach to policy seems to be more like Schrodinger's cat: you cannot tell whether it is one side or the other until you lift up the lid on the box. And even then we are unclear.

The facts about community contributions are clear. The club industry needs to tighten its focus on giving to community groups. It needs to be more transparent about where those funds are going. It is also clear that many organisations do benefit from the scheme, and that should continue in the most effective way possible.

I will reiterate my firm and unwavering commitment to those groups: we are working hard to keep the clubs who support you viable, sustainable and accountable. We are not going to stand for your entitlements being spent on entertainment for professional sports players or iPhones for staff. You deserve to be treated better than this.

Clubs have a special privilege. They are able to operate poker machines to serve their non-profit goals. Promoting and supporting their club purposes with their revenue is the responsibility of clubs. Community contributions money is separate from that purpose, and it belongs to the community as a whole. This review is about ensuring that the clubs live up to their obligations to support more than just their membership. It is about expanding support for community groups.

My directorate wrote to clubs and community stakeholders on 17 July, and the formal submission period closed last Monday. We are consulting in a way that is transparent and can leave our constituents in no doubt about what evidence we are relying on and who is making representations to us. We are adding these submissions to the recent reports that the government has already received from the Auditor-General and others.

The Canberra Liberals are seeking to hijack that consultation and suggest that they are working for community groups. The reality is that they are not; they are scaremongering in order to advance their agenda of maximising poker machine profits. Instead of promoting engagement and trying to find ways of enhancing their funding, Mr Parton has been suggesting to a wide range of groups, including seniors groups, that the government is going to ban them from using function rooms. This is simply not true, and it would seem simply to be the negative, shock-jock behaviour of the kind that Mr Parton just cannot manage to leave behind.

My message to the community groups in the ACT, those who have been supported by contributions in the past, as well as those who have not been and may want to be, is that this government is determined to maximise community benefits through the scheme. We will not, unlike the Canberra Liberals, ignore the evidence. We will not, unlike the Canberra Liberals, avoid the findings of reports which make it clear that the scheme should be improved. We will not, unlike the Canberra Liberals both do and suggest we should, close our eyes and our minds to the very intent of the scheme.

We know that we have the support of many in the clubs industry who have acknowledged that that scheme could be better. That is fundamentally what this review is about: our community clubs and their relationship with the people and organisations who benefit so well from their presence.

Our clubs operate gaming machines under a social licence. Our community gives them a privilege in exchange for ensuring that money from the gaming industry serves the community, the whole community. The government's review will help us maximise the benefits to those who need it most and it will help us and help the clubs to be more transparent in delivering those benefits.

The amendment to this motion circulated in my name sets the record straight. The amendment articulates a clear, transparent and unambiguous factual basis for conducting the review. And, in passing the motion, as amended, we will be rejecting Liberal scaremongering as a basis for policy. We are sending a message to the community groups who rely on the community contributions scheme. This government will deliver reforms that ensure that the benefit to the community is maximised and that you are supported.

Finally, Madam Speaker, I say, through you, to our community clubs, as we have for this entire term: we will continue to support you to be sustainable, to be diverse and to carry out the purposes for which you were established. I commend the amendment to the Assembly.

MS CODY (Murrumbidgee) (11.10): Wow! Isn't it wonderful to have the opportunity to discuss all clubs in the ACT for once! I am, and have been, a member of many clubs across the ACT and am very supportive of their strong engagement with the community, be that in the form of providing sporting fields, grants to community groups or the many other good works done by them. The sense of community fostered by many of our multicultural clubs is a real strength of Canberra, as was on display during the recent World Cup finals. Of course, another of the great contributions of clubs in Canberra is their support for advocacy and political groups.

I would like to congratulate Clubs ACT, the Liberal Party and Mr Parton on their campaign about community contributions. I try to single out who did what but it is hard to tell. And they seem like one great continuous organisation to me. Their efforts, both in the volume of their shouting and the few people doing it, remind me of their 2016 election campaign. Yes, if what they were accusing the government of was true, there would be good cause for concern in the community. But in reality all that they have done is give me the opportunity to highlight Mr Ramsay's good work.

I have really enjoyed the experience of being able to sit with the community groups, large and small, and discuss ways we can make the community contributions scheme stronger. It is supposed to do just that. I have got complete confidence that Mr Ramsay will deliver just that, and the only people who will be upset will be those who have either been fiddling the books or who have been spinning the process of review a bit too hard to the community. That is why I am voting for Mr Ramsay's amendment today.

MR MILLIGAN (Yerrabi) (11.13): I wish that I could say I am shocked to be standing here today defending community contributions but we are, after all, up against a Labor-Greens government that is hell-bent on punishing those in the community who speak out against them.

Certain clubs, like the Ainslie Group, the Southern Cross Club, the Raiders and the Vikings, just to name a few, had the courage to have an opinion at the last election. They spoke out about issues that make operating a club in Canberra more difficult than anywhere else in the country. In 2016 these clubs expressed a view, and ever since the Labor-Greens government has been determined to punish them.

The culture of fear in the ACT is very real. If those on the other side of this chamber believe that this is not the case, they are kidding themselves. We hear all the time of public servants, businesspeople and community leaders all with clear, strong views about the harm this government is causing, but almost none is willing to speak out. Why? Consequences, retribution and punishment are dealt out by this government. Here we are today seeing that play out with community clubs.

What upsets me most, what angers me more than the grudge this government holds against community clubs, is the flow-on effect that this will have on local sport and recreation. Community clubs provide a critical lifeline to local sports and recreation in Canberra. They support grassroots groups through financial support, free room hire, raffle prizes and equipment assistance. This is not to mention the various sporting

facilities that clubs actually own and operate for the Canberra community, facilities like golf courses, ovals and even a yacht club. So why, you ask, is this government trying to tell clubs how to run their business and how to best support their community? Clubs know what they are doing. They listen to their membership and they support clubs and causes that patrons want to sponsor.

Under current arrangements the community clubs are required to give 8 per cent of gaming revenue in community contributions, and clubs are more than happy to do this. They give back well above the 8 per cent. Last year clubs exceeded this target, reaching 12 per cent. In fact last year community clubs provided \$11.9 million in community contributions.

Do you know how much grant funding was provided to sport and recreation in the same period by this government? The answer is \$2.4 million. For those of you who are not maths wizards, that equates to almost 400 per cent more support from clubs than from this government. With this financial support, community clubs help more than 1,000 local sport, recreation and community organisations. Do you know how many sporting groups received grants in the same period from this government? It was just 60. Again, this equates to almost 1,600 per cent more.

Why the statistics? Why point out something so obvious? I do so because this is what this government is threatening by targeting the community contributions scheme: thousands of volunteers who give up their free time to coach and train, run canteens, fundraise, write grant applications, approach corporate sponsors, mentor kids or just help out in the community. And let us not forget about the unsung heroes, the mums and dads, the uncles, the aunties and the friends and supporters. They are out there driving to games, washing uniforms and working out the family budget just so the kids can participate. This is the everyday reality of grassroots sport and recreation, and this is a reality that this Labor-Greens government clearly does not understand.

Let me share just some of the stories I have been receiving from grassroots sport and recreation groups, clubs that are genuinely concerned for their membership, their youth, their community and their future.

Let me explain the predicament of one local hockey club. This club has a proud history dating back to the 1950s. They have strong presence across all competitions. Many of their players, past and present, play on state and national teams. They are a great club, and they do lots to encourage juniors. They discount membership fees and try to help with travel expenses. This club relies on funding from local community clubs, and it is already discussing increasing fees if it loses this funding. These changes are only going to hurt local youth and families who already struggle to afford to participate and keep active.

Another great example of a local club is a social dance group that has been operating in the community for the past 30 years. This group relies almost solely on one particular club not just for a venue but for benefits provided to its members, things like lucky door prizes, raffles and Christmas parties. These extra benefits are important to many of the mature members who see this group as their only affordable source of entertainment. Again, this type of arrangement is under threat if community

clubs are directed to surrender funds or spend them in particular ways. How will this group survive? What will happen to the members if they lose their regular get-togethers?

Another example is a local music group who, even on conservative estimates, will see a \$4,000 increase in costs if they lose the support of community clubs. This group exists to share a love of music with each other and with the community. They regularly perform at nursing homes, retirement villages and a range of Canberra events, even government-run free events. If changes to the community contributions scheme go ahead, it is likely that membership fees will need to be increased and, for many, participation will become unaffordable. Again, let us remember that this music group does not operate to compete or win tournaments. Instead it is a fun outlet for its members who provide the community with free music and entertainment. Why would the government want to jeopardise that?

The local hockey club helping young athletes progress to state and national representative sides, the social dancing group that provides such an important social and physical outlet for older Canberrans, the music group out entertaining our community, these three groups are only a small sample of the stories. I have heard from Probus clubs, special interest associations that run social events, rugby clubs, football clubs, music groups, choirs, tennis clubs, cricket clubs, golf courses, crafters and gamers, and the list goes on.

As the shadow minister for sport and recreation I implore this government to stop and to listen. Stop the attack on community clubs. Let go of what happened in 2016 when some of these clubs dared to speak out against you, and instead listen. Listen to the community consultation. We on this side of the chamber certainly have been. Mr Parton and I have received so many letters and thousands of contacts via social media about this issue. Just today an e-petition on this issue reached 1,000 signatures. The community are united on this issue and they want you to leave this scheme alone.

Sure, tighten up the governance. Make clubs report more directly about where contributions go. But at the end of the day this is club revenue. Clubs pay their taxes and they pay plenty of them. This is club revenue generated from club members. Let them decide how to spend it. Let them determine the local clubs and groups that they want to support.

Stop and listen. If you will not even do that, I think it is only fair that you promise the people of Canberra that you will make up for the shortfall. If you attack this scheme by taking much needed funds from grassroots sport and recreation and instead give it to the Chief Minister's pet project and charitable fund, be sure to make up the shortfall. Let us refresh ourselves on the maths here. Community clubs provided \$11.9 million last year in community contributions. That is 400 per cent more than this government. Community clubs helped more than 1,000 sporting groups, recreation groups and community organisations. That is 1,600 per cent more than this government. I want to hear a commitment that you will make up the difference so that the sport and recreation community does not suffer.

Sport really is the glue that binds us all but it does not run on community spirit alone. Grassroots sport relies on community contributions, and this government needs to stop its campaign against clubs and listen to the needs of the community it is meant to serve.

MR RATTENBURY (Kurrajong) (11.22): It is clear from a number of reports over recent years that the current community contributions scheme has some weaknesses and is not working as well as it could. That is why the Greens called for a review of the scheme through the parliamentary agreement and why we are supportive of the process that the government is currently undertaking to consider options for changes and improvements.

This process has included a recent period of community consultation, and I expect that the feedback from clubs, community groups and industry will inform the government's response, along with the evidence and recommendations from the various reports that we have seen.

I also believe that there is a more constructive way to engage in this debate than the path outlined in Mr Parton's motion. It is unfortunate that some organisations and individuals have chosen to use this period of consultation to engage in a campaign of making the worst possible scenario for this and suggest that the future of clubs is under threat because of this review.

We know that many clubs were set up with a dedicated purpose of supporting local community activities, from sports teams to language and cultural groups, and it is not the intention of this review to get in the way of those activities. There is great benefit to the community from clubs supporting local sporting teams and providing venues for community group meetings and all the other activities that take place in the local clubs.

However, there are some questions about the efficacy of the current scheme, which is why a review is warranted. Recent reviews of the scheme have described it as opaque and lacking transparency, with the Auditor-General finding that there are questions regarding the value and benefit of some items being claimed as community contributions. That is not a question we can simply ignore. We cannot turn a blind eye to those sorts of findings.

Let us look at some of the examples cited in the Auditor-General's recent report. These include salaries and wages of coaching and ancillary staff for professional and semi-professional sporting teams, and the maintenance and upkeep of sporting infrastructure where the community cannot necessarily access that sporting infrastructure. I think that raises a question about what is the definition of a community contribution.

Perhaps my favourite example is airline lounge memberships for sports teams' members. I am sorry, but that does not count as a community contribution. That does not pass the pub test. Let us be frank about it. I know Mr Parton is whipping around and taking vox pop videos on the sports fields around town, but does he actually say,

“By the way, that community contribution paid for a Qantas Club membership”? I doubt it.

The May 2017 report on the scheme from Dr Charles Livingstone, who is an expert researcher in gambling harm and the gambling industry, found examples—

Mr Parton interjecting—

MADAM ASSISTANT SPEAKER (Ms Cody): Members! Mr Parton.

MR RATTENBURY: Mr Parton was heard in silence, despite the many inflammatory remarks that he made. He sets his own standards, and he has just demonstrated that.

Dr Livingstone is an expert researcher in gambling harm and the gambling industry, and he found examples of contributions being approved for activities such as covering the cost of fines incurred for game forfeits and melees. So the community contribution fund paid the fines for melees at sporting events. That does not pass the pub test by anybody’s measure, either. He also referred to reimbursement of player out-of-pocket expenses for items such as physiotherapy and massage services, and providing weekly awards of trophies, meal vouchers and cash awards.

While some of these may have been only relatively small amounts, counting these kinds of expenses as a community contribution does not pass the pub test, as I have said. This is not to suggest that the whole scheme is ineffective, but it does raise some valid questions about how contributions are assessed and which ones should be accepted.

It is also clear that under the current reporting system the lack of information in clubs’ annual returns submitted to the Gambling and Racing Commission makes it difficult to understand the exact nature of the expenditure and the community contribution claimed. The Auditor-General found 1,455 recorded community contributions, or 16.3 per cent, where the benefit being provided could not be identified. Examples of recorded benefits included generic terms such as “community support”, “drinks”, “car” or “van fuel”. This makes it nearly impossible to determine whether these are activities that provide real community benefit and are consistent with the intent and purpose of the scheme.

Much of the responsibility for this enforcement rests with the ACT government, and the Auditor-General has provided a number of constructive recommendations for how the reporting and enforcement of the scheme could be improved. I look forward to seeing the government’s response to this report.

The reality is that at the moment the Gaming Machine Act provides a very broad definition of community contribution and there is no further guidance in the Gaming Machine Regulation regarding what constitutes and should be allowable as a community contribution. This is a matter that needs government consideration, and that is the process that is currently underway.

Mr Parton's motion also talks about excessive fees, charges and taxes and makes claims about the comparative tax rate for clubs in New South Wales. Of course, there are many ways to present these figures, and I have seen some very creative interpretations of these figures over time. But here are the figures quoted in Dr Livingstone's recent report. The effective average rate of tax on gaming machine revenue in the ACT was 19.9 per cent in 2014-15. The average for all Australian jurisdictions was 29.9 per cent during the same period. In New South Wales it was 22.9 per cent and in Victoria it was 41 per cent.

It is also important to note that net gaming revenue in the ACT is calculated based on gaming machine revenue—that is, user losses—minus operating costs which are set at 24 per cent. In Victoria it is based on the net amount lost by poker machine users, with no allowance made for operating expenses. This means that in Victoria clubs must provide a contribution 37 per cent greater than that required for ACT clubs. This is not to suggest that clubs do not have a range of expenses, taxes and fees they must pay, but the reality is that the ACT gaming tax regime is no more onerous, and arguably is significantly less onerous, than similar regimes in other jurisdictions.

What we do know is that gaming machine revenue is decreasing as fewer people are playing poker machines, although the evidence suggests that the amount of harm from these machines is not decreasing. Dr Livingstone found that gambling harms are widespread across the ACT community and directly affect up to 16,000 people, about 4,400 of these directly at a serious to very serious level. The level of harm associated with gambling in the ACT is estimated to be close to that associated with harmful or dependent alcohol use and well in excess of that associated with cannabis dependency.

Figures from the ANU show that in 2014-15 people in the ACT spent \$167.45 million on the pokies. Almost 20 per cent of adults played the pokies at least once in that period, with losses totalling nearly \$38 million. Of these losses, 63 per cent came from people with at least some problem gambling symptoms. Twenty-eight per cent of losses came from people at moderate risk or people identified as problem gamblers. This means that \$10.59 million was lost by people in the ACT with some level of gambling addiction. This is not a small or insignificant issue.

The fundamental dilemma that lies at the heart of this is that while we recognise the significant amount of benefit that many people in our community get through their community club activities, much of that benefit is funded by poker machine revenue which causes significant harm to other parts of our community. These harms are not addressed by the community contributions scheme, and I would argue that they are not completely offset by the contributions made under that scheme. That is where we need to bring a bit of sense and a bit of nuance to this discussion. Yes, the clubs do provide a range of supports to our community, but we cannot simply close our eyes to where that money comes from or the impact that it has in our community. To do so is dishonest, and it is not good enough for this place to simply ignore those consequences.

Community contributions are an acknowledgement that gambling imposes significant social, psychological, physical and emotional costs on the Canberra community. While we cannot always directly address all of these harms through the scheme, we

must not forget the fundamental reason why the scheme exists when we engage in this debate.

With these factors in mind, the Greens believe that the current review provides an opportunity to explore some key questions. What should the definition of “community benefit” be and what sorts of activities should be counted under the scheme? How can the reporting and distribution arrangements be adjusted to ensure that the scheme is appropriately transparent and maximise community benefit? How much of the current scheme should be about directly responding to the gambling harm that results from gaming machines, and how much should fund broader community activities in line with the community focus of clubs?

I do not have all the answers to these questions, and I do not have a predetermined outcome of the review in mind. But what I am not prepared to do is rule anything in or out, as Mr Parton’s motion asks us to do today. The government is undertaking an important process, which is taking the voices of clubs and the community into account. That process should be allowed to take its course, and that is why we will be supporting the amendment put forward by Minister Ramsay.

We are strong supporters of our community clubs, but we have an equally strong commitment to harm minimisation and reducing gambling harm. We cannot simply sit back and allow a business model that relies so much on and has become so dependent on gaming machine revenue to continue unquestioned. We recognise that ACT clubs provide significant value for our community, but we do not accept that the good work clubs do means that they have a right to profit from gambling harm or that they are excused from a responsibility to minimise harm from their gambling products. We believe that the social licence for clubs to be reliant on poker machine revenue has expired, and we support the government working with clubs to help them diversify their revenue streams.

We accept that the transition away from a reliance on poker machine revenue will be challenging, particularly for some of the clubs, which is why the reduction in the number of machines will be staged over several years and why the government is working with clubs to help identify alternative income streams.

At the last election the Greens put forward a transition plan for clubs, and we remain committed to those measures. These included tax rebates for clubs with improved harm minimisation measures, water subsidies for sporting ovals and greens, reduced liquor licensing fees for low-risk venues, and business and financial support for diversification proposals.

The review of the community contributions scheme is an important part of the government’s commitment to harm minimisation. Both through this process and the broader work that is happening in this space, our commitment remains to continue doing all we can to better support addicted gamblers and their families. At the same time we will also continue to support our clubs to survive and flourish, especially those committed to reducing their reliance on revenue from poker machines and problem gambling.

The last thing I want to touch on today is that we are seeing a very active community discussion about this at the moment. Of course, ClubsACT is running a campaign and various community members are putting their view. And that is right; that is what should be going on, because we are having a consultation process and people are free to put their views. But I do take issue with the way some elements of this campaign are being conducted.

I recently wrote a letter to the Chief Executive of ClubsACT expressing my dismay at some of the tactics they had used. Specifically, they gave out the email address and mobile phone number of Hands Across Canberra and urged their members to contact them. Hands Across Canberra is a charity organisation. Potentially, if the scheme is changed, they would become the recipients of some of those funds and would then disburse them to a group of charities across Canberra. It begs the question: why would ClubsACT see them as a target as part of this campaign?

They also gave out the email addresses and phone numbers for MLAs, and that is perfectly appropriate. The community should contact us to put their views. But it beggars belief that ClubsACT would give out the mobile phone number of a charity organisation, and have their supporters ring up and harass that community organisation. Why? What possesses you to do something like that?

I have written to the Chief Executive of ClubsACT expressing my disappointment at the recent tactics employed by ClubsACT. I have explained to them, in case they were not clear about this, what Hands Across Canberra is. I have asked ClubsACT, whilst they are absolutely entitled to express their views, to be more considerate in the future and not to target what I deem the “innocent bystander”.

I have asked ClubsACT not to employ these tactics in the future. I hope they will reflect on their tactics in this process. By all means participate in the public debate; absolutely. We have all had plenty of experience of their enthusiasm for that process, and we will continue to do so. But, come on; employ a little bit of decency when it comes to your approach to these debates.

The Greens will be supporting Minister Ramsay’s amendment today.

MS LAWDER (Brindabella) (11.36): I will start by paraphrasing Mr Rattenbury’s start to his speech. It appears to me that it is clear that the current government is not working as well as it could and improvements could be made. This is just one more example where the government are failing ACT clubs. They failed them back in 2015 when the public accounts committee tabled its report on its inquiry into the future of the clubs sector, and it is failing them again now.

When I came to Canberra—I think it was in 1988—I experienced the community club model for the first time. Having lived mostly in Melbourne but in some other places before then, this was a new experience to me. My husband and I joined some clubs, as many Canberrans did. You joined clubs based on shared values, shared interests and also geographic location. I will embarrass my husband by mentioning here that when he was a teenager he played piano accordion in a band at the Harmonie German Club,

because he came from a German family. Luckily for me, he does not play the piano accordion anymore!

Mrs Dunne: You are missing out.

MS LAWDER: No, I am not. He does not play it anymore, but they joined the German club because of those shared interests and sense of community. This is why clubs were established in the first place: because of shared interests. Over time, we joined other clubs based on our own and our children's sporting and other interests. People join clubs for a particular reason, and they usually understand what the clubs are doing to support the local sporting groups and community and interest groups.

I would like now to turn to the many comments I have received from constituents. Whilst I have received comments from people right across Canberra, I am going to focus on just a few from my own electorate to highlight the concerns that people have facing them in their own particular choices in joining clubs. I will read from a couple. I note that many of these emails have gone to many, if not all, MLAs, so you should be familiar with the content.

The Tuggeranong Valley Rugby League Football Club said:

Therefore, we as a community club, do not understand the ACT Government's determination to change a system where the obvious goodwill shown by the clubs in contributing more than is required. A centrally administered fund as proposed by the ACT Government is not a more efficient mechanism than is currently in place.

Another one said:

My wife and I ... are both active members of The Combined Probus Club of Lake Tuggeranong and ... have ... received considerable assistance from the Southern Cross Club Tuggeranong and more recently from the Vikings Club, Town Centre and the Vikings Club, Erindale.

In particular, the Probus Club holds its General Meetings at the Town Centre Club every month at no cost to us for the use of quite a large room, sufficient to hold the 80-90 members who attend regularly ... It seems to me that the proposal to place Club Community Contributions into a government run centrally administered pool of funds will most probably lead to these types of small groups being unable to meet to help needy community causes ... My wife and I appreciate enormously the facilities that are provided to us, and to other members of the Canberra community more widely, at no cost. In return, of course, people in the community reciprocate through support of the clubs through their membership and use of club facilities.

Therefore, I should like it placed on record that my wife and I are both very much against the suggestion of a government centrally administered fund, no matter how it might be "dressed up".

A member of the Ni Bonchi Judo Club at Vikings Lanyon said:

... our not for profit Judo Club ... is currently sponsored by the Lanyon Vikings Club.

Ni Bonchi Judo is a small club run by families for families. We regularly and very successfully compete in local and national competitions where we proudly represent Canberra and Judo ACT ... As a not for profit Judo club this plan—

the government's plan

could result in the Vikings withdrawing some or all of their essential financial and venue support. In turn impacting the many families that make up our club and their ability to continue Judo and keep representing Canberra.

The chairman of SCOA, the former Superannuated Commonwealth Officers Association, which goes across the ACT, said.

SCOA Australia ... runs activities for our members in the various states. In the ACT, this includes regular quarterly open meetings for members, with speakers on topics of both particular and general interest. These generally attract between 50 and 90 attendees and are held in venues at ACT clubs, generally provided free of charge as part of their current community contribution obligation.

We are concerned that under the new proposed arrangements, with the ACT Government distributing all community contributions through a centrally administered fund, a focus on broader community progress and initiatives ... may result in in-kind funding ... falling through the cracks.

A constituent in Gordon said:

... I am perplexed by the Chief Minister's statements that his new charitable fund aims to support "*a wider range of activities*" and "*will provide targeted support*", particularly as there is substantial evidence to demonstrate that this is already happening.

As a matter of principle, I am totally opposed to governments and/or political parties using community groups for political advantage i.e. free publicity and pork-barrelling.

At the very outset, the deceptive title of "Chief Minister's Charitable Fund" politicises the issue.

Whilst I have the greatest respect for Hands Across Canberra, I have not seen any sound evidence to demonstrate that HAC would be better able to distribute funds in a more effective, efficient, impartial and social beneficial way than the clubs are already doing. In addition, I am concerned that precious money, which should be going to needy and worthy community groups, will become annual expenditure for the additional layers of administration needed ...

A member of the valley Vikings and Southern Cross clubs said:

They provide financial, service and in-kind support for several social, educational and community groups in Tuggeranong and Woden in which I participate ... I can look at the Southern Cross Website and see the list of local community groups they support. I can even nominate which group gets a portion of my spend at the club. Valley Vikings also lists ... the community and sporting groups they support.

The Southern Cross Club said:

... CSCC does not believe that there is a basis for the significant and potential harmful reforms to the community contributions model ...

Mr Ramsay has responded to a number of the writers. One of them has responded to him in turn. They said:

Your response below, either through ignorance or wilful design, overlooks the key points of my correspondence i.e. the politically deceptive (in name) “Chief Minister’s Charitable Fund” should not have ever been created, and should be dispensed with as a matter of priority. Therefore, it follows that not one cent of money from clubs in the ACT should go to this or any other politicised fund for distribution.

I will make a quick comment here. The Vikings club nominates a charity of the year. The first one was Red Nose. The second one was OzHarvest. Recently they have nominated Marymead. I went to the presentation of the annual collection when they presented a cheque to OzHarvest. The cheque was for over \$60,000 that they had contributed. They also support the Pines Tennis Club. I have had emails from the Pines Tennis Club outlining the value and benefits of support for the Pines Tennis Club. There is so much that goes on in our community that would not be possible without the support of the clubs.

Finally, I would like to quote my friend Artur, from Isabella Plains, who said:

Please take note that I do not Approve of your intentions & proposal to create a new bureaucracy to administer the combined funds available from all the clubs in the ACT, Keep your Fingers out of the Clubs funding arrangements, this is an attack on the rights of the citizenship, and will not serve the community to the best advantage, we the Citicen are happy with the distribution as presently occur.

He quotes Albert Einstein:

A foolish Faith in Authority, is the worst enemy of the TRUTH.

And he said in Latin that an argument to the purse is to one’s self-interest.

MRS DUNNE (Ginninderra) (11.47): I thank Mr Parton for bringing forward this important motion today. It allows me an opportunity to briefly put on record the appreciation that I have, as a local member, for the many community organisations and for the clubs who support them. I will start at the top, with those where I have to declare a conflict of interest.

Radio 1RPH, where I have volunteered for more years than I can count—in fact, I have lost count—has written to me and other members about their gratitude for the support that they receive from the Canberra Southern Cross Club for “bringing you this radio reading service”, as the promo says. And we have to remember, Madam Assistant Speaker, that the Southern Cross Club continued to support Radio 1RPH when this Labor government did not.

As a former patron of Karinya House, I also have to acknowledge the Canberra Southern Cross Club for its magnificent support of Karinya House, with a substantial in-kind donation every year to the dinners that most members of this place have attended at least once. Mr Rattenbury, Ms Stephen-Smith, Ms Fitzharris and many members on this side have attended. Mrs Jones is a regular attender. Canberra Southern Cross Club opens up its entire function facility and provides every ounce of food and all the PA system—the whole lot—gratis to Karinya House. That enables them to raise many tens of thousands of dollars towards their quite ambitious fundraising campaign every year.

My daughter plays for the Uni Owls women's team, who are in the grand final this week at the Vikings club. They are supported by the RUC in Turner.

But it goes across all of the other great organisations. Probus clubs across this town rely upon licensed clubs who provide them with accommodation for their meetings free of charge. The Probus club, as a group and individually, have written to many members. The east Canberra Probus club benefits from the generosity of the Canberra Deakin Football Club. Another Probus club benefits from the Jamison Southern Cross Club. The Macquarie Probus club receives assistance from the Raiders club in Belconnen.

The Campbell-Russell RSL sub-branch receives assistance from the Yowani golf club. The Canberra Blues Society Inc has its home at the Harmonie German Club. I do not think you actually get piano accordions with blues, but it shows the diversity of the musical appreciation of the Harmonie German Club, because they house both German oompah bands and the Blues Society. The Southern Cross social dance group exists because of the generosity of the Canberra Southern Cross Club.

In my own electorate, in addition to assisting the Macquarie Probus club, the Raiders Belconnen club is extraordinarily generous to community groups. The ACT Apple Users Group depends upon the free accommodation for its meetings that it receives from Raiders Belconnen. The Joy Cummings sewing group say to me that they could not meet if it were not for the generosity of Raiders Belconnen. The University of Canberra Grizzlies rugby league football club also extols the virtues of the Raiders Belconnen and the support they give. Going to an issue which is close to many members in this place, Bosom Buddies has written to many of us extolling the virtues of the Canberra Southern Cross Club and the generosity that they receive from the club.

I have talked about only some clubs. This is just the tip of the iceberg. These are associations that I have had something to do with or that are in my electorate. These organisations depend upon licensed clubs, for the most part, giving gifts in kind.

Mr Rattenbury and Mr Ramsay have found a number of things which they think are wrong, and the Auditor-General has highlighted some of those. Instead of throwing the baby out with the bathwater, call it for what it is. Say that there are things about the scheme that need tightening up.

There are things about the scheme that need tightening up, but we do not need to take away from licensed clubs and their members autonomy as to how they spend their money—and remember that it is members' money—and give it to Andrew Barr. Quite frankly, Madam Assistant Speaker, the average club-going member of the ACT does not quite trust Andrew Barr to give out money through his Chief Minister grandiose scheme in a way that ensures that it goes to the little organisations that get by on the smell of an oily rag and make such a contribution to this territory. Whether it is a sewing group, whether it is turning print into sound, whether it is providing a home for young women who have no home, whether it is encouraging young women to play rugby union football or whether it is a blues music group, they all make a contribution. And they make a contribution because the community clubs choose to help them.

As Mr Milligan has quite adequately said, this government is not going to step into the gap and fund the more than 1,500 organisations that are currently funded. It is not in their DNA to do it, and they will be picking winners all the time. I commend Mr Parton for his motion, I commend Mr Parton for his vigour and activity in this place, and I commend him for standing up for Canberra's community clubs.

MR PARTON (Brindabella) (11.53): This motion was never about harm minimisation. None of the references in the “notes” or “calls upon” sections of my motion had anything to do with harm minimisation. The discussion paper is not about harm minimisation. The discussion paper is not about machine reduction. If the government chooses to go with one of the three options in the discussion paper, that has no effect whatsoever on the level of gambling in the city or the level of gambling harm. This motion was never about the level of gambling or the level of gambling harm.

I will speak to Mr Ramsay's amendment. I understand that when Mr Ramsay starts thinking about gambling, all he can think about is gambling harm: gambling is no good; no-one has ever enjoyed having a punt; this is not Australia, is it? But this motion has nothing to do with gambling harm. That is an important issue for another debate.

Mr Ramsay's amendments refer to a 2017 report by Dr Charles Livingstone on community contributions. It is no surprise to me that Dr Livingstone is a hero of Mr Rattenbury. I gather that he has certainly been a member of the Greens in the past and probably still is. But I note that in the recent court case against Crown casino, Dr Livingstone gave evidence as a gambling expert. He has been quoted here as a gambling expert. His evidence was rejected as being inadmissible by the judge; the court would not accept it. Why? It was because, according to the court, Dr Livingstone is a known anti-gambling advocate. So his evidence as an academic could not be used, and it was not used. I wanted to draw members' attention to that point.

As we consider this motion and the amendment, I would like us to consider for a moment a historical Labor figure. Does the name Ros Kelly ring a bell? When it comes to the Labor Party pooling money to distribute as they choose, we may remember the sports rorts affair of 1993. Of course, at the time this was all being done,

it was supposed to be so noble. This was all going to be beyond reproach. This was all going to be about maximising the benefit to the community. That is what it was supposed to be about.

History shows us that it did not work out that way at all. Indeed, history shows us that the sports rorts affair cost the federal minister her job. Ros Kelly resigned over allegations that funds were allocated for political purposes. Indeed, at the by-election the Liberals ended up winning the seat. I wonder whether we will be using a big whiteboard to list the thousands of applications for funding through this proposed new centralised fund.

What I do know is that whatever happens it is clear that nobody from this government would be stepping down or resigning over anything. There is very clearly a belief from those in this government that they can do or say whatever they like and get away with it. There are those from this government who believe that they can force these changes through by hook or by crook and that everyone who is against them will just forgive and forget. Let me tell you, Madam Assistant Speaker, that these people will not be forgiving and forgetting.

You mess with this very successful model at your own peril. Community looks after community. The clubs are owned by community; clubs are community. They should be trusted by this self-righteous Labor-Greens government. They should be trusted to keep on serving their communities as they have for many years.

I have heard Mr Ramsay talk in the public space. We have heard today about this dastardly situation: community contributions paying for coaches' wages and paying for player wages and expenses. I have heard the inference that this is so wrong and that it is so far outside the guidelines. I think I should refer to those guidelines. Subsection 65(2) of Gaming Regulation 2004 provides the following guidance with respects to payments that promote, develop or encourage sport or sporting activities. This is what the official regulation lists:

- (a) payment of a sportsperson's wages or expenses;
- (b) payment for sports uniforms and equipment;
- (c) payment for sporting coaches ...

I note that there were all these questions about a particular professional coach. These expenses are very clearly in the official guidelines; so why are we carrying on about them? My message to the government is that if you do not want these things, if you do not think they should be included as community contributions, then change the guidelines.

As the Auditor-General made clear on a number of occasions in her report, the problem was not necessarily with the conduct of the clubs; rather, the guidelines were not clear enough for those navigating the system. Why would you punish those who have complied with the rules? Why would you trash the whole system because there is some confusion over what is in or what is out?

In closing, I would like to refer to a letter that was sent to Alison Playford, the D-G of the JACS directorate. It came from Betty Ferguson, the president of the Probus Association of Canberra & District. Betty says:

We consider the Probus Club meetings and functions are vital to the social interaction of many of our members and for some, this is what they look forward to each month. For our members, many of whom are senior aged single women and men, this provides a significant benefit to physical and mental wellbeing.

We believe that if the ACT Government establishes a central charitable fund to receive all community contributions and distribute money to charitable and community causes by an independent administrative body ... then the viability of the Probus Club in the ACT and the Probus Association would be in jeopardy.

Mr Ramsay believes that I have been scouting around town telling people in aged groups that they are going to lose all of their funding. They have come to me. I have not gone to them; they have come to me and said, "We want to make this point. We believe that there is a serious chance that if the funding model changes, we are going to be at the bottom of the list," which will be diminished because there is only so much money to go around.

Mr Ramsay and Mr Rattenbury can turn their backs on the clubs as much as they like. Mr Barr and co can say that if the clubs choose not to support the Probus club or the junior rugby league club, that is the clubs' call. But the reality is that there is only so much money to go around. If the government takes away a large chunk of these community contributions, if they become a tax, it will mean that something else has to give. The smaller clubs and groups that get money from clubs know that they are only small. They are on a long list of contribution recipients.

If that overall monetary amount is to shrink, they cannot all make the cut. Somebody has to lose. If this system changes, as per any of the options listed, then the reality is that there will be a number of sporting clubs, social groups and community organisations that miss out. And they will remember.

Question put:

That the amendment be agreed to.

The Assembly voted—

Ayes 12

Noes 9

Ms J Burch	Ms Orr	Miss C Burch	Ms Lee
Ms Cheyne	Mr Pettersson	Mr Coe	Mr Milligan
Ms Cody	Mr Ramsay	Mrs Dunne	Mr Parton
Ms Fitzharris	Mr Rattenbury	Mr Hanson	
Mr Gentleman	Mr Steel	Mrs Kikkert	
Ms Le Couteur	Ms Stephen-Smith	Ms Lawder	

Amendment agreed to.

Original question, as amended, resolved in the affirmative.

ACTION bus service—timetable changes

MISS C BURCH (Kurrajong) (12.06): I move:

That this Assembly:

(1) notes that:

- (a) from 2019, only 55 percent of Canberrans will be within walking distance from a Rapid bus stop, meaning 45 percent of Canberrans must walk over 800 metres or catch connecting services to access Rapid public transport;
- (b) the new routes service fewer areas and leave many commuters forced to:
 - (i) walk longer distances to a bus stop; or
 - (ii) travel on a service that is slower; or
 - (iii) change buses and take two or more bus routes to get to major town centres and hubs like Civic, Woden, Tuggeranong, Belconnen, Gungahlin and Barton;
- (c) more than half of all dedicated school buses will be cut, forcing children to use the general public bus network and travel through interchanges to get to and from school;
- (d) as of August 2018, the ACT Government is yet to release the 2019 bus timetable for consultation;
- (e) without access to the proposed timetable, it is nearly impossible to ascertain the impact of the new network on commuters or for the community to provide genuine feedback in the consultation process; and
- (f) there is strong dissatisfaction in the community of the ACT Government's consultation process, and many feel their concerns are not being heard; and

(2) calls on the Minister for Transport and City Services to:

- (a) explain to the Assembly why the language concerning public consultation has changed from wanting to understand the impacts of the new bus routes on commuters to “how we can best support you to use the bus network and improve your overall experience when using and connecting to public transport”;
- (b) hold a further round of consultation for the proposed bus network, which would include releasing the proposed 2019 timetable for consultation, and detailing how community feedback has been incorporated into the proposed network; and
- (c) make publicly available the results of the consultation, including a report to the Assembly which details community sentiment regarding the proposed changes, by November 2018.

Two weeks ago I rose in this place to speak on behalf of all the Canberrans who feel let down by the government's consultation processes on the new bus network, and provided example after example of how constituents feel that the government is not listening to them. That is why today I am calling on the Labor-Greens government to

stop treating Canberrans with the disdain that has characterised the way in which they conduct consultation on everything from P-plater laws to the new bus network.

We have heard from school principals who have walked away from the consultation process feeling as if these changes were already a done deal. We have heard from parents, the elderly and many commuters who feel that Transport Canberra's roadshows have been laughable.

A comprehensive network overhaul of this magnitude affects everyone. Everyone should have an opportunity to comment, and a lot of people have. We have seen over 8,000 responses, in fact, and they are not happy. As my colleagues and I have witnessed countless times in these public meetings and roadshows, often when residents air their frustrations they are told by public officials to wait until after the meeting as public officials are all too often not willing to address their concerns publicly.

We have heard from countless parents who are afraid, and rightly so, of putting their primary school aged children onto public buses that will take them to crowded and potentially dangerous interchanges. We have heard from parents of children who suffer from disabilities whose access to direct school buses represents the only option for them to get to and from school.

We have heard stories of the 70 and 80-year-old residents whose direct access to public transport will be cut under the new network, leaving them socially isolated and unable to get around Canberra. Further, we have heard at numerous community meetings how mothers and fathers will have less time each morning and evening to spend with their families because of added travel times. We have heard how the extra 15 or 20 minute walk to and from the bus stop places further inconvenience on so many people and makes their door-to-door commute that much longer and more difficult.

I agree with Transport Canberra's deputy director, Duncan Edgehill, that individual circumstances change. But when you receive hundreds of responses from Canberrans who hail from all walks of life, all disgruntled and disappointed about the proposed changes, it is not something you can so easily dismiss.

But what did Minister Fitzharris do with the feedback similar to what I have just described? She changed the game. This is a government that loves to move the goalposts. Time and time again, we have seen directorates fall short of indicators and targets not being met, or media articles criticising government decisions, and instead of pulling up their socks and admitting to these shortcomings and working to fix them, they have just changed how these things are measured.

I draw the Assembly's attention to the government's your say website, which hosted the submissions for the consultation process on the new bus network. Despite reassurances from both the deputy director and Minister Fitzharris herself that the consultation process would focus on how these proposed changes would affect Canberrans, the language on the website significantly begs to differ. The website reads:

From 18 June 2018 to 12 August 2018, we asked you, the community, how we can best support Canberrans to use the proposed New Bus Network to travel to school, commute to work, attend community and sporting events and get around our growing city.

This language does not suggest a government that is open to hearing the frank and honest views of so many Canberrans; rather it implies that, as so many Canberrans suspect, these changes are already a foregone conclusion.

It is not only the ACT government website that has cast doubt on the genuine nature of this process. Many school principals from both public and independent schools have also questioned its validity and transparency. A *Canberra Times* article published on 8 August quoted numerous principals all of whom raised concerns about the lack of information and consultation offered to their schools. We have heard from public school principals who have told their school communities that they have been misled by this government. Independent school principals have had their requests for meetings refused until finally being agreed to late last week in the dying days of consultation, with meetings only to take place after the consultation period has already concluded.

As I said two weeks ago, one of the most damning parts of this consultation process is the fact that the government is yet to release timetables. Without timetable information, it is impossible for Canberrans to fully understand the impact of the new network on them and their families. Withholding necessary and vital information is not only insulting to the people of Canberra but also serves to discredit and delegitimise the consultation process in the first place. People who use the network are entitled to see the effects of the new timetable on their door-to-door travel times. Parents are entitled to see how long their children will be waiting at interchanges. The elderly are also entitled to see how long they will be required to wait at bus stops on a cold Canberra winter morning, waiting to catch the second or third leg of their journey.

Transport Canberra deputy director Mr Edgehill said during estimates only a few weeks ago:

There will be a much shorter, effectively, third phase of consultation after this consultation where we will be putting the timetable out and saying, "These are the actual bus times."

Yet in all of the roadshows and all of the public meetings, we have heard nothing of this third phase of consultation. The government has said time and time again that this new network is more direct, accessible and frequent, yet it is yet to release any form of data or timetabling to support these claims. Let me be clear. I recognise that timetabling is a complicated beast, and I am not calling for timetabling consultation in order for individual arrival and departure times to be critiqued. Rather, Canberrans who rely on this network every day cannot give legitimate feedback on how this network will affect them without seeing the timetables.

The minister's proposed amendments to my motion today are laughable, and the Canberra Liberals will not be supporting them. I will go through a couple of these

quickly. At 1(b) the minister states that Canberrans said they wanted more direct routes, yet under the new network we will be seeing many more transfers, cuts to the Xpresso services—and it really does not get more direct than the Xpresso services—and fewer bus stops. At 1(b) she also says that Canberrans wanted increased services across both on and off-peak times, including evenings and weekends. Yet we are seeing so many people losing suburban services.

At 2(b) she says that almost 80 per cent of those surveyed said they would be prepared to walk further to a bus stop if their journeys were faster. Yet under the proposed new network we are seeing door-to-door travel times become longer for many people. I strongly suspect that if this question had been rephrased and people were asked if they would mind their total journey times increasing, the answer would have been a resounding no.

At 2(e) the minister talks about Transport Canberra having consulted directly with older Canberrans about these proposed changes. Yet we have heard from countless retirement communities and bodies who claim that they were not consulted. Only yesterday we saw a petition lodged by over 500 residents from just one retirement community about these proposed changes.

At 3(a) the minister's amendment talks about releasing timetabling before the new network commences. This entirely ignores the issue of consultation on new timetables. It is completely inconsistent with what we have already heard from the deputy director of Transport Canberra. And really it is quite laughable, because you would certainly expect that a timetable would be released, at the minimum, before the new network commences.

I also draw the Assembly's attention to a media release by Minister Fitzharris on 6 August entitled "Record bus patronage supports proposed new network". This is yet another example of delegitimising the consultation process. By in effect correlating statistics with an otherwise unrelated conclusion, Minister Fitzharris is serving to undermine the process by discrediting any view which contradicts the proof that the media release outlined. Rather ironically, what the minister is saying is, "The current system is working, so let's completely overhaul it." An example of this lunacy is that the media release also cited tertiary students as a large driver of public transport use in Canberra. Yet under the proposed new network the No 3 service that runs directly through the ANU is going to be cut.

This government is making it harder for children to get to school, employees to get to work, elderly people to get to their medical appointments, and the sick to get to hospital. If this government really did take public consultation seriously, then they would see how poorly designed this new network is.

As late as yesterday, the minister admitted, "We have not heard much from those who don't use the network." Just to be clear, this new network has been designed and is intended to be implemented for Canberrans who do not use public transport and who did not contribute to the consultation process, at the expense of those who do currently use the network.

The minister has spoken at length about increasing the number of rapids in order to increase overall patronage of the new network. While this is definitely a good thing and we all agree that we want to see more Canberrans using public transport, this should not be at the expense of those who currently rely on it.

What seems to be forgotten here is the inherently public nature of public transportation. Yes, we want to encourage more commuters to use public transport. But equally, if not more importantly, public transport needs to be available to our less advantaged members of the community, those who do not have access to a car and those who cannot or can no longer safely drive. By cutting suburban services and removing bus stops, the new network neglects our most vulnerable. The government would know this, of course, if they chose to listen to the past eight weeks of public outcry. But they have not listened for the past 17 years, so why would they start now?

The minister needs to stop taking Canberrans for granted. The people of Canberra are more than just a cash cow for rainbow roundabouts and ill-forsaken, over-budget infrastructure plans.

These people rely on you to provide services that make their lives easier and provide the means by which they can access the plethora of opportunities that our territory has to offer. Public transport is a means by which Canberrans can and do access these opportunities. We must listen to those who have elected us.

MS LE COUTEUR (Murrumbidgee) (12.17): This will be a brief speech. As people know, I am very much in favour of our bus network and a regular user of it. I would love to be able to talk at greater length, but I do not think I can.

I will not be supporting Miss Burch's motion because it is not nearly as practically constructed as the amendment to be proposed by the minister. I cannot agree with her that the timetables all have to be out front. We have to do consultation while there are still decisions being made. If we make all the decisions and then do the consultation the community will rightly feel aggrieved that they have no say on what is going on. I think Minister Fitzharris's amendment better identifies the real issues and commits to further consultation on them. It is not sensible or practical in my view to produce timetables that go with consultation about the bus route because at that point, if we are doing genuine consultation, the timetables would be close to completely meaningless.

We already have a commitment from the government in terms of minimum timings for the rapid routes so we have some idea of what the timetables must be. But our buses do not just run one route; a bus might do a 3 to Woden then a 23 down to Woden valley, a 26 to Weston and a 60 through Kambah. If there were a change in, say, the No 3 route, that would change not just the timetable for that route but potentially all the others. We would have people putting submissions in on the basis of timetables that have not been worked out yet.

This recent consultation has the problems every other public transport system has in balancing where it puts its resources. Everybody wants a bus stop next to them or very close to them. Everybody wants more frequent services. Everybody wants faster

services. Everybody wants at the very least not to increase the rates they have to pay. All of these together are not consistent, and the issue for our public transport system, like others, is to balance the competing demands.

Miss Burch's motion highlighted some of the competing demands, but we also have to look at the competing demands of the current day-to-day user and commuter. I am very confident that the government has looked at those because it has a wonderful treasure-trove of data. It has all the MyWay data. It knows where the people are going right now. I am confident that, whatever else they have tried to do, the government has tried to optimise it for the people who they know are already happy to use the bus.

One of the issues is that 80 per cent of people are happy to walk further for better services and 20 per cent are not. Where this becomes a real issue is that some of those 20 per cent simply cannot walk for further services. Miss Burch talked about retirement communities, and they are a good example of people who probably are in that situation.

It is a very difficult balance, so I am very pleased the amendment Minister Fitzharris will move calls on the government to do more work with ACTCOSS and other groups on this. Maybe some funding has to move from the standard bus network into the flexible bus service. Maybe we can do some more work on making demand-responsive services more widely available, particularly for those who are never really going to be served by a financially feasible public transport network.

Another difficult balance that Miss Burch highlighted is school buses. But we simply cannot keep running almost empty school buses on very long trips across Canberra for a fairly small number of children while packed buses are having to drive past people trying to get to work. Sometimes I do not manage to get on my bus in the morning because it is full. I totally appreciate that kids are established in a school and, understandably, their parents do not want the school bus removed. This is one of the difficult balances we have to find.

I understand that many people are concerned about the safety of children at interchanges. The minister has already promised more staff at interchanges to help the children, but parents are nervous because the details have not been released yet. That is why I asked Minister Fitzharris to include in her amendment consultation with peak bodies and parent groups about what they intend to deliver.

I have to say that safety at interchanges is an issue not just for schoolkids; it is a major perception issue. I want to use the word "perception" very clearly. I regularly travel through the Woden bus interchange and due to the sitting hours of the Assembly and the public events I go to I do this at night sometimes. It has never seemed unsafe to me. I am very aware that while the buses are running there is always at least one ACTION staff member at the Woden interchange. We need to put out more of a message to people that interchanges are quite safe places not just for our kids but for all the people who might want to catch public transport in Canberra.

One of the other balancing issues is the Xpresso buses that will be stopping in favour of rapids. For some of us that works; it works for me. My husband catches an Xpresso

and that is going to be turned into a rapid so we are really happy. But I know that for others it does not work. I went to the Tuggeranong Community Council meeting where there were lots of examples of people it was not going to work for.

I have been to three community council consultations about the bus network, and in all of them people were asking for information about the Xpressos but none of them got that. That is why I asked a question on notice on about them. I think there has been a failure in the consultation; there needed to be more information about the Xpressos.

I have received a number of emails from people who have taken the time to step through what they believe the extra time will be for them if their Xpresso goes. There are people who think they will be spending an extra hour a day on the bus; if they still use the bus, which generally they say they will not. I am confident the government will do some more work on this because if I am getting a lot of feedback about this, they must be getting even more.

Clearly, if the government has 8,500 responses then there are issues and concerns with the network, but I think it is really great that there have been all these responses. Hopefully we will get the best network we possibly can with our resources. It is inevitably a balancing act, and I think we all need to stress the importance of a good public transport system. For that reason I very much thank Miss Burch for bringing this motion forward, but we must work with the government to make the best system we can, which is why I will be supporting the amendment Minister Fitzharris will move.

MS LEE (Kurrajong) (12.26): I thank Miss Burch for bringing this motion today about the proposed changes to the ACTION bus network. I speak to the motion in my capacity as shadow minister for education as it is school students, their parents and school leaders who will be amongst the hardest hit by the planned cuts. The changes to bus routes will impact every school in the ACT, some severely. Non-government schools are not bound by rigid priority enrolment areas that apply to government schools and draw students from across the territory, and it is these schools that will be most affected.

Parents choose to send their children to non-government schools for myriad reasons, whether it is religious affiliation, a particular program, or a school their siblings or perhaps they themselves attended. We are fortunate in Canberra that we have a diverse range of excellent non-government and government schools from which parents can choose to best suit their children's needs.

We know the total number of dedicated school buses in the network will be reduced by more than half, from 109 to just 47. Fifty-nine schools will have their dedicated school buses cut next year. This means that students, some as young as six, at the following schools will all be expected to take a public bus to and from school: Amaroo; Arawang primary; Bonython primary; Burgmann Anglican, Forde; Burgmann Anglican, Valley; Calwell high; Calwell primary; Canberra Grammar, north side early childhood; Caroline Chisholm; Chapman primary; Charles Conder primary; Covenant Christian; Curtin primary; Dickson College; Duffy primary; Evatt

primary; Florey primary; Garran primary; Good Shepherd primary; Gordon primary; Harrison; Hawker primary; Holy Trinity primary; Kaleen primary; Kingsford Smith; Lanyon high; Latham primary; Lyneham high; Macquarie primary; Majura primary; Monash primary; Mother Teresa Catholic primary; Namadgi; Narrabundah College; Narrabundah early childhood; Neville Bonner primary; Ngunnawal primary; Palmerston district primary; Red Hill primary; Rosary primary; Sacred Heart primary; St Bede's primary; St Benedict's primary; St Clare of Assisi primary; St Francis of Assisi primary; St John Vianney's primary; St Joseph's primary; St Matthew's primary; St Michael's primary; St Thomas Aquinas primary; St Vincent's primary; Sts Peter and Paul primary; Theodore primary; Torrens primary; Turner; University of Canberra high, Kaleen; Wanniasa primary; and Weetangera primary.

This means that students as young as five will be forced to get on a bus with regular commuters, many having to change at bus interchanges and many commutes involving a walk from home to the bus stop and a walk from the bus stop to school.

I have not met a single parent or a single school principal who is supportive of these changes. The fact is that most parents are uncomfortable sending their young children to school on public buses, and this is for myriad reasons. What if they miss their stop? Will they get off too early or too late or get lost? Will they be safe? The reality is that when children as young as five are forced on public buses, the chain of duty is broken.

On a dedicated school bus, a parent or guardian may wait with their child at a bus stop. Once their child is on the bus, the parent can be reassured that the bus will go straight to the school entrance. Once their child arrives at the school, the parent can be reassured that their child will be under the care of their principal and teacher. How can this tight chain of duty be upheld if students as young as five are being forced onto public buses? This is a serious safety concern. We have working with vulnerable people checks for all bus drivers for exactly that reason. If we are going to trust drivers with schoolchildren the government must ensure they are safe.

The government insists that the provision of TCCS officers at interchanges will assist students to make their connections. But how does this government expect TCCS staff to take care of the hundreds of children flowing through interchanges, and for how long will this happen?

Finally, I take this opportunity to directly communicate some comments I have received from parents to the minister so that I can be absolutely sure she hears them. A parent from Kambah commented that her child's school bus is full each day but that has not stopped the bus from being cancelled. She points out that kids with a heavy bag, gym gear and a musical instrument will take time to get on and off the bus and that grown-up patrons will be significantly less understanding of the time it takes for young kids to get on and off the bus.

A parent from Red Hill primary has contacted me. Currently school buses which service that school drop students directly at the school's entrance. However, the replacement bus will drop kids on the street and force five-year-olds to negotiate the busy school car park. This car park is risky at the best of times, but the removal of

dedicated school buses will doubtless force more families to drive children to school, further making this busy car park a veritable minefield.

A parent from Fisher says:

I remember as an older teen ... feeling uncomfortable on the bus when someone stared or started an inappropriate conversation. I remember getting up and moving seats. Yet primary schoolchildren, tweens and teens are expected to be allowed in these situations every day just to get to school.

The board of a school in the inner north states that the single biggest concern is over the ultimate safety and wellbeing of children which should override the government's simple pursuit of efficiencies, and the underlying truth about the current push to remove direct school buses remains entangled with a number of other serious mistruths and inconsistencies surrounding Canberra traffic not being addressed by this government.

A parent from Amaroo asks:

How will the safety of the primary schoolchildren on a public bus be ensured?
Will there be special stops at interchanges to let children off and on first?

The ACT Association of Parents and Friends has also raised major concerns about the safety of students in going about their core day-to-day journey of simply getting to and from school. This government are quick to say how important education is, but if they cannot be trusted to even get our children to and from school then I and the majority of Canberrans must seriously question whether they have their priorities right in the first place.

I must ask the minister: what really was the goal of this supposed improved network? After all the spin and rhetoric, we still do not know. Of course, this does not even begin to touch on the sham consultations this government has undertaken, which Miss Burch has spoken about in great detail today whilst the minister is not even fronting the thousands of Canberrans who are unhappy about these proposed network changes.

I thank Miss Burch for bringing this motion today to raise a significantly important issue that will impact thousands of Canberrans, particularly schoolchildren and their families, and I commend her motion to the Assembly.

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

Sitting suspended from 12.34 to 2.30 pm.

Questions without notice

Taxation—reform

MR COE: My question is for the Chief Minister and Treasurer. I refer to claims by former senior treasury official Dr Khalid Ahmed in the media on 25 July. Dr Ahmed

claims that the territory's own-source revenue has grown by \$400 million since 2012-13, representing a broken promise that the tax reform would be revenue neutral. This increase goes well beyond population and economic activity. Neither wages nor the territory's welfare concessions have kept pace with this. Dr Ahmed also claims that if the government had maintained the same revenue to gross state product as in 2011-12, it would have received about \$332 million less in revenue. Chief Minister, why has the government broken its promise about tax reform being revenue neutral?

MR BARR: The government has not broken its commitment in relation to tax reform, but we have seen a period of very strong economic growth for the territory. We have, in fact, been the fastest growing economy amongst all of the Australian states and territories. We have seen exceptionally strong growth particularly in new international investment in commercial property in the territory, and that has seen revenues increase. Particularly over the past few years, there were a couple of very significant commercial property transactions, including the sale of part—

Mr Coe: Did they pay stamp duty?

MR BARR: Yes. They included the sale of part of the Woden plaza shopping centre that attracted a very significant new investment partner. And there were a number of large commonwealth tenanted buildings that transacted during that period.

Mr Coe interjecting—

MR BARR: The rate of stamp duty for those commercial transactions is, of course, lower now than it was prior to tax reform—

Mr Hanson interjecting—

MR BARR: but there still remains a stamp duty on commercial property transactions, particularly very large ones.

Ms Cheyne: Madam Speaker—

MADAM SPEAKER: Chief Minister, can you resume your seat. Point of order.

Ms Cheyne: The constant interruptions are a pretty unbecoming way to start question time.

Mr Hanson: Oh—

MADAM SPEAKER: Thank you. There is no need for diddums inclinations there. I was about to about call you to order. Please be called to order.

MR BARR: Thank you, Madam Speaker. That is a totally new concept that has been introduced, but I feel it is very apt for those opposite. They have been sucking that one up for 17 years, haven't they, Madam Speaker?

Let us be clear that the strengths of the territory economy are record levels of economic growth and our population increase. The fact that we are seeing a very significant period of economic growth is, of course, being reflected in the territory's revenues. (*Time expired.*)

MR COE: Chief Minister, why has own-source revenue outstripped growth in wages and CPI?

MR BARR: We have seen very strong business activity. We have seen a number of revenue lines, including payroll tax and commercial conveyance, reflecting the strength of the economy, and the fact that our unemployment rate is the lowest of any Australian state or territory. We have pursued a growth model. We have wanted to ensure that Canberrans stayed in work during the very harsh cuts from your federal colleagues that damaged this economy significantly. We pursued a path of expansion, of economic activity and of job creation, and we have seen an extraordinary level of jobs growth.

We have the lowest unemployment rate in the nation. That means we are seeing increased payroll tax revenues for the territory. This is a good thing. It is a sign of a strong economy that is generating good, new, long-term, sustainable jobs for Canberrans. We are seeing people coming to our city from around Australia and overseas because they are attracted to our world-class lifestyle. This is the world's most livable city. People are moving here. Our population is growing rapidly. This is a fantastic thing for Canberra, and the evidence is that we have the lowest unemployment, the fastest growth and nearly our strongest era of population growth in the city's history.

MR PARTON: Why is the ACT budget not in fiscal surplus, given the growth in own-source revenue?

MR BARR: Perhaps it has escaped Mr Parton that the data I tabled in this place yesterday showed that the territory has a very strong operating cash surplus. Our headline net operating balance is in surplus and we continue to see our strong economic growth contributing very good social outcomes for our city, with unemployment very low and levels of workplace participation very high, and we continue to see that private sector wage growth, in fact, has been outstripping public sector wage growth because of the policies of your federal colleagues, which are suppressing public sector wages in the commonwealth public sector. If you want to look at anyone who has got something to account for in relation to slow wage growth it is your colleagues federally.

I remind you that it is your colleagues and your shadow minister who support cutting penalty rates as well. You want to take money out of people's pockets. You want to suppress their pay. That is the Liberal Party philosophy: driving down wages, insecure work, sacking people, turning this economy and this city backwards. That is your policy approach. No wonder it has been rejected so many times by the people of Canberra.

MADAM SPEAKER: Before I call the next question, Mr Coe, you were quiet noisy in those few minutes. Can you refrain.

Taxation—increases

MISS C BURCH: My question is to the Treasurer. I refer to an analysis by economist Mr Adrian Makeham-Kirchner on the impact of rapidly rising increases in rates, taxes and charges under this government reported in the media on 25 July. He found that the increases in ACT government rates, taxes and charges were hitting low income earners the hardest. Mr Makeham-Kirchner said:

“With the fixed portion of these taxes, rates and levies increasing, it means at the lower end of the income distribution it’s consuming a higher proportion of the household budget, and the concessions have essentially gone backwards in real terms.”

Why are increases in ACT government rates, taxes and charges consuming an increasing proportion of the household budget for low income earners?

MR BARR: Through the mix of concession policies that the ACT government has in place we have in recent times significantly increased our support for low income households. We are not, however, in the business of trying to cut their penalty rates or reduce their support through the social welfare system. We are not the party that seeks to ensure that the most vulnerable in our city receive the least support, which is the fundamental philosophical reason for being on this side of politics. That side of the chamber pride themselves on delivering as much cash as they possibly can to the top 10 per cent of income earners in this nation.

Opposition members interjecting—

MR BARR: That is what you are about. That is why you are all in politics: to put more money into the pockets of the richest Australians. We take a different approach. We support—

Mr Hanson: Madam Speaker, I raise a point of order. Mr Barr talked about us trying to put money into the pockets of people. I recall a hearing when Mr Barr objected to that and said it was unparliamentary. I ask you to rule on whether an allegation that people are trying to put money into the pockets of someone is unparliamentary.

MADAM SPEAKER: Mr Hanson, I will give you a very quick ruling. It is not out of order.

Mr Hanson: There you go, it is not out of order, Mr Barr. Did you hear that?

MADAM SPEAKER: It was context, Mr Hanson.

Mr Hanson: Oh, it was context!

MADAM SPEAKER: Mr Hanson, consider yourself warned.

Mr Hanson: Yeah, whatever.

MADAM SPEAKER: What did you just say, Mr Hanson, after I said to consider yourself warned?

MR HANSON: I said, “Whatever.”

MADAM SPEAKER: You are very close. One more utterance and you will be named, Mr Hanson.

MR BARR: As I was saying, this side of politics also invests very heavily in health, education and human services—

Mr Coe: And the Tradies.

MADAM SPEAKER: You will be added to that list, Mr Coe.

MR BARR: in order to support the most vulnerable in our community. I think it is very clear from the very different approaches to public policy that we see from this side of the chamber versus that side of the chamber that we support the most vulnerable in our community. *(Time expired.)*

MISS C BURCH: Why have concessions for low income households gone backwards in real terms since 2012?

MR BARR: The government has increased concessions in a number of areas, including though our concessions review where we sought to target support to those who need it most. We also focus across our investments in health, education and community services to provide support to the most needy in our community.

It is not just about direct cash payments. It is also about access to free, high quality health care. It is access to public education. It is access to community and social services that support families and individuals in need: the collective responsibility, both at our level of government and the Australian government level, to support the most vulnerable. It is why I have called for an increase in the Newstart allowance. That is another important measure that the Australian parliament could take to improve the lives of the most vulnerable.

MR COE: Chief Minister, why is the number of households facing financial pressure increasing rapidly if you are a so-called progressive government despite the fact that concessions have essentially gone backwards in real terms?

MR BARR: A range of factors have impacted on household incomes: low wage growth as a result of commonwealth policy; loss of penalty rates for many workers as a result of Liberal Party policy; refusal to address most of the significant issues in relation to our social security system as a result of Liberal Party policy; and the failure of the Abbott government’s removal of carbon taxation and the expected benefits of

\$550 that everyone was going to save when the carbon tax was removed, which has increased cost of living, is entirely down to the federal Liberal Party.

We have seen multiple examples across the economy where the policies of your side of politics have very significantly impacted on cost of living for low income households. There is significant opportunity in the coming 12 months to change the federal government and to see a better outcome for low income Australians.

Schools—playgrounds

MS LE COUTEUR: My question is to the minister for education and relates to access to playgrounds in schools. In a debate earlier this year on a playground at Waramanga shops, Minister Fitzharris said that playgrounds in schools should be accessible to the general public for use at weekends. Minister, is that the case for all public schools or are schools given a choice as to whether they lock their gates after school hours and at weekends?

MS BERRY: The policy on access to schools by the broader community with regard to playgrounds is available online. The policy is that school playgrounds are available to the broader school community as long as it does not interfere with the school operations or the management of the school.

MS LE COUTEUR: Minister, who can community members contact if they are actually having trouble accessing a playground at their local school outside school hours?

MS BERRY: They should speak to the school initially and then they should contact the Education Directorate if they have any issues. But the policy is very clear. Those schools are available for use by the broader community.

MS CODY: How is the government investing in improving community and sporting access to ACT public schools?

MS BERRY: The government is investing in our schools to ensure that community access is available. A number of schools have had works done to ensure that the community can access them out of hours. There has been an election commitment adding to our former work, which was actually started by the former minister for sport, Minister Shane Rattenbury.

I have added to that another \$100,000 to do upgrades to schools to make sure that they are more available to community groups that want to use them. There is also forward planning occurring to make sure that both indoor and outdoor facilities are available in all sorts of different ways.

Waste—green bins

MS CHEYNE: My question is to the Minister for Transport and City Services. Minister, can you please update the Assembly on the rollout of green bins to Belconnen?

MS FITZHARRIS: I thank Ms Cheyne very much for the question and note her continued advocacy for green bins, particularly in the electorate of Ginninderra. I am delighted to talk about the green bin rollout to Belconnen.

As you know, this was a Labor government commitment in the 2016 election campaign. The rollout has commenced. I know that in your electorate, Madam Speaker, there are already green bins on offer, as there are in Weston Creek and Kambah. We have now extended that to Belconnen. We are continuing to deliver on our commitment, with Belconnen residents the next to receive their green bins. Registrations opened just a couple of weeks ago and households started receiving the bins just this week.

I would like to thank my colleagues Minister Berry and Minister Ramsay for delivering the very first green bin to a household in Evatt just this week. The pick-up service for those bins will start next month. The remainder of Canberra will have their bins from July next year, including suburbs in the inner north, inner south, Hall, Gungahlin and Molonglo Valley.

As of 6 August this year, 2,211 Belconnen households had already registered to receive a green bin. Spring is just around the corner, and the green bins are arriving just in time for the start of what is always the busiest gardening season. In many areas of Belconnen in my own electorate, I know people are very excited about this service. Indeed I am sure that some of those opposite might even register and get their own green bin delivered. I would encourage all Belconnen residents to take advantage of this wonderful new service.

MS CHEYNE: Minister, what waste management and other benefits does a city-wide green bins program provide?

MS FITZHARRIS: Providing green bins city wide to all Canberrans will help save residents time and money and reduce the amount of waste sent to landfill or our waterways. The new bins will divert close to 5,000 tonnes of garden waste going to landfill each year. Waste collected from green bins will be processed, recycled and made available through commercial providers. Green waste is converted into clean compost and mulch products which are then sold to retail and wholesale markets. Over 3,134 tonnes of organic garden waste has been collected since the start of the green bins service.

Canberrans should be proud that to date the contamination in green bins is less than 0.01 per cent of the total green waste received by Corkhills. The most common contamination items include newspapers and magazines, plastic tags from plant nurseries, and garden clippings that have been put in a plastic bag. But this level of contamination is incredibly low and it is a real tribute to residents as well as both the NoWaste team and the contractors delivering this service.

Nevertheless, there will be an ongoing education program in place to provide information on what can and cannot be put into green bins. For everybody's information, residents can put the following items in their green bins: garden prunings; leaves; grass clippings; weeds; small branches; and flowers.

MR PETTERSSON: Minister, how can all local Ginninderra and Yerrabi MLAs help promote public awareness of green bins for Belconnen residents?

MS FITZHARRIS: That is a great question, and I encourage all MLAs to promote this wonderful service, particularly in the Belconnen region. As I mentioned earlier, Ministers Ramsay and Berry delivered the first green bins in Belconnen and, of course, our very active local member in Ginninderra Ms Cheyne is also an enthusiastic supporter of green bins and has been promoting them extensively through social media channels.

Unfortunately we see those opposite less active on the matter of green bins, particularly when this wonderful service is being delivered right across their electorates as well. It is confusing to some in the community, I am sure, Madam Speaker, because you may remember that about six years ago—I am advised, almost to the day—Mrs Dunne was out promoting the benefit of the Canberra Liberals' policy at that point to deliver green bins. Back then she said:

Effective waste management and reduction is not only important in protecting our environment, it's also a vital component of a well-managed city.

On this side of the chamber we absolutely agree. Mrs Dunne further said in 2012:

This initiative would save Canberra home owners up to \$400 a year in green waste collection services.

Even more recently the opposition were also proposing a green bin trial, a green bin roundtable, I understand—I think I recall from about two years ago—which never eventuated. I am sure the Canberra community will have a long memory on the Liberals' position on green bins and I look forward to them reversing their position on green bins, supporting the rollout of this wonderful service to Canberra and encouraging all their constituents to sign up for a green bin.

Members interjecting—

MADAM SPEAKER: Can we all settle down and get back to questions without notice.

Taxation—unit rating system

MR PARTON: My question is to the Treasurer. I refer to reports in the media of 9 August that the government had not modelled the impact of apartment and unit rates increases on rents. Why hasn't the government modelled the impact of its rates increases on rents?

MR BARR: The member would probably be aware, I would hope, that those charges are fully tax deductible.

MADAM SPEAKER: Mr Parton, a supplementary.

Mrs Dunne: Not if you're living in your own residence, it's not.

Mr Barr interjecting—

MADAM SPEAKER: Chief Minister and Mrs Dunne, please refrain. Mr Parton.

MR PARTON: How much have the changes to the rating system for units contributed to increases in rents for units?

MR BARR: It would be almost impossible to ascertain that. It would be from zero, because they are, of course, fully deductible. That would be the most likely outcome.

MR COE: Chief Minister, do you accept that your changes to the methodology for units and apartments are causing considerable hardship to many Canberrans?

MR BARR: I understand that most people do not enjoy paying tax. Most people would prefer that someone else pay tax. We all have a responsibility, though, to contribute to the collective good of our community and that means that it is necessary for the government to raise revenue. The government must consider the fairest way to raise that revenue and the government believes, following detailed consideration of the issues as they relate to the split of revenue collected between detached dwellings and units, that it is appropriate for units to contribute slightly more to the overall tax increase.

Mr Coe: A point of order.

MADAM SPEAKER: A point of order. Minister, can you resume your seat.

Mr Coe: The question was: does he accept that the changes cause hardship to many Canberrans? He has spoken about revenue at large, but he has not actually spoken about the impact it has had on those who are actually paying the rates.

MADAM SPEAKER: I think he is talking on the broader policy issue.

Mr Coe: That is right; he is.

MADAM SPEAKER: He has a minute, but he is still talking on the broader policy issue, Mr Coe.

MR BARR: Thank you, Madam Speaker. It is, of course, available to anyone to utilise the various deferral schemes if they are experiencing any hardship. There is a variety of concessions and programs available to assist households in that regard, particularly as it relates to rates, including payment by instalment or, importantly, the ability to defer them altogether.

Mr Coe: Altogether?

MR BARR: To defer them altogether, to when the property is sold in the future.

Mr Coe: So not altogether?

MR BARR: That is a deferment into the future, and that is available to those who wish to defer the payment altogether for this period of time, and to simply have their rates deducted when they sell their property at some point in the future.

Mental health—efficiency targets

MRS KIKKERT: My question is to the Minister for Mental Health: I refer to media reports on 12 July 2018 about the independent external review for mental health inpatient services, which found that the government had set a nine per cent savings and efficiency target for these services. Why has the government set a nine per cent savings target for the adult mental health unit over the two years?

MR RATTENBURY: I will take that question on notice.

MRS KIKKERT: Minister, why does the government think that a nine per cent saving and efficiency target for mental health inpatient services is appropriate, given that the occupancy rate of the adult mental health unit is over 100 per cent capacity?

MR RATTENBURY: Further to my previous answer, I will provide those details to Mrs Kikkert on notice.

MRS DUNNE: Minister, how is it possible that you cannot provide Mrs Kikkert with an answer, considering that this was canvassed in the media in July and it was canvassed yesterday in this place? You asked for a clarification and I gave you a clarification during the adjournment debate.

MR RATTENBURY: I was actually not available during Mrs Dunne's response last night. I would like to consider it before walking into some political trap that the Liberal Party is trying to set for me.

Aboriginals and Torres Strait Islanders—family services

MR PETTERSSON: My question is to the Minister for Disability, Children and Youth. Minister, how are the government's child and family centres working to improve outcomes for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander families?

MS STEPHEN-SMITH: I thank Mr Pettersson for his question. Over a number of years the ACT government's three child and family centres in Tuggeranong, Gungahlin and West Belconnen have focused on engagement with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children and their families through a program called growing healthy families. The program offers a range of culturally safe and responsive services to support Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children and families and their communities. Examples of these services are: supported playgroups, women's groups, leadership groups and community activities and events that celebrate Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander culture, like the Tracks to Reconciliation events during Reconciliation Week.

Growing healthy families recognises the central role of the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community in informing the development and implementation of culturally safe and responsive supports and services. Using a strengths-based approach, child and family workers build on the aspirations and needs of each family to provide a tailored program for each family they work with. Through this program the child and family centres have grown their understanding, practice and service offer to ensure that children's and families' experiences are culturally safe and inclusive.

Working alongside the community, staff have co-designed, tested and refined a range of programs and approaches in their work with children and families. As a result we have seen more children and families connected with the child and family centres as safe places, and increased participation in a range of mainstream programs as well as targeted supports.

Over the past year the growing healthy families program has been transitioned to become a core program of the child and family centres. The revised model focuses on strengthened governance; community engagement; data; staff recruitment, professional development and training; and innovative programs and partnerships.

MR PETTERSSON: Minister, how is professional development and training helping to improve cultural awareness and culturally sensitive practice in child and family centres?

MS STEPHEN-SMITH: I thank Mr Pettersson for his supplementary. The work to transition growing healthy families as a core program of the child and family centres has included: providing innovative and relevant professional development to staff in relation to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander issues; and reviewing and changing recruitment practices to strengthen the recruitment and retention of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander staff and to embed lead-practice working with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children and families in recruitment documentation and practice.

The conversation—talking excellence project is an example of the innovative approach being taken to professional development and training at the child and family centres. The conversation provides an engagement opportunity for staff to hear from community leaders across the government, community and business sectors. In an interview format, including a Q&A segment, guests talk about what is going on in their areas of interest and responsibility and also their hopes, dreams and vision for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples.

To date the conversation guests have included: Mr Michael De'Ath in his role as Director-General of the Community Services Directorate; Mr Justin Mohamed, prior to commencing his new role as Victorian Commissioner for Aboriginal Children and Young People; and Dr Kaye Price, a highly respected academic and policy-maker in the field of education. The number of staff attending the conversation continues to grow, and the Community Services Directorate is working with the Education Directorate on ideas for future speakers.

Of course, this is just one way child and family centre staff are engaged in a conversation about how we best support Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander families in the ACT. Child and family centre staff are also encouraged to access the broad range of cultural competence training available to all Community Services Directorate staff.

MR STEEL: Minister, what other opportunities in the Community Services Directorate are there to increase the cultural competence of its staff?

MS STEPHEN-SMITH: I thank Mr Steel for his supplementary question. The Community Services Directorate has recently released its strategic plan, “Empowering people”, based on extensive consultation with staff. The plan is underpinned by a cultural integrity statement, and one of its five key principles is:

Positive life outcomes for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people are placed at the centre of what we do.

While CSD has long had a strong commitment to cultural awareness, it is progressively increasing the range of cultural competency training and development opportunities available for its staff, including launching a cultural e-learning program in conjunction with the Australian Institute of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Studies and establishing the creating excellence project to develop supports and pathways for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander employees.

Recently, 96 staff from across CSD participated in cultural safety masterclasses delivered by Associate Professor Richard Frankland, Associate Dean (Inclusion and Diversity), University of Melbourne. The masterclasses focused on cultural safety and cultural loads, creating policy about alleviating cultural loads, creating culturally safe pathways, and determining culturally safe environments. I understand that feedback from staff who attended was overwhelmingly positive, and 200 additional places are being offered across eight sessions in early September and mid-October 2018.

CSD has also arranged three screenings of the 2017 film *After the apology*, directed by Professor Larissa Behrendt. The film follows the journey of four Aboriginal grandmothers challenging government policy to bring their grandchildren home. While confronting, it provides an opportunity for staff to reflect on past and current practices to ensure that we are moving towards culturally safe practices that better support our community. The first session was held on 12 July, with 130 staff in attendance. The next two screenings are being held on Thursday, 16 August and 13 September. I look forward to joining staff at the September screening. (*Time expired.*)

Centenary Hospital for Women and Children—upgrade program

MR HANSON: My question is to the Minister for Health and Wellbeing. Minister, I refer to your media release of 1 June 2017 in which you advised that the upgrade of the Centenary women’s and children’s hospital was due for completion in 2020-21. The acting minister for health, Mr Rattenbury, advised in an estimates

question taken on notice that the project was forecast for completion in 2021-22. Minister, why has the completion of the upgrade to the Centenary women's and children's hospital been delayed by a year?

MS FITZHARRIS: It has not been. It will be completed in the following financial year. That is the full completion of the project. As we have discussed in the chamber previously, there is extensive work underway regarding territory-wide service planning. That is fundamentally informing the work that we are doing to deliver not only the upgrades to the Centenary Hospital for Women and Children but also significant upgrades at the Canberra Hospital site. That is very detailed service planning that we need to do not only with building teams but also, most importantly, with staff who will be designing and delivering the new services. In addition there will also be upgrades to the existing Centenary hospital, and that work is continuing over this current financial year. I look forward to having more to say on that later on this year.

MR HANSON: Minister, in plain English, can you explain then why you stated that it was due to complete in 2020 and 2021 but the Minister for Mental Health, Mr Rattenbury, has advised that it would be completed a year later?

MS FITZHARRIS: Because since that original date we have progressed planning and new information has been made available to us. We will also—

Opposition members interjecting—

MS FITZHARRIS: Madam Speaker, I said that it would be completed in the following financial year.

MRS DUNNE: Minister, when will you announce further delays in the upgrade to the Centenary women's and children's hospital and how can you justify upgrades to the five-year-old infrastructure that is already there?

MS FITZHARRIS: Upgrades include expanding the services that are available there and also expanding the footprint of the Centenary hospital not only to provide additional services for women and children, which may be in maternity services, gynaecology services, adolescent gynaecology services, but also the very important construction of an in-patient youth and adolescent mental health unit.

ACT Health—executive salaries

MRS DUNNE: My question is to the Minister for Health and Wellbeing. I refer to answers to questions on notice regarding growth in the number of ACT Health senior executives. The number of senior executives in ACT Health increased by 13 positions last financial year. The cost of senior executive salaries increased from \$6.1 million in 2016-17 to \$8.2 million in 2017-18. Minister, why did the cost of senior executive salaries increase by \$2.1 million last financial year?

MS FITZHARRIS: In that financial year the cost increased because there were more positions.

MRS DUNNE: Minister, how many senior executive positions will exist in ACT Health and the Canberra Hospital and health services when the new structure starts in October?

MS FITZHARRIS: That precise number has not been completed yet. I am pleased to advise the Assembly that progress on the transition of ACT Health to two organisations is proceeding very well. In fact, just yesterday, well over 100 leaders within the ACT Health Directorate came together to discuss with each other the significant progress that has been made, on behalf of the leadership and staff of the ACT Health Directorate. Reports from yesterday's event were that there was a high level of engagement and a high level of discussion about the enormous opportunity that this provides to ACT Health, particularly because everybody in that room is a dedicated professional, and very engaged with the most senior levels of leadership in ACT Health. They will take the discussions held yesterday back into their teams right across the directorate and discuss with their teams right across the directorate all the opportunities that will be made available to staff to engage in and inform the transition to two new organisations on 1 October.

MISS C BURCH: Minister, why do we have a situation where the cost of ACT health senior executive salaries grew by a third in one year, yet performance in emergency department and elective surgery wait times fell?

MS FITZHARRIS: As I said in my previous answer, the cost increased because there were more positions.

Budget—support for emergency services

MR STEEL: My question is to the Minister for Police and Emergency Services. Minister, how is the government supporting the ACT Ambulance Service?

MR GENTLEMAN: I thank Mr Steel for the question and for his interest in the safety of all Canberrans on our front line. I am delighted to discuss the support that the ACT government is providing to the hardworking men and women of the ACT Ambulance Service. These individuals are the team that helps Canberrans at their time of greatest need: when the unforeseen occurs. We have an excellent Ambulance Service, one that is among the best, if not the best, in the country. This is borne out by the facts: the fastest response times in the nation and the highest levels of patient satisfaction as well.

While they are great at their jobs, Madam Speaker, I recognise that it is a difficult job and that we need to support ACTAS. You and I both know what it is like doing shiftwork. They work very hard. That is why the government is reviewing crewing. We are also looking through a blueprint for change, a process to help ACTAS as our city grows. In addition, we are delivering more staff and new ambulances.

This year's budget builds on our support for this great service, with a \$4.6 million investment to enhance the ACTAS vehicle fleet. This includes providing electronic stretchers and power loaders to reduce the physical demands on our paramedics and

also improve patient safety. On Monday I launched five new ambulances funded as part of the funding provided for the vehicle replacement program.

As our city grows, the government is committed to growing key services and supporting ACTAS, along with ACT Fire & Rescue and ACT Policing.

MR STEEL: Minister, can you advise if the government is providing equipment upgrades for ACT Fire & Rescue?

MR GENTLEMAN: It is a good question. I mentioned in my previous answer that our city is growing, and as it grows the government is focused on growing the services our city needs. Our latest budget delivers on this and reflects our commitment to an inclusive, progressive and connected Canberra.

This year's budget does not support just our paramedics and the hard-working staff at ACTAS; we are also helping our firefighters. There is funding to recruit additional firefighters. There is funding to provide new protective helmets, providing the kit needed to do the job safely and effectively. There is also \$2 million committed to bring in a new vehicle to help our firefighters respond to incidents that might occur in multistorey buildings.

The funding in this year's budget builds on the significant investment in last year's budget, which also included funding for front-line firefighters. As I have said, this government is delivering on the front-line services for our growing city, and this includes ACT Policing.

MS CODY: Minister, what support is being provided to ACT Policing?

MR GENTLEMAN: I thank Ms Cody for her interest in our front-line staff. This government's budget not only delivers for our firefighters and paramedics but it also delivers for officers of ACT Policing. The government's most recent budget provides \$11.8 million over four years to support our police force.

Highlights of the support being provided this year include \$2.6 million to recruit and expand ACT Policing's strategic analysis capability targeting crime hot spots and identifying emerging risks; \$1.6 million over four years to recruit additional resources and provide specialised training and tools to target, disrupt, deter and prevent organised crime in the ACT; \$5.6 million over four years to provide new smartphones to improve service delivery and officer safety; and \$2 million over two years to upgrade facilities at Tuggeranong police station and Winchester police station.

These investments build on those that this government made last year. We are committed to working with ACT Policing to continue keeping our community safe.

Education—disability funding

MS LEE: My question is to the Minister for Education and Early Childhood Development. Minister, during the estimates hearings I asked for details about the \$23.2 million that budget paper 2 had highlighted as being money to support students

with a disability. Despite many attempts from you and officials to identify what that funding would actually fund and cover, you could not answer the question in any detail. Minister, can you now provide to the Assembly details of exactly what this \$23.2 million will cover and how it will support students with a disability?

MS BERRY: Yes, I can refer the member to the responses that were provided during estimates. I thought that education officials and I did respond to the questions that were asked by the member opposite. If there is any more detail that I can provide I will take the rest of the question on notice and do that.

MS LEE: Minister, how was the amount of \$23.2 million over four years arrived at?

MS BERRY: There is some detail that goes into the calculation for support for students with disabilities. I can provide that information in more detail to the chamber.

MR MILLIGAN: Minister, how does the \$23.2 million relate to the average cost per student that was published on page 15 of budget paper F?

MS BERRY: I am sorry, Madam Speaker; I was not paying much attention to that question. I might have to ask Mr Milligan to repeat it for me.

MR MILLIGAN: For a second time: how does the \$23.2 million relate to the average cost per student that was published on page 15 of budget paper F?

MS BERRY: The calculations on funding for students with disabilities are based on the needs-based funding formula. That work is still being considered nationally, and nationally there is modelling being developed to make sure that the best funding is provided based on need. It is about the way that data is collected from students who are going to school and have different needs. That is the information that is used to inform the funding.

Budget—assistance for veterans and seniors

MS CODY: My question is to the Minister for Veterans and Seniors. Can the minister please outline how this year's budget is supporting veterans and seniors in the ACT?

MR RAMSAY: I thank Ms Cody for the question and for her clear interest in our veterans and seniors communities.

I am pleased to say that the government is continuing to grow the services and supports for these two important and distinct groups in the Canberra community. In this budget we have doubled the funding for the social inclusion grants in this portfolio, allowing us to now run two separate, large grants rounds: one specifically for seniors and one for veterans. I look forward to launching these grants rounds later this month.

We have also provided \$640,000 over four years to fund a seniors rights service in Legal Aid. This service will be established as a specialist legal service within Legal

Aid for older people in the ACT who are experiencing, or are vulnerable to, elder abuse.

We have added funding for additional staff to the office for veterans and seniors to develop policy, work with community groups and to help support my ministerial advisory councils for ageing and veterans. There is also additional funding for staffing in the Chief Minister, Treasury and Economic Development Directorate's HR area to drive the veterans employment program, which I have previously announced.

This is in addition to the work being done in other portfolios to benefit older Canberrans, such as the expansion of the general rates aged deferral scheme, expanding the older persons mental health intensive treatment service, continuing the free off-peak bus trial, continuing the age-friendly suburbs initiative, and a number of other measures in this year's budget.

Our veterans and our seniors are highly valued members of the Canberra community, and I am very pleased that this year's budget continues to build support for them.

MS CODY: Minister, can you outline what benefits these measures will provide for seniors in the community?

MR RAMSAY: I thank Ms Cody for the supplementary question. In this budget we are growing services for our growing city. We have grown the pool of funding available for our seniors community inclusion grants. There will now be \$80,000 available this financial year and then into the future to help ensure that our seniors are and remain connected and integral members of the city. This is important as our seniors continue to give back so much to the city even after they retire, whether it is through volunteering, work, community service or to their family, in addition to the rich diversity they bring to the city. The government wants to support them in many ways to do this.

We will be increasing the number of suburbs that receive age-friendly upgrades to ensure that our seniors can get around the city more easily. This is important because these upgrades not only help support our older Canberrans but also provide good quality paths for kids on bikes and good crossings for the mobility impaired, and help people of all ages and levels of mobility to move around the city.

Through the newly established seniors rights service we will be growing the supports available to older Canberrans to protect against elder abuse. This abuse comes in many forms, and the specialist help that seniors can receive through Legal Aid and this service will help seniors to know their rights, to point them to these services should they require help, and to give expert legal advice to them when they need it. Elder abuse is insidious and it can rob older Canberrans of quality of life in later years. This service is just one of the ways we are seeking to combat it.

MS ORR: Can the minister outline what benefits these measures will provide for veterans in the community?

MR RAMSAY: I thank Ms Orr for the supplementary question. In this budget we are growing services for the growing veterans population in the ACT. We know that over 300 personnel exited the defence force and settled in the ACT in 2017, adding their skills, their training and their leadership qualities to the community.

This year we have created a dedicated veterans social inclusion grants round, and this is important as, for many in the ADF, the defence force becomes their family, their support network and their social circle as they move through their military careers. These grants will help support those who are serving and those who have served become and remain connected members of the Canberra community.

Many of those who exit the ADF have a number of years or even decades of their working life ahead of them and we want to ensure that they are able to build a new family and a new support network in Canberra. Similarly, we want to ensure that those who are no longer working also remain an integrated and integral party of the city.

In addition to this, we are implementing the government's veterans employment program. Dedicated staff in the Chief Minister's directorate provided for in the budget will be developing institutional links with the Department of Defence and the Department of Veterans' Affairs in helping to create resources to facilitate employment transition from the ADF to the ACT public service. They will also work to support our recently announced veterans employment champions to build internal support and mentoring arrangements for veterans in the ACT public service.

Whether it is veterans or seniors or any of the other parts that the government works in, this budget will be making sure that we are continuing to grow the services and the supports for all those who live in our city.

Budget—pensioner concessions

MR MILLIGAN: My question is to the Minister for Veterans and Seniors. The pensioner concession for the fire and emergency levy was reduced from 50 per cent in 2015-16 to 29 per cent in 2018-19. The levy has increased for pensioners by 368 per cent since 2011-12. Why is the value of the pensioner concession for the fire and emergency levy fallen while the levy has increased dramatically?

MADAM SPEAKER: Are you taking that question, Treasurer?

MR BARR: Thank you, Madam Speaker. I have responsibility for concessions. The government has, through changes to the fire and emergency services levy, sought to better align the cost of service provision in this area with—

Mr Coe: Better align?

Mrs Dunne: That means increase.

MR BARR: To ensure that the levy meets the growing cost of providing those services to the community. That is a reflection of the growing costs of providing those services. The government provides a range of concessions across the board for a number of different utilities use and a number of other concessions and rebates.

There have been changes in eligibility for certain concessions because they are tied to the commonwealth's eligibility criteria for certain commonwealth payments. That, of course, flows through to eligibility for ACT concession payments. We have reviewed this matter recently and, of course, it is the subject of further ongoing consideration. Most recently, we provided a \$50 increase, for example, in the utilities concession.

MR MILLIGAN: Chief Minister, why exactly has the fire and emergency levy increased by 368 per cent for pensioners since 2011-12?

MR BARR: The increase has gone to fund the massive expansion of services in this area.

MS LAWDER: Chief Minister, what impact is the growth in rates and charges levied on senior Canberrans having on their standard of living?

MR BARR: Again, the government seeks to keep all tax increases to an absolute minimum while, equally, providing the maximum level of services that we possibly can. We have a complex interaction between two levels of government in terms of income support. One thing that would be of great assistance is advocacy to increase incomes, rather than one side of politics being solely focused on suppressing the incomes of low income Australians.

Opposition members interjecting—

MADAM SPEAKER: Members on my left, please; I was about to call you all to order again.

Budget—pensioner concessions

MS LAWDER: My question is to the Minister for Veterans and Seniors. Minister, the pensioner rebate for general rates has remained capped at \$700 since 2015-16. Meanwhile, since 2015-16, rates have increased on average by almost 20 per cent. Why has the pensioner rebate remained capped at \$700 while household rates have increased on average by almost 20 per cent?

MADAM SPEAKER: Chief Minister, I assume you are taking that.

MR BARR: Thank you, Madam Speaker. The government has made various changes to concessions and rebates over previous periods, and that has included a comprehensive review of concessions. We have increased them in a number of areas for a number of different categories. We have enhanced eligibility and access for those most in need. It was a comprehensive review of concessions and we sought to target those concessions to those most in need.

This issue is one that is under constant review. We are aware of support also being provided by the Australian government. We are also aware of the gaps in income support that the Australian government continues to allow through their system.

What would be a useful thing would be if there could be bipartisanship in terms of advocacy to raise the incomes of low income Australians. That would be through support for increases to the minimum wage; it would be through support for increases to the Newstart allowance; and it would be through support for increases to pensions. I notice that there is only one party in Australian politics that can hold government that constantly advocates and delivers on those outcomes. That is the Australian Labor Party.

MS LAWDER: Chief Minister, is it Labor values that pensioners find it increasingly difficult to make ends meet due to rising rates?

MR BARR: The government has a comprehensive program of concessions and a very significant program of deferral to enable people to defer those charges until properties are sold. That is an important piece of public policy to ensure that adverse impacts on asset rich but income poor households can be put in place. This is an important principle of equity across our system.

Opposition members interjecting—

MR BARR: Of course I acknowledge that no-one enjoys paying tax, or very few people do. But we all collectively benefit from the investment of our taxation into world-class health services, into emergency services, into community services.

Opposition members interjecting—

MR BARR: The choice is what sort of society we live in: one where government provides services to the community—

Opposition members interjecting—

MR BARR: or a world where you are on your own, where the political party, the conservative political party—

Opposition members interjecting—

MR BARR: seeks to suppress your income by cutting your penalty rates, by opposing minimum wage increases and by seeking to slash your working conditions. Everything that side of politics stands for is to reduce the incomes of low income Australians. You stand condemned for you entire history as a political party, which has been to wage war against low income Australians

Opposition members interjecting—

MR HANSON: A supplementary, Madam Speaker.

MADAM SPEAKER: A supplementary, Mr Hanson. Before you continue, though, I would expect that if you are asking the question, the Chief Minister will be able to answer in some level of quiet, which has not been the case during his answering of the last two questions.

MR HANSON: Could everybody be quiet, please? I've been warned. Everybody needs to be quiet. It seems to come down to me.

MADAM SPEAKER: You will be named now. Mr Hanson—

MR HANSON: Well, you have directed it to me, Madam Speaker, and said that the chamber needs to stay quiet.

MADAM SPEAKER: No, you are talking back to the chair. You are showing disrespect for the chair. You are a serial offender. I have put you on notice that you were warned. You are now named. I move:

That Mr Hanson be suspended from the service of the Assembly.

Question put.

Ayes 12

Noes 9

Mr Barr	Ms Le Couteur	Miss C Burch	Ms Lee
Ms Berry	Ms Orr	Mr Coe	Mr Milligan
Ms J Burch	Mr Ramsay	Mrs Dunne	Mr Parton
Ms Cheyne	Mr Rattenbury	Mr Hanson	
Ms Fitzharris	Mr Steel	Mrs Kikkert	
Mr Gentleman	Ms Stephen-Smith	Ms Lawder	

Question resolved in the affirmative.

[Mr Hanson was suspended at 3.32 pm for three sitting hours in accordance with standing order 204, and he withdrew from the chamber].

Mrs Dunne: A supplementary question, Madam Speaker.

Mr Barr: Haven't you already given the call?

MADAM SPEAKER: I would advise everybody that we are on nearly the final question and there has been a level of interjection and disregard from members of the opposition, and my tolerance level has just about expired.

Mr Coe: A point of order.

MADAM SPEAKER: Yes.

Mr Coe: Mr Barr's answer was about five minutes of ranting about Liberal Party history. So, yes, feel free to call the opposition to order, but I also ask that the Chief Minister be directly relevant when answering questions.

MADAM SPEAKER: Thank you, Mr Coe. Mrs Dunne, a supplementary.

MRS DUNNE: Chief Minister, how many Canberra households have reached the cap of \$700 on rates and cannot therefore benefit from further concession because of increases in rates?

MR BARR: I do not have that figure in front of me. I will take it on notice.

Tourism—international visitors

MS ORR: My question is to the Chief Minister. Chief Minister, can you please update the Assembly on the most recent international visitor statistics?

MR BARR: I thank Ms Orr for the question. I am pleased to advise the Assembly that we have welcomed a record number of international visitors, with the most recent release of tourism statistics showing that this record number of visitors have spent more time in the capital than any time previously and of course have spent more money. This result is very pleasing because it demonstrates the government's successful efforts in partnership with Canberra airport to attract direct international flights to grow our local tourism industry. The feedback from the tourism sector is overwhelmingly positive as a result of these initiatives.

The number of international overnight visitors climbed to reach almost 250,000. That is a nearly 16 per cent increase from the previous year, and the length of time that our international visitors are staying in Canberra jumped by a record 20.9 per cent to an average of 22 days.

Singapore Airlines' move to provide daily flights from May, as well as the commencement of Qatar Airways flights earlier this year, is a signal of confidence in Canberra as a tourism destination, and we will continue our work with existing airlines who are servicing the Canberra market whilst also engaging with a range of new potential carriers for the ACT market.

Members may not be aware that China is the largest source of international visitors for the ACT, followed by the United States, the United Kingdom, New Zealand and India. We may in fact have some international visitors from New Zealand with us today.

MS ORR: Chief Minister, what measures has the ACT government taken to continue this growth?

MR BARR: It is very important that we continue to focus on improving transport connections to Canberra to grow our visitor numbers. These figures are the first set to capture a significant portion of the international flights into Canberra, and show that

this work across the tourism industry is paying off. The ACT government continues to work to increase both domestic and international aviation capacity. We are also very pleased to continue to work with our New South Wales colleagues on both sides of politics to see improvement and enhancement of the Canberra to Sydney rail connection. We look forward to continuing to work with both New South Wales Labor and the current New South Wales government to see improvements in that service.

Through VisitCanberra the ACT government continues to promote the city, most recently through some innovative campaigns in our major domestic markets in Sydney and Melbourne. We need to market ourselves somewhat differently to potential visitors to capture attention in a competitive domestic marketplace. Some of the recent promotions, such as Canberra in a Can, have been very effective and innovative. I particularly want to acknowledge the support for the campaign from industry partners including Jamala Wildlife Lodge and a great winery in my electorate, Majura wines.

MS CHEYNE: Chief Minister, how else has the government supported local operators to achieve international growth?

MR BARR: As part of the recent trade mission to Asia, we were joined by a significant delegation of Canberra businesses, with a particularly strong showing from the local tourism sector. Pialligo Estate, GoBoat, Jamala Wildlife Lodge, Shaw Vineyard, Canberra Secrets and Canberra Guided Tours joined the delegation, to name just a few.

As part of the delegation, VisitCanberra held a series of workshops with key businesses and decision-makers in the industry to create awareness of products and to negotiate inclusion in future marketing campaigns. There was also a forum for delegates to present their products and services to a range of front-line retail travel agents and reservations staff in these international markets to help them build further connections.

Additionally, in the 2018-19 territory budget, the government has committed around \$47.5 million to boost tourism and related sectors. This will support investment in a suite of domestic and international campaign activities to continue to grow Canberra's profile and to provide a range of compelling reasons to visit this great city and this region. Mr Hanson might use his next three hours to enjoy some of those wonderful opportunities.

With that, Madam Speaker, I ask that all further questions be placed on the notice paper.

Supplementary answer to question without notice

Light rail—safety

MR GENTLEMAN: I have some further information, in addition to an answer I gave Miss C Burch yesterday, with regard to light rail and ACT Fire & Rescue. I can advise that all ACT Fire & Rescue firefighters have been provided with an online

learning package on hazards associated with the light rail. This will be followed up with a more detailed learning package to be jointly developed with capital metro, with a lesson plan for all firefighters to complete. This will cover risks associated with working within the light rail corridor, safe working practices for firefighters, shutting down overhead power, and liaising with capital metro staff and the light rail corridor control centre.

Additional hydraulic rams with 25-tonne lifting capacity have been purchased to enable the lifting of light rail cars. This was done from within ESA's existing budget, so no additional funding was required. These will be placed in an upgraded technical rescue pod which will be deployed to all rescue incidents involving light rail vehicles.

ACT Fire & Rescue operational staff will undertake a familiarisation of the light rail vehicles and rail corridor on a scheduled platoon basis to be developed in consultation with capital metro, and a standard operating guide will also be promulgated which will cover responses to incidents involving light rail. The training program for the rams and associated equipment, known as a re-railing kit, including positioning needs on light rail vehicle undercarriages, will be delivered to all ACT Fire & Rescue level 3 rescue operators.

ACTION bus service—timetable changes

Debate resumed.

MS LAWDER (Brindabella) (3.40): During the estimates process we spoke about a number of issues that will be affected by changes to the bus network. Those include the issue of women's safety. We talked about the fact that at present only 38 per cent of women feel safe in public on their own at night. Making people walk further to and from a bus stop will contribute to people, especially women—I will say that while I am still allowed to use gender specific terms—feeling less safe walking to and from a bus stop.

A number of older people, especially those in retirement villages and nursing homes, have raised with me their concerns about having to walk further to and from a bus stop. Working people have raised with me issues about the length of time it will take them to get to and from work, and many parents have raised issues with me about their children going to and from school, given the proposed changes to the school bus system.

One constituent said:

The proposed changes will hurt young people now and will hurt them in the future. Kids will be hurt at bus interchanges; not as many as people fear, but the occasional student on their way between school and home will find themselves isolated, unsupervised, and any kind of abuse may well happen.

Lindsay from Chisholm said:

If the changes to the bus timetable happen, it will take me longer to get to and from work, and I will feel forced to drive more often.

Janice said:

My work moved to Civic ... Upon hearing of the new times and routes, I will not be using the bus service any more. I leave home at 7.10am and arrived home at 6.10pm every day but this new service will mean I will need to leave at 6am and not get home until after 7pm.

John from Chisholm said that he wanted:

... to share my thoughts with you about the proposed axing of the 765/767 Expresso service. The proposed network is a DISASTER for me ...

Stuart said:

I am a father of two school age children in the Brindabella electorate. I have grave concerns over the proposed changes to the school bus routes in and around Canberra, in particular to/from St Mary Mackillop College.

Parents at Trinity Christian School in Wanniasa have also contacted me. The school has sent them information saying that safety on public buses was their first concern. The email said:

We hope that the government will be implementing strategies so that the School and parents can be assured of students' safety whilst travelling on public transport but we are unsure how this can be effectively managed.

The second point was in regards to the cancellation of public buses. We understand that currently, where there is an occasional bus driver shortage on a given day due to illness, school buses are not cancelled whilst public buses may be cancelled without notice ...

This clearly means that students will have a good deal further to walk to catch their bus. This is understood to be for both public and school bus routes.

One parent has sent me an email about students at Trinity Christian School, and I think it is probably similar to the concerns of many students in the Lanyon Valley. She said:

So basically, if I wanted my kids to catch the bus they would have to get to Lanyon Marketplace (2.5km away and across major roads) and then catch another bus (or walk home). Which is pretty—

expletive deleted—

because one of the reasons we purchased our house was because it was in close proximity to a bus stop. I feel more comfortable with making my children wait for 30+ minutes at school for me to pick them up on the way home from work, than them spending time waiting around at public bus stops/interchanges for connecting buses.

Basically anyone in Gordon, Banks, Conder only has Lanyon Marketplace as their stop for school buses which is 4+km away for some students—

in Lanyon. She continued:

Trinity has a wide 'zone' so children in this area are not attending an out of area school.

Currently there is a dedicated Gordon Trinity service in the afternoon (ie enough students to just do a pick to Trinity and service our side of Gordon). (There is an additional bus which services the other side of Gordon and picks up at Mackillop, Trinity and St Anthony's).

They are very, very concerned about the changes.

I have pages of comments from social media sites, which I will not go through now. But I would just briefly mention concerns raised by the Tuggeranong Community Council. People from Transport Canberra attended the Tuggeranong Community Council meeting in early July. Unfortunately the notes from that meeting are not yet, as of just before lunch today, up on "What We've Heard" on the your say website. It has notes from a meeting at Gungahlin, which was a week later, but the notes from Tuggeranong are not yet available online.

Tuggeranong Community Council said:

Approximately 100 people attended last general meeting ... to raise their concerns about the proposed new bus routes.

I was at that meeting. But notes on other meetings outlined on the your say website talk about 30 people in north Canberra, about 40 people in Weston Creek and about 25 people in Gungahlin. You can see the difference in the number of concerns in the Tuggeranong community because there are so many changes proposed in the Tuggeranong area, including the very, very popular Xpresso buses, as well as the school buses. As the TCC note says:

Main concerns raised were the cutting of all express buses and dedicated school buses. While the extra Rapid buses might benefit many people, there are many other people, including students, who will have longer journeys with some of them having to catch multiple buses and wait around interchanges for connections.

In summary, I commend Miss C Burch's motion to the Assembly. It outlines the concerns that we are all hearing from members of the public, especially bus users, but also those whose children or other family members catch the bus—and even those who might want to catch the bus, including those in retirement villages who have said to me that they had picked a particular retirement village because there were bus stops nearby. Goodwin in Monash is an example.

They might be driving now, but they picked that retirement village because of the bus stop proximity and the availability of buses to get them to where they needed to go. They are concerned that under these proposed changes those buses or bus stops may no longer be available to them. I thank Miss C Burch for bringing forward and

amplifying the concerns of the community in relation to what appear to me, from what I have heard, deeply unpopular proposed changes to the bus network.

MS FITZHARRIS (Yerrabi—Minister for Health and Wellbeing, Minister for Transport and City Services and Minister for Higher Education, Training and Research) (3.48): I welcome the opportunity to speak again about the bus network and this government's long-term commitment to provide better public transport for Canberra. I thank Miss C Burch for the opportunity to discuss this. I want to point to a couple of key themes which have come up, not only in the consultation but also in debate in this place.

Mr Assistant Speaker, you will be well aware that the opposition often accuse the government of not listening. If the opposition were to listen to anything that most members on this side of the chamber say, and actually take the time to think about it and reflect on it in their comments, they may have some credibility when they say they are listening. They simply did not listen to speeches given in this place yesterday on the bus network and about the consultation; they simply did not listen. As I said yesterday, this consultation is part of two stages of consultation. But this has been built on the back of over a decade of public conversations on public transport.

What has come about over the last decade is the very clear preference from the Canberra Liberals to not invest in public transport. The one great benefit of the last election was that it finally put to bed the argument that the Canberra Liberals had been running, for a decade at least, that this city could not support public transport. They simply could not run that argument in 2016. They ran it in 2012—that Canberra was always going to be a city for the car, and why should we invest in public transport? I certainly welcome their turnaround in discussing public transport and wanting to see more investment in it.

I am also deeply concerned by their somewhat outrageous scaremongering that has come about in some of the debate today. Quite frankly, it is utterly lacking in responsibility. We are all members of this place and we will all take the views of our community on board. But what about some of the comments about the safety of our city, and about the people that currently use public transport? While a small number of people use public transport in Canberra—only eight per cent—and our commitment is to increase that, those opposite are suggesting that people that use public transport are dangerous, that people who interchange in our public transport interchanges are dangerous. This is one of the safest cities in the world, and those opposite are suggesting that people who use public transport are dangerous and people who hang out in public transport interchanges are dangerous.

Ms Lee referred to the outrage of forcing kids to walk through school car parks. Children walk through school car parks every day. Children catch public buses every day—but not enough of them. Not enough people in our city catch public transport. Only eight per cent do.

I will go to the point about consultation. This has been an extensive consultation period. It is on the back of significant consultation done in 2016, significant consultation done late last year and early this year. In regard to the latest consultation,

it is genuine. It is, of course, understandable that people whose bus routes are going to change want to let us know that they would like them to stay just the way they are. I understand that. But we simply must increase the number of people using public transport in this city, and I really reject any suggestion that there has not been genuine consultation.

I take my hat off to the Transport Canberra officials who have been working day and night at community consultations. They have gone above and beyond in genuinely getting out there and talking to Canberrans and hearing their concerns. For the Canberra Liberals to suggest that these officials will not be considering what it is that the community are telling them, that I will not be considering that, is simply wrong. How on earth can we expect to go about having consultation in this city if, in regard to the very fact of doing consultation, the Canberra Liberals are going to accuse it of not being genuine?

Can I give you some facts, Mr Assistant Speaker: 7,600 responses to a survey; public meetings at each of Canberra's seven community councils, attended by around a total of 350 people altogether; a range of other public meetings with residents' groups, such as a number of retirement villages in the inner north, Gungahlin and Tuggeranong; over 1,000 people visiting one of the pop-up roadshows in shopping centres in each region across Canberra and at key CIT campuses and at the universities; 460 emails and written submissions; dozens of face-to-face meetings and conversations with key stakeholders, such as school principals, peak bodies and others; and a number of representations, I know, to many people in this place.

The Canberra Liberals are simply wrong that there has not been extensive consultation. Do they have another definition of what extensive community consultation looks like? Seriously, it closed on Sunday. Any government going about decent policymaking and decent community consultation needs time.

What has been really remarkable in all of this discussion is that I thought maybe there would be one contribution that showed any sense of what a good public transport network looks like—one contribution about the challenges of managing a complex public transport network in a city like ours; one contribution from the Canberra Liberals about what it might take to deliver an efficient, reliable public transport system. But there was not one. They have simply engaged in scaremongering. I want to absolutely assure the Canberra community that we are listening to their feedback. I will not put up with some of the ridiculous scaremongering that we have seen from the Canberra Liberals.

I want to put some facts on the table here about school buses. True to form, deep in the DNA of the Liberal Party is their ability to whip up fear campaigns. Everyone in the community knows this. But let me be very clear about what we are doing: we are seeking to invest public resources in a public transport network for all Canberrans. At the moment eight per cent of Canberrans use the bus network. At the moment around 13 per cent of all schoolchildren catch the public transport network to school—13 per cent of schoolkids. That is around 10,000. Around 2,000 of these are primary school kids. Around 8,000 are high school and college kids. That means about

80 per cent of the 13 per cent of schoolkids catching the bus to school are high school students.

Most kids catching a bus to school catch public buses. With respect to the hysteria that has come from the opposition, I have kids that catch buses to school. Many people in this place have kids that catch buses to school. For the opposition to suggest that somehow parents are putting their kids in danger by allowing them to travel on public buses with the ruffraff, as the Canberra Liberals seem to imply, is simply irresponsible.

That is the litany of commentary from those opposite. I appreciate that some of those were direct messages from people in our community, and I accept that. For each of those individuals, I understand their concern. But the way that the Liberals have gone about this today is pretty disgraceful, when we have people in our city, families in our city, who, every day, confidently have their kids catching a public bus to school. What is wrong with kids catching public buses to school? We want to see more of them. We want to see more kids catching buses to school, and there will continue to be dedicated school buses.

I say to those opposite who think that I do not take this seriously that my own kids, in primary school and high school, take buses to school. They get off at interchanges. There are actually enormous benefits in having a wide and diverse group of people in our community catching public buses. There is something fundamentally good about people catching buses together. I do not know about those opposite, but when you do, you might strike up a conversation. You might learn something new about someone in your community. You might help someone out. You might see someone else helping someone out. There is something fundamentally good about it.

What we are doing is investing a significant amount of money in more buses. That is another lunacy from those opposite. We are investing in more buses. We are investing in 80 more buses, 80 new drivers and six new rapid services. That is a fact that those opposite cannot possibly contest. There is more investment in public transport than has ever been invested in this city.

I would encourage everybody, particularly those opposite, to have a little bit of perspective in this debate. The consultation is genuine. The consultation, which closed on Sunday, has included a considerable amount of feedback. I acknowledge that many people whose services are going to change are worried about what that means for them. We are working with many schools right across the community and talking at length to them, and we will respond when we have had time to properly consider all of the feedback that we have received.

I have said publicly—and please listen; I have said it publicly in the media, and I will say it publicly again here today, as I said yesterday, which everybody opposite totally ignored—that we will be making changes. But because the consultation closed on Sunday, we cannot tell you on Wednesday what those changes will be. You should be responsible and allow the government to get on and do some good work and to stop the scaremongering that you have engaged in in this debate.

There are many benefits from continuing to invest in a good public transport system. There are many benefits from the investments that we have already made. We have seen, particularly since we invested in the new green and new black rapids, which started last year, significant improvements. We have seen record numbers of patronage.

Going to the policy question about how to design a complex public transport system, as those opposite should know, it is an interconnected network. If you make one change here, it has another effect. You have to be able to manage fleets, drivers, depots and shifts. You have to be able to manage the geography that we have in our city. We acknowledge that it is a difficult city to provide public transport services in, but the government's proposal is to have 10 rapid bus services. Again I go to the point that when the rapid bus services were introduced the Canberra Liberals opposed them, as they opposed any public transport measure prior to 2016, when they were forced to recognise that public transport was good. Part of this discussion today has included that underlying sense that we have had from the Canberra Liberals previously that public transport is not quite good enough for them because it is dangerous.

The significant investments that we have made have seen record patronage on our bus network. We have seen significant growth in patronage, particularly on the rapid services. Every public transport designer in the world knows that providing rapid services is a way to drive patronage. We have seen it. The evidence is there. By all means, the Canberra Liberals can express a view put to them by many members of the community—views that I have also received, and I am not immune to. Like all of you, we all got voted in to this place because we speak to a lot of people. They continue to speak with us, and of course I know that, and I am not going to ignore it.

I would appreciate from the Canberra Liberals some recognition and some reference to some facts, which they completely ignored in virtually every speech. I now move the amendment which was circulated earlier this morning:

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

“(1) notes that:

- (a) the ACT Government is working to deliver a city-wide integrated public transport network that can move people around our city effectively, providing a real alternative to the car;
- (b) over the past two years, the ACT Government asked Canberrans to tell us what they wanted in their public transport network. Canberrans said they want:
 - (i) more direct routes;
 - (ii) more frequent and reliable services; and
 - (iii) increased services across both on and off peak times, including evenings and weekends;
- (c) the ACT Government has listened and designed the proposed new bus network based on these priorities. This includes:
 - (i) all-day, seven day services across the city, including much better services on weekends and in the evenings;

- (ii) frequent, reliable Rapid services connecting town centres, the City and other key interchanges (such as Dickson and Erindale); and
 - (iii) a simpler network, based on more consistent and direct routes—no more weekend timetable with different route numbers;
- (d) the proposed new network will ensure that 98% of the community will have access to public transport and also increase accessibility to a Rapid bus stop, with over 55% of all Canberrans living within walking distance of a Rapid stop, compared with just 38% today;
- (e) the proposed new network will provide a 30% increase in bus trips past schools, alongside dedicated school bus services to give students and their families more options for using public transport to get between home and school;
- (f) the ACT Government is also working on a range of initiatives to make it as convenient and safe as possible for school students to walk, cycle or use public transport between home and school; and
- (g) the ACT Government will also employ additional customer service staff at interchanges and major connection points, and deliver new and improved bus stops and associated infrastructure to facilitate the new network;
- (2) further notes that:
- (a) the ACT Government undertook phase one of public consultation in 2017 on the proposed new bus network, which included a survey of public transport users;
 - (b) almost 80% of those surveyed indicated that they would be prepared to walk further to a bus stop if services were more frequent and journeys faster;
 - (c) the ACT Government recently completed phase two of this extensive public consultation and is still to consider the results;
 - (d) the ACT Government understands the importance of public transport to maintaining and improving social inclusion, particularly for older Canberrans and others who may not own a car or hold a drivers licence;
 - (e) Transport Canberra has consulted directly with older Canberrans about the proposed bus network, to better understand what changes the community thinks are needed; and
 - (f) Transport Canberra is also continuing to engage with ACTCOSS and providers of community transport services and their users to ensure their views are incorporated into the design of the new bus network; and
- (3) calls on the ACT Government to:
- (a) consider this extensive community feedback and make necessary changes before finalising the timetable for the new bus network, and release this timetable before the new network commences;
 - (b) work with groups such as ACTCOSS to consider ways of improving transport for people that cannot walk further to a bus stop, including ways the existing Flexible Bus Service might be improved to work better for older people, and ways community transport services could better integrate with the new network;

- (c) release details of how Transport Canberra will manage the flow of students at interchanges, and consult on these arrangements with peak bodies and parent groups before the 2019 school year commences;
- (d) include in the final community consultation report average patronage for each current Xpresso bus service; and
- (e) release any details of additional infrastructure works that will be delivered to facilitate the new network by November 2018 to ensure local communities are well informed of these changes before the new bus network commences.”.

The amendment outlines these issues and presents some facts. It also calls on the government to consider the feedback received, which closed on Sunday of this week. It calls on the government to work with a number of groups, as Ms Le Couteur said earlier, such as ACTCOSS, particularly to consider ways to improve our flexible bus service and expand community bus services; to release the details of how we will work with schools and students at interchanges; to consider how we will be dealing with the issue of Xpressos and providing data on the average patronage for Xpressos, which was a question on notice put to me a couple of weeks ago; and also to release additional information on any infrastructure improvements that we will make, particularly around key interchanges. I acknowledge, particularly, the comments from the Weston Creek Community Council on that.

I would appreciate reference to some of the facts from the Canberra Liberals and I encourage them to stop some of the scaremongering. We will listen to the community’s views.

MR PARTON (Brindabella) (4.03): With regard to this motion on the bus timetable changes, I think that when the minister talks about community consultation we have a vision that community consultation involves a process whereby you talk to the community and ask them about a particular policy area before you have made a decision on it. That is where we have fallen over in that space. You can throw your arms up in the air as much as you want, Ms Cheyne, but it is very clear that there will be some extreme changes made and that it is not a case of asking people how they would like to see things changed; it is telling them how it is going to change and how it is going to be.

As with the clubs’ community contributions debacle, the voices in the community against this are very loud and there are many of them. We all know that. I have had dozens of conversations with community members about these proposed changes. I am going to mention just two of them this afternoon.

I visited Tom and Leslie in Chisholm. Leslie is blind. Tom has bone cancer. They rely on the bus to get everywhere. They walked me through and showed me how far they have to walk to the bus as it is now. It is very, very close. They then showed me on a map where their proposed nearest bus stop would be under the changes. They had to show me on a map because they are not capable of walking to that bus stop. They cannot walk there. It is just too far for them. This is Tom’s and Leslie’s ability to get around, and their quality of life. It is not a scare campaign. It just will be affected

dramatically as a consequence of these changes. You cannot get away from that. They will not be able to walk to that bus stop to get the bus. I do not think that is fair.

I had a long conversation with Michael Lee from MacKillop College. I want to read briefly some of the things that he wrote in a letter to parents. He said:

I attended a meeting of Catholic school principals, Catholic Education, and Department of Transport ACT at Transport House, Braddon yesterday morning.

That would have been 9 August.

I need to advise that the following significant information was aired at the meeting ...

He said:

The proposed bus routes were developed using data from the Education Directorate without the inclusion of data from the Catholic sector.

He said:

I raised the point that about 850 Year 7 to 9 students arrive and leave MacKillop's junior campus each day under the supervision of four teachers. A number of St Anthony's students also use these buses. Under the proposed route, students will overwhelmingly access general public buses from a host of separate stops which cannot be supervised by staff.

That is their beef: the staff cannot supervise them. There are 850 of them.

Towards the end of the meeting it was said that the new bus route was about

- a) Trying to make the bus service better
- b) Trying to make the buses better align with light rail

When I made the point that Tuggeranong was subsidising this by slashing school routes for our kids, people looked the other way.

So—

Ms Cheyne: You mean you lied?

Ms Lawder: I raise a point of order, Mr Assistant Speaker. We listened to the minister in silence. I am trying to listen to Mr Parton now and I am distracted by the noises coming from those opposite. It makes it very difficult for me to concentrate.

MR ASSISTANT SPEAKER: There is no point of order. There are hardly any comments being made across the chamber.

Ms Lawder: I beg your pardon; I did not quite hear you.

MR ASSISTANT SPEAKER: There is no point of order, Ms Lawder.

Ms Lawder: Why is that? Could you just explain why there is no point of order?

MR ASSISTANT SPEAKER: There is no point of order, Ms Lawder. Please take your seat.

Ms Lawder: Thanks for your explanation.

MR PARTON: Mr Assistant Speaker, in those interjections I heard Ms Cheyne suggest that I was lying. I am reading from a letter that was written to parents at MacKillop College. This is Michael Lee, the principal of MacKillop College, and this is what he said:

Towards the end of the meeting it was said that the new bus route was about

- a) Trying to make the bus service better
- b) Trying to make the buses better align with light rail.

If you believe that that is a lie, you can take it up with Mr Lee.

Ms Cheyne: That is not what I said was a lie.

MR PARTON: Yes, it is.

Ms Berry: I raise a point of order, Mr Assistant Speaker. I ask the members opposite to direct their comments to the chair.

MR ASSISTANT SPEAKER: Direct your comments to the chair and, please, members, we have heard in silence—

MR PARTON: Mr Assistant Speaker, I would say to Ms Cheyne, “Ms Cheyne, those comments were made by Michael Lee, the principal of MacKillop College.” I would say to Ms Cheyne if I were speaking to her, but I am speaking to you, “Ms Cheyne, if you want to take it up with him, please feel free to do so.”

He went on to say:

When I made the point that Tuggeranong was subsidising this by slashing school routes for our kids, people looked the other way.

And he said:

I must say that I am profoundly disappointed with the management of the needs of students in Catholic schools. The fact that the largest secondary school in the city has not been included in data to build the new network points to a proposed network that, at its best is too clever by half and at its worst is dangerous to the safety of many hundreds of school students at MacKillop and elsewhere.

MS CODY (Murrumbidgee) (4.09): It is not every day I am made to feel like a bad mum. But some of the comments I have seen recently about the school buses have

been pretty hard to swallow. My kids went to a public school on a regular old public bus along with thousands of other kids every day. While some people think that is normal, there are others in the community who seem to be accusing me of neglecting my kids.

We are Canberra. We are one of the safest cities in the world. While it might be politically expedient for some to pretend there is no difference between the ACT and the DMZ, some of the feedback received indicates that there are people who will believe it. Kids are safe changing buses in Canberra. They are safe changing buses in Belconnen. They are safe changing buses in Woden, in Tuggeranong, at Cooleman Court, or anywhere else in the city. Canberra is one of the world's safest cities. If we teach our next generation to be timid and fearful, we are doing them a disservice.

Our bus network should make sure every kid can get to school safely and on time. But right now it is a select few schools who are getting dedicated, subsidised school buses at the expense of everyone else. Catching the bus to school should not be controversial. We should be getting more kids onto the regular network so that they can learn how public transport works. If they can get a regular bus it means that if they are running late—and, let us face it, getting the kids out the door on time can be a special kind of hell—they can just get the next bus a few minutes later instead of missing the only school bus.

Some people have asked me why we are changing the bus system. It is simple: because we should. Light rail means more buses to more places more often, and while we are changing things we might as well see what we can improve. Replacing the Xpressos with rapids and reforming school bus routes means we can have more services all day, every day. We should not leave anyone without services, but an all-day service is far better than having buses that are not used or stops with only two buses a day, even if that means changing things.

In April Labor, the Liberals and the Greens came together to pass a joint motion in this place to call for upgrades exactly like what is being proposed to the Transport Canberra bus network. It noted that most kids, around 60 per cent, already catch a regular bus to and from school, rather than take a long and circuitous dedicated school bus. So I am a bit surprised to hear the Canberra Liberals now claiming that the ACT is forcing kids to use regular buses like it is a bad thing. The Liberals claim to want more people to use public transport but apparently only if you attend private school on a dedicated bus route.

Despite this scare campaign, under the proposed—proposed—new bus network, there will be 30 per cent more bus trips past schools, and every bus route has been designed to go past a school every day. More than half of Canberra's schools will continue to have a dedicated school trip or special S-trip or a combination. The remainder will have an all-day bus service on the regular network. This actually provides more choice for parents and kids alike, and more opportunity for them to use buses to get to and from after-school sports and activities. Thousands of students already use our bus interchanges each day, just like my kids did. The government will also employ more customer service and school safety staff in interchanges and major connection points to help people navigate the new network.

I get it. As parents we will always worry about the safety of our kids. It is natural. But I also believe that Canberra is a place where we look after each other. We must teach our kids to be safe as they move around our city. After all, thousands of kids already do it every day. Saying that private school kids are not as capable as state-based public school kids of using a public bus system seems more of an insult to them, rather than a position the Liberal Party would take.

Public transport takes cars off the road in peak hour but it also makes sure everyone in Canberra can get to school, work, appointments or just to catch up with friends and family. A good public transport network is not just made up of frequent direct routes like the rapids. It also makes sure as many people as possible have a service near their home. One of Canberra's charms is the unique approach to planning taken by our predecessors, but it does make the bus routes a bit complicated. Making sure we get this right is an important part of Minister Fitzharris's consultation process. I commend her for the transparent, consultative approach that she has taken to improving our public transport network.

I have to agree with some of what Ms Fitzharris has already said today and has included in her amendment to Miss C Burch's motion. It is really important that the Canberra community continue to have their say. They have told us what they think, and I think Ms Fitzharris stated that there were over 8,000 comments made to the Transport Canberra consultation process.

It is now a matter of looking at what we are doing. It is a matter of looking at what has been said and trying to work out how best to build our public transport system to meet the needs of the wonderful Canberra community that we all grew up with, love and stand in this place every day to represent.

I am happy to be able to support Minister Fitzharris's amendment to Miss C Burch's motion. It is a wonderful amendment. It brings you online. It commits the government to providing us with some of the feedback to ensure that the consultation is listened to, as Ms Fitzharris has continuously explained that we are doing.

MR MILLIGAN (Yerrabi) (4.17): I thank the minister for her response. However, I would like to assure you, Mr Assistant Speaker, that this is not a scare campaign. We are not being irresponsible. We are representing our constituents, and I applaud Miss Candice Burch for advocating for this issue in the Assembly. With the most recent changes, this government is not just threatening commuters but also schoolkids and those with mobility issues, like our elderly and our disabled.

Yesterday I was pleased to support a petition from the residents of Crace, along with my colleagues Mr Coe and Miss Candice Burch, to ensure that changes to bus route 54 do not limit and restrict elderly residents' freedom and mobility. I was pleased to see that the government supported our motion to refer this petition to an Assembly committee. I hope common sense prevails and that Transport Canberra thinks carefully before removing suburban stops. Along the same lines, the decision to reduce school buses is one that they need to review very closely.

The cuts to dedicated school buses will have a damaging effect on families throughout Gungahlin and east Belconnen. The loss of dedicated school buses will force young primary school aged children onto the regular bus network, which means many children will have to change at bus interchanges just to get to and from school. This raises serious safety concerns for many parents, especially those of primary school aged children, many of whom have indicated to us they would choose instead to drive their children to and from school. This will no doubt cause significant inconvenience for families and, of course, have flow-on effects for our roads.

At a glance, the schools in my electorate that will be impacted the most by these school bus changes will be Amaroo School, which loses all school buses; Burgmann Anglican School, which also loses all school buses at both campuses; Gold Creek School—primary and secondary—which will go from six school buses to just one; John Paul II College, which goes from six routes to just one; and Ngunnawal Primary School, which goes from four school buses to none.

The ACT government is completely out of touch with the needs of Canberra families. They have forgotten what public transport is meant to be about. I will watch with interest what happens following this community consultation, but based on my experience I doubt there will be any real changes from the plans the government have already announced, because that is how they do consultations. They talk the big game. They spend a lot of taxpayer money on websites, communications advisers and spin campaigns only to implement what they wanted in the first place.

I sincerely hope that this is not the case with our public transport system. Yes, the consultation has been long, but we will wait to see if it is genuine. I commend Miss Burch for her motion calling on the minister to explain this language as well as to extend the consultation and actually release the results.

MS CHEYNE (Ginninderra) (4.20): I welcome the opportunity presented by Miss C Burch's motion to talk about what genuine consultation actually looks like. I appreciate Mr Milligan's interest in the consultation and his asking for the results to be released. But, again, I have to underline Minister Fitzharris's comments to listen. Mr Milligan could have amended his pre-prepared speech. The minister has said that it has been just a few days since consultation closed. The government does need to go through the huge amount of responses that it has received.

I have been involved in community consultation for a very long time, as a member of the Belconnen Community Council, then as the president, and before that as the deputy president. We led the greatest engagement there has ever been on a master plan process. Now, as an elected member, I love participating myself and I love encouraging people to participate. I think that is very clear.

In all my years of actively participating and encouraging participation I cannot remember a government consultation that has received more coverage, more interest or more participation. I cannot remember something that has been more widely consulted on. Even though I do not agree with the tactics that the Canberra Liberals have employed, they did their bit as well by stirring people up into a frenzy. Perhaps it

made them pay more attention than they otherwise would have. But the government did its own work on this as well in making sure that people could have their say.

Mr Parton said earlier that we should ask people what they want before we actually release any designs or things for them to comment on. I am not sure where he was last year but that is exactly what we did. The government released a consultation paper. It was called phase 1. It was a comprehensive, wideranging survey asking people how they used buses, even if they used buses, and what they wanted in their bus services. It was that evidence base that helped design the next phase of the consultation.

Many people have had their say through phase 2. I will reiterate how many people have been involved in the consultation that has been running over the last few months. There were 7,623 responses to a survey. I repeat: 7,623 responses. That is enormous. There were public meetings of all of the community councils, with a total of around 350 people attending. All of us in this place know that community councils are not necessarily well attended, so that is an impressive number.

There were a range of public meetings with residents groups; 1,100 people visited one of the pop-up roadshows, of which there were many in Belconnen; there were 462 emails and written submissions to a dedicated consultation inbox; and many phone calls and many representations were also made to the members of this place.

I think it is a common occurrence for the Liberals not to make sense in this place. But it has been especially insightful hearing them say that there has been no consultation or opportunity for people to properly have their say. Yet in the next sentence they talk about how well attended certain meetings have been, like at the Tuggeranong Community Council. I ask them to reflect on the contradictions inherent in their statements.

Unlike many of those opposite, I actually did attend consultations on this. This matters to me; this matters to residents of the Belconnen community. I was the member who did turn up to the Belconnen Community Council meeting. I even went out of my way to live stream it to people so that if they were not able to attend they were able to listen to it live but also were able to watch it later, at their convenience.

I also spent my own money promoting the consultation and promoting the Belconnen Community Council meeting so that it reached as many people as possible to get them to attend. I can tell you what happened at that community council meeting. A lot of people attended. There was a good presentation. It explained what was happening. But it also stressed that, yes, while changes would be made, they already recognised that in some cases the routes were not right and that the routes were going to need to change.

One of the really important ones was Melba. Melba is not being properly serviced in the current design. The officers who were there absolutely recognised that the middle of Melba, not just the outside of Melba, needed better support from the routes through it. They stated that at the meeting. I am not sure what could possibly be a better example of someone taking feedback on board. They listened and said, "Yes, we reckon we probably have this wrong. We are going to go back and look at it again."

If those opposite bothered turning up they would also realise that not only did the Transport Canberra officers spend hours at these meetings—hours!—talking through the network and answering people's questions; they then stayed back after the meetings were concluded so that people who had very individualised concerns could talk about them directly and make their views known.

There were also consultations in my electorate at the Belconnen Library, at Westfield Belconnen and at the interchange. I also attended the one at Belconnen Library. It was incredibly well attended. People were grateful for the opportunity to have their say. I think the fact that we provided forums for people to go along to in the mornings, in the evenings and on weekends catered for a wide range of people, rather than just holding a meeting on a week night, when you are trying to put your kids to bed. In terms of consultation, I think that is pretty good.

We do need to support older Canberrans better through this network. I think that has come through to me loud and clear. I am interested in how we will be addressing the loss of the Xpressos. That has come through to me loud and clear as well. I know that many Belconnen residents care. Many Belconnen residents went out of their way to make sure they had their say on this issue. I think more information probably could have been released about the Xpressos and their patronage, but I am very pleased to see Minister Fitzharris's amendment that addresses this.

In closing, I am not sure that those opposite have come up with any way that this could have been done better, that we could have got more people involved in the consultation. I think this is going to be incredibly data rich, a fantastic evidence base for the minister and the team at Transport Canberra. It is going to take a long time to sort through it.

As someone who has helped run and lead consultations, I can tell you that if even 50 people have their say, that is a lot. Knowing that we have somewhere in the vicinity of 10,000 is going to take a significant amount of time. What I would be hoping is that Transport Canberra do not necessarily rush through it but that they take their time to get it right and use all the evidence available to them. I am absolutely confident, based on Minister Fitzharris's statements today and her amendment, that this will occur and that we will get more people on buses and better services for all Canberrans.

MRS KIKKERT (Ginninderra) (4.30): Day in and day out the minister talks about consultation on this change to the bus timetable. But can I say that this intensive consultation would not happen if the government had used some common sense and not robbed students of their school buses, not robbed seniors of their buses and not robbed low income earners of their buses. There would not be any intensive consultation with the community because the community is very, very upset about this lack of common sense coming from the government.

On the point made by many of the government speakers about Canberra being the safest city in the world, can I say that that does not rule out the aggressiveness and the inappropriate behaviour that happens, sometimes, at bus interchanges and that raises

concerns for parents. I was at the Belconnen bus interchange a few days ago and I witnessed a pre-teen boy punching another pre-teen boy in the face, and then he ran away. You tell that 12-year-old boy or a 13 or 14-year-old that Canberra is a safe place for him. To him it is not. The bus interchange is not a safe place for him. And this is why so many Canberra parents are concerned about the safety of their kids.

I thank Miss Candice Burch for bringing this very important motion before the Assembly today. I wish to say a few words in support. A good public transport system is crucial to the livability of any city. A well-connected, convenient, accessible transport network binds a city together. It means that people can shop, visit friends and family, engage in recreational opportunities, visit attractions and so forth. It takes people out of their homes and neighbourhoods. It is a necessary part of fostering a sense of community.

Certain segments of society are often especially dependent on public transport options: the elderly, those with disabilities, children and young people, uni students, casual and shift workers and those on low incomes. For many of these people, such as the elderly and those whose mobility is impaired, lack of access to a reliable, convenient bus network increases the very real risk of social isolation, leading to more loneliness and depression.

Low income earners and casual shift workers need a bus network that they can rely on. The alternative is to force them to use private vehicles or other expensive forms of transportation. Considering that this government just raised, once again, the cost of registering and parking a car in this city, this is a losing proposition for these workers. They cannot get to work using public transport but they cannot afford to get there on their own. One of my constituents in Holt, a student, works a late shift in Barton. With no viable public transport options available to him, he spends about one-quarter of his earnings just getting home from work each night by taxi.

These are important points. Public transportation options are not just about getting people from point A to point B. In a well-run city, a well-integrated bus network plays an important role in fostering healthy social outcomes in the lives of many people, including the most vulnerable. Changes to bus routes that unfairly target the elderly, those who struggle with mobility issues and low income earners strongly suggest a government that has lost its sense of social responsibility. What sort of government seeks to increase efficiency for some by robbing the lifeline from others?

A number of constituents have made it very clear to me that the proposed changes to the bus network will burden their families. St Francis Xavier College in Florey is the only Catholic high school in west Belconnen and consequently draws students from across the area. Under this government's proposed changes to the bus network the only areas south of Southern Cross Drive that will have routes directly connected to the school are small corners of Holt and Higgins. This means that students from Page, Hawker, Weetangera, Cook, Macquarie, Aranda and most of Higgins and Holt will need to start catching multiple buses just to get to their neighbourhood school.

To emphasise how ridiculous this situation looks to many Canberrans, St Francis Xavier students who live in Scullin, which is literally just across the street from

Florey, will also have to take multiple buses to get to school under the proposed new network, whilst Gungahlin residents could catch a single bus to the college. It appears to me that this government does not even know where school students live, or maybe those opposite just do not care.

A Canberra parent said that an email from the principal of a public school told parents that cuts to dedicated school buses will have a “significant impact on our school and the students”. The principal of this school also apologised to parents for the late timing of the email since requests for up-to-date information had gone unfulfilled. Those school leaders had been previously advised that the impact would be minimal. I quote from the email from the school principal:

This is obviously not the case.

It seems to me that the government mentioned that there was a previous consultation phase 1, and it looks like they misled the public schools on whatever results may have come from it.

The principal of Radford College in Bruce pointed out that students as young as nine will be forced to catch two buses to and from school each day, changing at busy public interchanges, under these proposed changes. A more likely outcome, unfortunately, will be that more parents will start driving their kids to school. This is the opposite of what we want. The other side claim they want fewer cars on the roads. I think most Canberrans would agree. But they want a public bus network that does not hang the vulnerable out to dry, one that is safe and convenient to use.

The Canberrans who have spoken to me share the concerns raised by Miss C Burch in this motion and they want more and better consultation, including more information such as timetables and complete transparency and to keep their school buses and the express buses rather than robbing the school students, the seniors and other public transport users of their buses. I therefore commend this motion to the Assembly.

MISS C BURCH (Kurrajong) (4.39): I would like to thank all my colleagues today for their contributions in their capacity as shadow ministers and as representatives of their local constituencies. I cannot say that I am at all surprised at the minister’s response, although I do note that she did not mention timetabling at all, which is central to my motion.

I am, however, surprised at Ms Le Couteur’s response today and that Ms Le Couteur and the Greens are so willing to ignore the public aspects of public transport; that is, ensuring accessibility for those who are most vulnerable in our community in favour of a financially viable public transport network. Financial viability is not something that we often hear the Greens talking about, and I hope that this is a sign that we will be seeing more financially viable policy from them in the future. Yet ideological consistency does not seem to be Ms Le Couteur’s strong suit.

This is not scaremongering; we are simply standing up for the hundreds and hundreds of parents and dozens of schoolteachers and principals who have shared with us that they hold significant concerns about the safety of their children on public buses. It is

not our suggestion that children's safety is at risk here. We are representing the concerns of the hundreds of parents who have said that they will not put their children on the public network.

If we, the Canberra Liberals, are scaremongering and making out that there is some safety issue here that does not exist, then why have we seen so many schools speak out publicly about their concerns? MacKillop College, Radford College, St Clare's College, St Edmund's College, Brindabella Christian College, Good Shepherd primary, Marist College, Daramalan College, Canberra Girls Grammar, the ACT Catholic Education Office and the ACT Association of Independent Schools have all spoken out publicly in the media about their safety concerns for children. Are they scaremongering too? And that is only those that have been willing to speak out publicly. As Mrs Kikkert alluded to, we have also heard that many public school principals are not willing to speak out publicly.

The minister has said that she wants facts. According to the government's own report from 2016, 31 per cent of people do not feel safe at bus stops. Forty per cent of people do not feel safe at interchanges. These are regular commuters and not specifically schoolchildren. Yet the minister is claiming that we are creating this safety issue. In addition, in the 2016 report 75 per cent of people said that they do not like changing buses. Yet the proposed new network includes many more transfers for many people.

The minister has said that she wants to hear facts, and the facts around consultation remain. The consultation website and all the language that has been used at forums say that Transport Canberra want to know how they can best support Canberrans in using the new network: "how we can assist you to use the network". It is not hard to see why residents feel that this is a done deal and that they are not being listened to.

The minister has also failed to address the third-round consultation around timetables, which was mentioned by her deputy director during estimates. Her media release this afternoon is also silent on this. Could it be that following the significant public outcry the government has now decided to walk away from this third-round consultation?

To respond to Ms Cheyne's comments as well, many of my colleagues and I have been at these community meetings and they have been drastically different to the meeting that Ms Cheyne described. Many, many Canberrans have come to us saying that they have had responses from officials that have not addressed their concerns or they have been told to wait until the end of the meeting.

As my colleagues have mentioned, we have not heard from a single school, a single parent group or a single individual parent who supports the government's cuts to school buses. We have not heard from a single disability group, retirement community or seniors group who is supportive of the cuts to suburban services and the removal of their local bus stops. We have not heard from a single community council or residents association that supports the changes in their local areas. And I note that those opposite have not mentioned a single specific example of positive feedback that they have received. In fact, I would be incredibly surprised if, out of the almost 8,000 responses to government consultation, there has been a single response that is supportive of these network changes.

Given the vast public outcry against the proposed new network, if the minister is to be believed and if the government really is listening to Canberrans, then I guess in the next couple of months we can expect to see another complete network overhaul. If the government really is listening to Canberrans then Transport Canberra officials would go back to the drawing board and design the network that Canberrans have asked for—a network with more direct routes, a network with shorter, door-to-door travel times, a network with increased on and off-peak services, a network that genuinely encourages more Canberrans to use our buses whilst not encouraging those who currently use our buses to return to their cars.

Minister, I was listening and I heard you loud and clear when you said that the government could not respond to every concern raised. I urge you to be honest with the people of Canberra and say that you have no intention of responding to any of these concerns.

MS FITZHARRIS (Yerrabi—Minister for Health and Wellbeing, Minister for Transport and City Services and Minister for Higher Education, Training and Research) (4.45): Madam Deputy Speaker, I seek your guidance. I do believe I was misrepresented.

MADAM DEPUTY SPEAKER: You can use standing order 47 and seek leave to speak again to clarify where you believe that you have been misinterpreted.

MS FITZHARRIS: I seek leave.

Leave granted.

MS FITZHARRIS: Miss C Burch concluded her remarks by saying that I have no intention of listening to the feedback. I do believe that that is a significant misrepresentation of what I said at length in my contribution to this debate, and what I have said at length previously, and I would ask her to consider withdrawing that because that is a significant misrepresentation and does go to my reputation as a member and as a minister.

MADAM DEPUTY SPEAKER: Sorry, you either have to, on a point of order, ask her to withdraw or explain how you believe you have been misrepresented. You cannot do both.

MS FITZHARRIS: Thank you. I have now explained how I believe I was misrepresented and I would ask her to withdraw.

MISS C BURCH (Kurrajong) (4.47): Can I seek leave to clarify the remark?

MADAM DEPUTY SPEAKER: Yes, under standing order 47.

MISS C BURCH: I said that the minister had no intention of responding, which is in response to a direct quote from yesterday that the government could not respond to every concern raised. The word was “responded”, not “listen”.

Question put:

That the amendment be agreed to.

The Assembly voted—

Ayes 11		Noes 7	
Ms J Burch	Ms Orr	Miss C Burch	Mr Milligan
Ms Cheyne	Mr Pettersson	Mr Coe	
Ms Cody	Mr Rattenbury	Mrs Dunne	
Ms Fitzharris	Mr Steel	Mrs Kikkert	
Mr Gentleman	Ms Stephen-Smith	Ms Lawder	
Ms Le Couteur		Ms Lee	

Amendment agreed to.

Original question, as amended, resolved in the affirmative.

Australian Broadcasting Corporation—funding levels

MR STEEL (Murrumbidgee) (4.52): I move:

That this Assembly:

(1) notes:

- (a) the importance of a well-funded and independent publicly-funded broadcaster for democracy, entertainment and cultural life in the ACT;
- (b) that Australian Broadcasting Corporation (ABC) Canberra has been in existence for 65 years;
- (c) that ABC Canberra is listened to and viewed by a significant proportion of Canberrans;
- (d) the Federal Government has cut \$282 million from the ABC since 2014, and \$83.7 million over the past year; and
- (e) these cuts have come at the expense of local programming for the ACT;

(2) calls on individual Members of the Assembly to:

- (a) stand against cuts to the ABC; and
- (b) tell the Assembly which way they voted in relation to privatisation of the ABC at the 2018 Liberal Party Federal Council; and

(3) further calls on the leaders of all parties in the Assembly to write a joint-letter to Senator the Hon Mitch Fifield, Minister for Communications, to express concern over the Federal Government's cuts to the ABC.

I start by telling the Assembly that I have never voted or abstained in a vote to privatise the ABC at any Liberal Party federal council meeting, and I have every confidence that none of my Labor Assembly colleagues would have taken such action or inaction. I am pretty sure I can also say that in relation to our Greens members, but they may be able to clarify that in the debate.

We recognise on this side of the chamber that the ABC is among Australia's most important public institutions. It is an essential part of Australian democracy and has been for almost 90 years. The ABC is the voice of Australia and acts as a vital source of information, entertainment and cultural life for our cities, our rural towns and our regional areas.

ABC Canberra has provided reliable, trustworthy news alongside engaging entertainment programming for 65 years now, and despite every effort of the federal Liberal government since the 2014 budget and the 2013 election, the ABC has remained one of Canberra's most beloved institutions.

The ABC serves an essential role in our society. However, this role has sadly been diminishing over time. The federal Liberal government has cut \$282 million from the ABC since 2014 and \$83.7 million over the past year alone. This level of cuts has a real impact on the quality of programming—it means less Australian and local content and it means fewer dedicated reporters.

One of the first losses as a result of the Liberal government was the state version of 7:30 or what was previously called *Stateline*. That means there is no longer any in-depth analysis of community and ACT politics and local events on our televisions, other than, of course, the nightly news bulletin itself.

According to *The Conversation*, in the lead-up to the 2013 election the ABC contributed 49 hours of political public sphere programming in the final fortnight. By comparison, channels 7, 9 and 10 had only 36 hours of content combined. This dedicated coverage continues to be at risk every time funding is cut.

I think I can safely say that the broad population may be slightly less interested in political coverage than those of us in this chamber, but the cultural programming is a vital part of what the ABC offers and its role in our society. We have lost shows like *At the Movies*, *Lateline*, *The Checkout*, the television version of *Big Ideas* and *Good Game* and many other locally produced Australian shows. Indeed, just yesterday the show *Tonightly with Tom Ballard* was axed as part of the latest round of cuts to ABC programming. It is particularly sad to see the regular version of *Catalyst*, the science show, going to a sort of special mode as a result of some of the cuts to the ABC.

In 2017 significant changes were made to the ABC's radio broadcasting, with programs like *Books and Arts* being split into multiple programs which further reduce opportunities to provide audiences with an overview of the whole arts sector. Even women's sporting leagues, which are today exploding in popularity, are being left behind by the ABC. They are also being affected by these cuts. It was anticipated in 2014 that budget cuts could mean that the ABC was at risk of losing coverage of the W-League and state-based AFL leagues, and I think the worst has eventuated.

The ABC can no longer provide coverage of the WNBL and the Shute Shield, which is the New South Wales rugby competition in which the Vikings have previously been a participant. Coverage of our women's team in the W-League, Canberra United, has

suffered as a result of these cuts as well. In 2018 we see Fox Sports and other channels covering these leagues. They are no longer available on free air, which is a real shame for local sport. It is an unfortunate but direct consequence of the significant cuts continually being made to the ABC by the federal Liberal government.

Earlier this year there was significant concern that the ABC could lose radio broadcasting rights to the cricket, a service the ABC has provided to Australians for 80 years. Here in the ACT the ABC provides a vital service, particularly the Chief Minister's talkback every Friday morning, something I am sure chief ministers present and past enjoy or enjoyed immensely.

Budget constraints have an adverse effect on the ability of the ABC to hold on to quality talent and provide good programming. Since 2017, 200 jobs have been lost across the ABC. Canberra has lost its dedicated rural reporter, and in 2014 three dedicated Canberra reporters lost their jobs. That is to say nothing of the recent loss of the much-loved Genevieve Jacobs. There are real and noticeable impacts on the quality of our public broadcaster, and we need to continue to fight to protect our ABC.

The broader national debate we see on ABC funding demonstrates the fundamental difference in values between the Liberal and Labor parties. As a Labor member I strongly believe in properly funding our public broadcasters to provide all Australians with quality independent broadcasting. We strongly believe we should continue to produce quality local content for Canberrans to view, listen to and enjoy. We believe we should ensure the ABC has the resources needed to provide in-depth, independent, factual analysis on current events, free of political or commercial influence.

The ABC is one of our most trusted institutions. According to the ABC's 2017 annual report, 80 per cent of Australians trust the ABC; 78 per cent believe the ABC does a good job of being distinctively Australian; and 74 per cent believe the ABC does a good job of being balanced and even-handed. Specifically, according to polling from the Australia Institute, the ABC is our most trusted television station, with 68 per cent of people agreeing that the ABC is even more important now in the era of social media and fake news.

Some 70 per cent of people believe a strong, independent ABC is critical to a healthy democracy; 58 per cent are opposed to the idea of cutting ABC funding; and even 52 per cent of Liberal voters believe the ABC needs a long-term funding boost. I suspect the positive view of the ABC from Liberal voters is not reflected in its party membership.

It is clear that Australians care about our ABC. You really have to think who are the people in this country and this territory who oppose all that the ABC does for Australian culture, for democracy and entertainment? Who are that minority 20 per cent of people? The answer is the Canberra Liberals. The Canberra Liberals have questions to answer. Do they support the privatisation of the ABC? Do they support further cuts to the ABC?

These are not questions being asked without reason. Not too long ago, the federal council of the Liberal Party, one of that party's most powerful voting bodies, voted on a motion on privatisation of the ABC. Privatisation of the ABC could lead to advertisements, commercial influence on news, significantly less investment in regional services and a further reduction in the diversity of Australia's media sector, risking the future of Australian media content.

I understand the motion that was discussed at the federal Liberal Party council was brought forward by current Young Liberals President and senior member of the Canberra Liberals, Josh Manuatu, who was also previously ACT Young Liberals president and staffer. I understand Mr Coe was not present to vote on the motion, but I think Canberrans deserve to know which MLAs were in attendance on behalf of the Canberra Liberals and how they voted on privatising this important public asset.

Given that it is reported that only 10 people in the whole room voted against privatising the ABC and given that the ACT delegation was apparently made up of 14 people, it is probably guaranteed that many of the Canberra Liberals representatives held the view that the ABC should be privatised. It is a sad fact that there is more local drama going on in the federal Liberal Party council than is now on the ABC. The public deserves to know whether members of the opposition who attended this federal Liberal Party council either abstained or voted for the motion. Canberrans deserve to know.

While Mr Coe can maintain that he did not vote on the motion, he is ultimately the leader of his party. If members of this Assembly believe vital public assets should be sold off then the opposition leader needs to clarify his party's position. The Liberal Party is very fond of demanding more transparency from the ABC; maybe they can lead by example and provide the public with some transparency on their voting record.

This Assembly should accept the fact that the ABC is one of Australia's most respected, trusted and beloved cultural institutions. We should fight to build stronger Australian culture and better local news coverage rather than attempting to tear it down. The ABC provides vital local services to Canberrans. If members of the Canberra Liberals hold the view that the ABC should not only be defunded but also privatised then voters in the Australian Capital Territory deserve to know who these people are.

I think Mr Coe and the Canberra Liberals need to provide transparency to the ACT community and commit to show their support for a vital public institution by joining other party leaders in writing to Senator the Hon Mitch Fifield, Minister for Communications, to express concern over the federal government's ongoing cuts and attacks on the ABC.

Every member of the Canberra Liberals should come into this chamber today and tell the Assembly which way they voted or whether they abstained in relation to the motion on the privatisation of the ABC at the 2018 Liberal Party federal council meeting and let us know where they stand in relation to cuts against the ABC. On this

side of the chamber, Labor members are friends of the ABC and we will fight to defend it, not defund it.

MS CODY (Murrumbidgee) (5.04): I can assure Mr Steel, the ACT Assembly and the Canberra community that I have never, will never, and would never vote for cuts to the ABC or cower in the corner whilst others do so. I would not do it here. I would not do it in a party forum. I just would not do it. I would not cut the Bananas. I would not cut the classical music. I would not cut Triple J or Double J. I would not cut the footy commentary—any code. I would not cut the journalists who point out more effectively than anyone else when we are getting it wrong. I really would not cut the journalists who point out when the opposition are getting it wrong. I would not cut the talkback. I would not cut the website. I would not cut the incubator of the thousands of careers. I would not cut the ABC. I would not stand by while people were trying to cut the ABC. I would not be that sort of coward—ever.

MR PETTERSSON (Yerrabi) (5.05): The ABC is a vital and well-respected public institution. The ABC performs a vital public good that benefits all Australians. Like most Australians of a certain age, I grew up watching *Play School*, *Sesame Street* and *Bananas in Pyjamas*. Today the ABC remains my most trusted source of information and entertainment.

In Canberra the ABC contributes to the economic and cultural wellbeing of our city. We should all view the ABC as ours; it is owned by every Australian. Every member of this place should support the ABC and the local Canberrans who work there. The wider community benefit from its numerous radio and television programs.

The benefits of the ABC cannot be overstated. The ABC's wide range of programs provide information access to people that the privately owned corporations never would. The ABC's local radio and television broadcasts provide people with information content relevant to their region. This is particularly important for remote and regional Australians. We on this side will not let the neoliberal agenda of corporate interests leave regional Australians without their news.

In Canberra, our national cultural institutions work with the ABC to provide content for national audiences. The ABC delivers local, unique stories that would not get the air time on commercial television or radio.

ABC news on both television and radio provides the most balanced and informative local, national and international news. Commercial news stations act in the best interests of corporate entities. For local news in particular, only the public funding model allows these stories to be told. Australians know this; Canberrans know this. That is why the ABC is by far the most trusted news source in Australia.

Unfortunately, as we see every time the right-wing Liberal Party is in power, they attack the ABC. Federal Liberals fundamentally do not believe in the public good. If they had it their way, it is clear they would privatise the ABC. At a recent Liberal Party conference, we saw the Liberal Party voting overwhelmingly to privatise the ABC. This is deeply out of step with what Australians and Canberrans believe.

The Liberals' trickle-down asset sale agenda is completely out of touch. The Liberals know that there would be an uproar if they sold the ABC in its current form. Instead, they subject it to death by a thousand cuts. The federal government has cut \$282 million from the ABC since 2014, and \$83.7 million this year alone. This has resulted in a massive reduction in services, particularly in local and regional coverage. The ABC has had to lay off staff in huge numbers, meaning that the high quality and integrity of the content are under threat. These cuts mean that the ABC cannot fund the production of Australian television programs and series.

Australia's television and film industry relies on the investment and exposure provided by the government. Great Australian-made programs like *Four Corners*, *Gruen*, *Australian Story*, *Bananas in Pyjamas*, *Rake* and *Rage*, just to name a few, are staples of Australian TV. This is all at risk.

The ABC allows a whole myriad of voices to be heard. It speaks for the broadest cross-section of the Australian community. It highlights marginalised voices. It is used to challenge the ideas of those in power. The ABC provides independent news without bias or agenda, something that people in undemocratic nations are literally dying for.

Indeed, the Liberals' short-sightedness over the ABC endangers citizens and relations in the Pacific region. Cuts have forced the ABC to end shortwave radio frequencies to the Pacific region which are a vital part of life in those areas. By vacating this space, we hurt our relationships with our neighbours and have allowed other nations to snap up the frequencies, garnering goodwill. Coupled with cuts to foreign aid, we have a Liberal government that is wilfully harming relations with our neighbours.

But I digress, Madam Deputy Speaker. It was an ABC *Four Corners* program which forced a Liberal government to address the systematic abuse of Indigenous children at Don Dale detention centre. This year it was the ABC who first published information about the Kevin Rudd cabinet documents. The ABC is one of the most accurate, up-to-date and rigorous news bodies in Australia. Cutting ABC services is a downright cynical move against high quality and trustworthy journalism. I consistently hear that we cannot trust politics and mainstream media. In the age of fake news and misinformation, and a widespread distrust of all political sides, the ABC is as necessary as it has ever been.

The ABC has been an integral part of our territory for 65 years. The ABC office is a fixture of Northbourne Ave, and the jobs it provides are part of our community. These cuts endanger this. They are part of an agenda of a federal Liberal government who have time and again attacked Canberra. The ABC is fundamental to our territory, and I have heard from countless Canberrans who oppose this cut.

This is all part of the neoliberal policy bundle. Call public services too bloated or administrative, instigate savage cuts and then claim the organisation is ineffective and needs to be privatised. It is a classic, and we will see a reprisal of it if those over there ever get into power. The ACT branch of the Liberal Party are the most extreme, neoliberal and anti-progressive group in this country. They will privatise public

services, give their mates in big business a leg-up and try to turn back the clock on all of our progressive reforms. We will not let that happen.

Last year they supported cutting thousands of jobs from the public service and continually tightened the efficiency dividend. Since 2016 they have been moving jobs out of our capital city for no other reason than shameless political pork-barrelling. This federal government attack the ABC at Ultimo the way they attack the public service in Canberra. I will not be surprised if the ABC somehow ends up headquartered in Armidale.

The Canberra Liberals have a shocking record of standing up to their mates on the big hill. They lack the fortitude to stand up for our community in the face of federal Liberal attacks. Sadly, it is another move by our federal government against Canberra values and Canberra jobs. Every time we try to stand up as a city, the Canberra Liberals are standing on the sidelines cheering on their federal colleagues. It is time for everyone to stand up for our city.

MR COE (Yerrabi—Leader of the Opposition) (5.13): It is a pleasure to speak on something that is going to have no impact whatsoever on Canberrans, Australians, staff at the ABC, viewers or listeners. This is all just another grandstanding exercise by a Labor backbencher. This one was a gushing advertorial, no less. Next time on your LinkedIn profile, feel free to put “Program director”, “Media commentator”, “Journalist”, “Advertorial writer” or whatever else you want to put down. Importantly, Mr Steel delivered that motion with his usual passion and flare. I thought it was fantastic, and I very much hope that he continues with this same sort of passion in the future.

I was very reassured by Bec Cody’s contribution. I thought it was a really meaningful contribution. It was full of substance and it really gave the good people of Murrumbidgee the value for money that they deserve out of their MLAs.

Really this is just B-grade grandstanding. Where is the ABC line item in the budget that we are debating right now? Where is it? Have a look through all of these budgets, budget papers 1, 2, 3 and 4. Go through all the statements. You are going to be hard-pressed to find the Australian Broadcasting Corporation in any of them. In fact, go through our legislation. Other than perhaps a few random mentions in some old legislation about where you have to advertise something or make some broadcasting available, it is entirely irrelevant to our jurisdiction.

I of course support the work that ABC Canberra do. It is a shame that the Chief Minister hates journalists. The ABC is full of journalists. The Chief Minister hates journalists, but somehow Chris Steel loves journalists. He said so in his gushing advertorial for ABC Canberra.

It may be news to Mr Steel, but people on this side of the chamber—indeed, people in the Liberal Party in general—do not live and die by our federal conferences. Whilst you may get up and have a little countdown clock as to how many days till the next ALP national conference, I am afraid we do not. Whilst I would not go as far as saying it is irrelevant, it is perhaps not particularly relevant. But one way or another,

this body does not seem to have the same level of interest as Chris Steel has in the federal Liberal Party council meeting.

Mr Steel, if he has this real passion, as he demonstrated, for the Liberal Party, can make an application to join the Liberals. Our constitution says that if you want to join you have to have resigned for more than 12 months from another party, so you are going to have to sit on the crossbench for at least 12 months if you want to join the Liberal Party, but that will give you an opportunity to finally sink your teeth into a federal council meeting and get to witness the joy of that occasion your very self.

Really, this is irrelevant. It is just more backbench Labor Party grandstanding. There is no appropriation. There is no jurisdiction whatsoever for the ACT Assembly. That is why it is a waste of time.

MS CHEYNE (Ginninderra) (5.17): The fact that the opposition leader has just said that the ABC does not matter to us, does not matter in this place and is irrelevant to Canberrans simply because it is not a line item in the budget says it all.

MR RATTENBURY (Kurrajong) (5.17): The Greens will be supporting this motion today, and in doing so we join with our federal colleagues in opposing cuts to the ABC. I think all members need to recognise that any cuts to the ABC will be detrimental not only for Australia but also for Canberra. Further cuts to the ABC will represent a loss to independent journalism, sports coverage and political scrutiny, as well as being specifically detrimental to the ACT and to the people we represent in this Assembly. In that regard I fundamentally disagree with Mr Coe's analysis that this is not relevant to the people of Canberra.

Ms Cheyne started to touch on it quite nicely. I think that if the only things we are ever going to debate in this place are things that are line items in the ACT budget, we will be much the poorer for it. And in fact I think this is entirely relevant to the people of the ACT. We know from the ratings that the ABC is a significant source of information, entertainment and, I guess, listenership and viewership for our citizens.

The motion asks all members to stand against cuts to the ABC and also specifically invites the members of the Liberal Party to share their views or the position they took at the Liberal Party federal council, given that there was this motion passed calling for the privatisation of the ABC. The motion also invites the leaders of all three parties to write a joint letter to the federal Minister for Communications, Senator Mitch Fifield. I am happy to sign up to such a letter. I am sure that between us we can find some suitable text, and I will look forward to seeing the track changes as that document goes around.

The ABC's funding has been cut by a quarter of a billion dollars since the coalition won the 2013 election promising no cuts to the ABC. Sections of the Liberal-Nationals coalition have long called for the privatisation of the national broadcaster. Make no mistake, privatisation will amount to cuts to programming, content and staff at the ABC. As a public broadcaster, the ABC has a very different role from commercial broadcasters, a role that would be at risk if it were to be privatised. Like other coalition policies, the short-sighted cuts to public broadcasting

will have a negative impact right here in Canberra. I think it is important to reflect on this in light of the comments that Mr Coe just made.

I came down here anticipating that Mr Coe would give a speech not unlike the one he just gave. It is the stock standard response that we get to these sorts of motions when members bring them to this place. Aside from the fact that Mr Coe took his usual strategy of seeking to belittle those in the debate that he disagrees with and go down the ridicule path, I was disappointed that he did not have the courage to state the position that he took at the federal council meeting. Every day we come in here for question time. We have to stand up and answer to decisions we have taken and to positions we have taken. But Mr Coe was invited and could not offer a position.

Mr Coe: We will start asking you about the Greens management committee then, shall we?

MADAM DEPUTY SPEAKER: Order, Mr Coe.

Mr Gentleman: On a point of order, Madam Deputy Speaker—

MADAM DEPUTY SPEAKER: I think I have got this under control, Mr Gentleman. I am across it. Mr Coe, can you not interject.

MR RATTENBURY: While it cannot be denied—

Mr Coe: We could ask you how you dealt with misconduct allegations, perhaps.

MADAM DEPUTY SPEAKER: Mr Coe.

MR RATTENBURY: Madam Deputy Speaker, Mr Coe is on a warning from question time today.

MADAM DEPUTY SPEAKER: It is not my warning, Mr Rattenbury.

MR RATTENBURY: That is a new, interesting interpretation. It cannot be denied that these cuts—

MADAM DEPUTY SPEAKER: You might like to be on a warning as well.

MR RATTENBURY: What cannot be denied is that these cuts have impacted and will continue to impact on Canberra. They impact on Canberrans that we represent and their ability to view local programming and receive local news. They even impact on the political discourse in our city as we face an inevitable decrease in the amount of local political reporting and political scrutiny. All members in this chamber should lament this decline and should stand up and oppose these cuts.

An example of the way local reporting has changed is that the regular news bulletins on ABC radio Canberra have been reduced from 10 minutes to five minutes. For Canberra this means there is less room for local news in these bulletins. Unfortunately,

this all serves to alienate Canberrans from their local Assembly and from the issues that are happening here and affect them every day.

As has been touched on today, the ABC has a long and proud history in this city. The ABC was launched in 1932, with the broadcast heard across the country. During the Second World War we heard Australia's first ever female newsreader on the ABC, Margaret Doyle. The radio station 2CM, which today we know as ABC 666 Canberra, started in this city in 1953. ABC television was launched in 1956. A current affairs program was first introduced in the 1960s with *Four Corners*.

In 1986 we welcomed the *7.30 Report*, which has evolved into what we now know as *7.30*. At this time we also got *Stateline*, the local focus version of the *7.30 Report*, which started in 1996. Since 2011 we have known our ACT *Stateline* as *7.30 ACT*. Sadly, *7.30 ACT* aired for the last time on Friday, 5 December 2014. The program provided a fantastic local focus, with quality stories that celebrated Canberra and profiled local Canberrans and events, as well as conducting serious current affairs reporting on issues that were important and topical to locals. Many current and former members of the Assembly have probably appeared on *Stateline* or *7.30 ACT*. I think we all appreciated the professionalism of that program and its journalists and presenters, perhaps even if we did not always share their interpretation. That, of course, is part of the robustness of a modern Western democracy. Over the years there were many favourite stories and memorable *Stateline* pieces that stick in our memories. There were stories on the Canberra bushfires, a moving piece about a homeless security guard in Canberra, a story showcasing Namadgi National Park and, of course, in-depth coverage of our local elections.

The local effects of these cuts do not stop at news and current affairs. It has been particularly concerning to see the impact of these cuts on the broadcast of women's sport. The ABC has previously been a strong supporter of women's sports, including having broadcast until recently the Women's National Basketball League, the WNBL, since 1980. The ABC stopped broadcasting the WNBL after the 2014-15 season. The coverage has been an important part of promoting one of our most successful teams in any sport, the Canberra Capitals. It has helped the players and team to earn sponsorship and has helped to promote the excellent quality of women's sport and our local teams to the broader population.

The WNBL went for two seasons without a TV broadcaster, putting at risk millions of dollars of potential sponsorship money and leaving young girls without the opportunity to see their favourite players—and, for that matter, probably some young men as well. The WNBL has since returned to TV on Fox Sports, which is very welcome. However, we all know that pay TV reaches a much smaller audience than free to air, and therefore the WNBL will not reach as wide an audience as it did on the ABC.

I hold similar concerns about the continued coverage on free to air of Australia's women's soccer league, the W-League. We have watched women's football grow from strength to strength, and the free-to-air televising of this sport has helped cement its place in the Australian sporting landscape. Our Canberra United team were the W-League premiers in 2013-14, which was a very proud moment for the city. The

rights to the 2017-18 season were shared between the ABC and Fox Sports. The W-League used to be exclusively on the ABC, and I am concerned that continued cuts to the ABC will put the availability of the W-League to the broader public at risk.

I must acknowledge that the decision to pull these programs fell to the ABC board, as it did with all the program changes I have described. But the sheer quantum of cuts forces these decisions to be considered and to be made.

It is for the reasons I have described that all MLAs should declare where they stand on privatisation, which, as I have previously stated, amounts to funding cuts to the ABC. Due to the impact on Canberra that the cuts to the ABC have had and will continue to have, I think it is only fair that the voters of Canberra know where their elected representatives stand on this issue. I think that members should be up-front about this. It is topical, given that it was a substantive motion passed at the recent Liberal Party federal council. We are surely willing to come in here and state our position. If members do support privatising the ABC, I ask them to put on the record which local programs they would like to see cut, so that voters can make an informed decision about what they think of that position.

These cuts to the ABC are bad for Canberra: for our local identity, for our ability to have local information and for our local democracy. In democratic societies like Australia, we use the news media to help us make decisions about who will represent us in parliament and make laws on our behalf. A diverse and objective news media is essential to helping us make the right decision. The media is essential to a healthy democracy for two key reasons: it helps to ensure that citizens make responsible, informed choices rather than acting out of ignorance or misinformation; and widely available and accurate information serves an important oversight function by ensuring that elected representatives uphold their oaths of office and carry out the wishes of those who elected them.

I have spoken very specifically about the Canberra context because we are here in the Assembly and that is appropriate. But it is also relevant to recognise the broader role of the ABC, and the role the ABC plays in regional parts of Australia in particular. Regional and rural communities probably have an even stronger affiliation to the ABC than some urban dwellers, although that is probably less so these days as more services become available in the bush than there used to be when, for example, I was a child.

We should also recognise the role of the ABC in the Asia-Pacific region. The ABC is widely recognised across this part of the world both for the transmissions it makes and for the reporting it does. In countries where press freedom is not as powerful as it is here in Australia, the role that the ABC has played in reporting on matters that have perhaps struggled to get mainstream coverage has been incredibly important both for Australia to understand our place in the region and for giving a voice to people who are taking different views from some of the more authoritarian governments across the region. We must not lose sight of the value of that.

Australia seeks to be a middle power in the global geopolitical setting. Certainly that is how we seek to position ourselves in the United Nations. I think the ABC is an important part of the diplomatic effort Australia mounts in that international context.

I conclude by formally putting on the record that the Greens strongly oppose the privatisation of the ABC and any further cuts to the national broadcaster. Polls show that the public do not support cuts to the ABC. So we will certainly fight to oppose those cuts and any proposal to privatise the ABC, and do our best to ensure that proper funding is provided. I hope that members of the Assembly will join us in doing that, for the reasons I have outlined today. Hopefully I have underlined the importance of the ABC as both a source of independence and an important cultural institution here in Australia.

MR STEEL (Murrumbidgee) (5.30), in reply: In wrapping up, I would like to say that it is a real shame that the Leader of the Opposition thinks the ABC is irrelevant to Canberra. It is important because it affects Canberrans. The ABC is an important institution in Canberra, not just in Australia. When cuts affect Canberrans badly—our culture, our sport, our democracy and our parliament—they are worth discussion in our Assembly.

It is important to a leader of the Canberra Liberals because you have influence on whether your own party and your own conservative faction backs cuts to the ABC or backs the privatisation of the ABC. You may never sit on the treasury benches but you might be able to demonstrate your values and try to influence your federal colleagues. And you do need to be transparent about whether your party voted or abstained in this meeting. Whether they did reflects on your values and your leadership, and that is important in our democracy and in this Assembly.

There is also the fact that we want you and your colleagues to stop the cuts and support the ABC. Not once did I hear the Leader of the Opposition in his response say that he supports the ABC. I suspect that many of my constituents are avid watchers of the ABC, and I think it is really disappointing. I think they would be very upset with the response from the Canberra Liberals today and the continued reduction of funding for the programs they enjoy and the important news services that the ABC has provided over the past 65 years in Canberra and 90 years in this country. It is something that matters to their lives right here in the ACT.

Question resolved in the affirmative.

Rulings from the chair

MR GENTLEMAN (Brindabella—Minister for Police and Emergency Services, Minister for the Environment and Heritage, Minister for Planning and Land Management and Minister for Urban Renewal) (5.32): Madam Speaker, could I ask for your indulgence in order to clear up some things that occurred during the last debate?

MADAM SPEAKER: Are you seeking leave to clarify some comments?

MR GENTLEMAN: No, I want to ask for your advice.

MADAM SPEAKER: Okay.

MR GENTLEMAN: During the last debate there was quite a bit of interjection by the opposition. During the debate it was raised by the MLA who was on their feet at the time that the particular person interjecting had been warned during question time and was on a warning. The Deputy Speaker, who was in the chair, said that it was not her ruling. Madam Speaker, can you advise whether or not a ruling made by you is to be continued by somebody occupying the chair later on? I am happy for you to take that on notice.

Mr Coe interjecting—

MADAM SPEAKER: Thank you. I will take that on notice and provide feedback. But, given that the question was about you, Mr Coe, given that you were the only other one on a warning, it was probably a little bit cheeky on your part to interject at that time. I will come back to members with some advice.

Canberra Hospital—radiology department

MRS DUNNE (Ginninderra) (5.33): I move:

That this Assembly:

- (1) notes the poor culture in the medical imaging department of The Canberra Hospital (TCH), and the impact this has on staff morale and performance, and patient safety, with this being a central theme of a recent accreditation status downgrade for the medical imaging training site for trainee radiologists;
- (2) further notes:
 - (a) on 19 March 2018, the Royal Australian and New Zealand College of Radiologists issued a preliminary report of its accreditation assessment for the provision of training of clinical radiologists in the medical imaging department at TCH (“The Assessment Report”);
 - (b) the Assessment Report recommended that the accreditation status for the training site be downgraded from Level A to Level D;
 - (c) the Assessment Report notes:
 - (i) the negative environment within the department;
 - (ii) the poor working relationship between the Directors of Training, the Head of Department, the Director of Medical Imaging and the hospital executive;
 - (iii) the lack of clinical control over the department;
 - (iv) clinical leaders having minimal involvement with the recruitment of new trainees, rostering of clinical staff, and other significant departmental decisions;
 - (v) internal political issues making working in the department difficult;
 - (vi) low morale amongst staff;
 - (vii) the impact of these issues on trainees’ health and wellbeing;

- (viii) the lack of collaboration and communication within the department;
 - (ix) the stress caused to consultants and trainees over rostering arrangements and staff leave management resulting in a “great risk” to the department and patients;
 - (x) teaching sessions not being held while one of the Directors of Training had been on extended leave, resulting in “great concern” to patient safety;
 - (xi) TCH not being part of a training network, trainees not rotating to any private or rural sites, past attempts to establish networks having been unsuccessful, and the confusion over whether TCH was required to be part of a network;
 - (xii) the department not implementing system-focussed rotations due to confusion regarding their necessity, and how trainees and consultants could be rostered to facilitate this;
 - (xiii) no formal teaching program being aligned to the curriculum for trainees, with teaching sessions often cancelled if the relevant consultant is not available;
 - (xiv) a lack of formal teaching sessions on patient safety and report writing;
 - (xv) a change to trainee recruitment processes, which required existing trainees to apply and interview for their positions in competition with new applicants, causing significant confusion and stress for trainees because of a lack of clear information coming from the department and hospital management;
 - (xvi) a person in a non-clinical role chairing the interviewing panel, which was in breach of the College’s trainee selection guidelines;
 - (xvii) the lack of a formal orientation program or manual for new trainees;
 - (xviii) the lack of formal, structured and documented support for trainees in difficulty, as required under the College’s Trainees in Difficulty Policy; and
 - (xix) imaging equipment being out-of-date, with no details of a replacement program provided to the assessors;
- (d) a meeting held on 13 February 2017 between radiology registrars and the Chief Medical Officer, during which registrars raised concerns over:
- (i) the lack of a registered nurse being on duty overnight when medical imaging is undertaken resulting in exposure of risks to patient safety;
 - (ii) possible delays in imaging reports, including critical reports, due to workload pressures and the lack of overnight nursing support;
 - (iii) registrar rotations with other hospitals and across disciplines, noting that “registrars are of the understanding the Medical Imaging Management have declined offers for these rotations, without explanation”;
 - (iv) the lack of a clinical director; and
 - (v) consultants frequently not being rostered on, resulting in the lack of an escalation point, and working unsupervised;

- (e) the evidence given to the Select Committee on Estimates 2018-2019 at hearings and in answers to questions on notice did not address fully the reasons for the accreditation downgrade to Level D and that the Committee recommended, at Recommendation 77, “that relevant officials from the Health Directorate provide the Assembly with all the reasons for the downgrade in the accreditation status for the radiology department”;
 - (f) a number of public interest disclosures have been submitted, relating to the radiology department; and
 - (g) the ACT Auditor-General is an officer of the Legislative Assembly; and
- (3) calls on the Speaker to request the ACT Auditor-General to undertake a performance audit of the medical imaging department at TCH, and report by 31 January 2019.

Yesterday I received a letter from the Minister for Health and Wellbeing seeking to address my concerns about culture and bullying in the ACT health system. The letter once again told me that the government has zero tolerance for bullying. It noted that “every person has the right to feel safe, supported and respected at work”. I do not think anyone disagrees with the sentiment.

The minister told me about training programs; the so-called safe and respectful pathways available to staff to raise their concerns, such as the health services commissioner, the Ombudsman, the Auditor-General and the Public Sector Standards Commissioner; the rigorous processes for investigating bullying appropriately and independently; and the employee assistance program.

In the letter the minister talked about how the restructure of the health department would be the panacea for all the government’s woes in ACT Health, including its culture. It is a pity that the minister’s statements are little more than that. They are statements—motherhood statements, actually. They do not bear any resemblance to reality. So that all members have the opportunity to see the minister’s letter, I seek leave to table the minister’s letter to me dated yesterday, 14 August.

Leave granted.

MRS DUNNE: I present the following paper:

ACT Health—Workplace culture—Copy of letter to Mrs Dunne from the Minister for Health and Wellbeing, dated 14 August 2018.

The minister, in her letter, gently chastised me for not referring to her officers the complaints that come to me. There are a couple of reasons why I do not do this. People who complain to me do so because they do not trust either the government or the public service to treat them respectfully. They do so because they fear reprisals from their bosses—not just from their immediate bosses but from bosses all the way up the food chain.

There are plenty of examples of this fear becoming a reality. The story I told last fortnight about Charlie was a case in point. People make complaints to me on the express condition that I do not disclose their complaints to the minister. I will quote

from an email that I received in my office this morning: "I cannot reveal my identity as ACT PS would make my life unpleasant. I must be anonymous." This person provided me with some information. The person concludes, "Kind regards, but, PS, please protect my identity."

That is why most of what I hear I do not refer directly to the ministers. However, when there are things that are more publicly available, I do refer them to the ministers. I will be doing that in response to the minister's letter later this week.

Why is it, Madam Speaker, that people want their complaints to be dealt with confidentially? It is because they fear that they will find their way back into the department, up the line and back to their immediate bosses, and that that will be the end of them. They fear reprisals. This is often further exacerbated by a top level management culture that seeks to protect their own at all costs. The bottom line is that the culture is such that workers are afraid. They are afraid for their jobs, their health, their wellbeing, their families and their friends.

Quite contrary to the minister's assurances, staff in the ACT health system do not feel safe, supported and respected at work. The psychological impact can be horrendous. I again refer to Charlie's case. The culture of bullying and harassment is entrenched. The culture is what drives the ACT health system. This culture is institutionalised in the ACT health system.

The bullying culture that we have seen is exemplified in the medical imaging department in the Canberra Hospital system, which is the main thrust of the motion today. Many of the issues that have arisen in the medical imaging department have been, as far as I can tell, the subject of public interest disclosures. But there are real concerns about the way that public interest disclosures have been dealt with. I raised these issues in general terms in estimates hearings in June.

Some of the disclosers in the ACT health system and some in the medical imaging department want to disclose to me, as is their right, under the Public Interest Disclosure Act, subject, of course, to certain criteria. In those cases, the question as to whether the criteria have been activated is murky. It is murky because of the way the government and the officials have handled it. It is murky because the government has made it difficult to see whether these public interest disclosures have been processed in accordance with the act.

There have been interminable delays. It has been uncertain as to whether they have even been accepted as public interest disclosures at all. There has been little, if any, feedback to the disclosers. They have not been consulted about who might investigate their concerns or whether they would be investigated. It is very murky, Madam Speaker. The disclosers do not know what their legal status is, nor do they know what their rights are. This is because government officials have closed ranks. There are some issues in medical imaging raised in these PIDs that cannot be raised in this place today because their status is simply unclear. So today I simply draw the Assembly's attention to the fact that there are public interest disclosures that relate to medical imaging and that they need to be investigated properly and promptly.

What I propose to do today is to rely upon the evidence before us, mainly from the report of the Royal Australian and New Zealand College of Radiologists and their accreditation review of the radiology training site at the Canberra Hospital. It more than adequately addresses the issues of culture. I note the minister's advice during question time yesterday that she had received the final report. I look forward to that final report and the draft report being tabled so that they can be made available publicly. I hope that when we see those reports we will have seen an improvement on what we read in the preliminary report that came out in March.

There are some very serious problems identified in the preliminary report. It is not just about how it impacts on training; it is about how it impacts on the whole department. What the college of radiologists uncovered was not just a training issue. It does lead to poor culture and also potentially it leads to poor diagnosis.

I am moving this motion today because medical imaging is, in many ways, at the heart of an operating health system. How many people enter the health system through the hospital, through outpatient clinics or the like and have to have an X-ray, a CAT scan, an MRI, an ultrasound or some combination of those things? If the system is not working, the risks of misdiagnosis or missed diagnosis are real and rare.

The college of radiologists sees it as necessary to raise these problems in a way because of the behaviour of ACT Health. I have been advised that it was not a scheduled investigation, audit or accreditation visit. The college of radiologists decided to make an accreditation visit because concerns had been raised with them. They had raised those concerns with ACT Health and ACT Health had not responded, or had not responded satisfactorily, to the college of radiologists. So they made an accreditation visit which was out of the usual timetable.

The issues raised in this preliminary report of the college of radiologists, as well as the discussions that I have had with others, including the salaried medical officers and the AMA, seem to point to the fact that there are real personality problems inside medical imaging. Part of the problem lies with the director of medical imaging, who holds no clinical qualifications.

I note that the position of the director of medical imaging was advertised three times between April and October 2017. It was first advertised as a senior officer grade 1 but later upgraded to an executive level 1.3, with an increase in salary of \$100,000. The first time it was advertised as an executive level 1.3 position, it was advertised only as an expression of interest. It was finally advertised in October 2017 and I think that was when the position was finally filled.

The college reported problems such as a lack of clinical control over the department. For considerable periods of time there has been no medically qualified clinical director of medical imaging. So the non-medical administrative person has taken on responsibilities that are inappropriate. It also reported on the lack of consultation with clinical directors on rostering arrangements; clinical leaders having little or no involvement in the recruitment of trainees; the lack of appropriate networks to enable training rotations; the lack of rigour and reliability in setting teaching programs; and the lack of formal orientation programs or a manual for trainees.

The college even raised concerns about a person in a non-clinical role chairing interviewing panels for new trainees, which is a breach of the college's training selection guidelines. These issues point to a person without clinical qualifications or experience, not a fellow of the college, not having knowledge or understanding of the clinical needs of the department and its employees, running the department anyhow. It also says to me that the director, by not being recognised by the college and not being qualified, does not have the knowledge or understanding of the college's requirements for running medical imaging training in the Canberra Hospital. The issues raised by the college in its preliminary report about the overall culture, the lack of communication, the political environment and the poor working relationship must also rest with the department's director.

This report is as much a performance review of the director as it is of the department, but it cannot rest solely with the director. There are still two more senior roles needing to take responsibility. The second part of my motion goes to that. In February 2017, radiology registrars met with the Chief Medical Officer to discuss a range of concerns, and my motion outlines those concerns. That was 13 months before the college of radiologists carried out their accreditation review. They highlighted a shortage of radiologists. There was one position advertised in late 2016 in the *ACT Government Gazette*, but it seems that that position was never filled. The problems identified in the college's report would suggest that little had changed in the intervening three months; so it seems that the meeting between the radiologists, the trainees and the Chief Medical Officer was a waste of everyone's time.

This fact was borne out in the estimates hearings in July. When the committee chair asked the Chief Medical Officer what was the basis for the medical imaging accreditation status going from A to D, the Chief Medical Officer told the committee:

Some of it is around a network. In radiology we have had trouble creating a network with other facilities.

That is true, Madam Speaker, but it is only a small part of the story. This exemplifies some of the issues outlined in my motion. I note that in recommendation 77 the committee called on the Health Directorate officials to:

... provide the Assembly with all the reasons for the downgrade in the accreditation status for the radiology department.

The government has agreed to do that. I look forward to the minister outlining those when she responds—perhaps.

There are real concerns, and in the time available to me I will summarise those. There are problems in the downgrading of training. There are problems that have caused people to submit public interest disclosures which are beyond the issues that I have raised here today. Staff have not seen positive outcomes from meetings held to air their concerns. Staff have become ill. Staff have become preoccupied with trying to rectify a dysfunctional department instead of getting on with the job of providing services to trainees and to patients. There are management practices that seemingly

are ignorant of clinical guidelines and procedures. There are people unwilling to take responsibility for failures.

We have a minister who is more concerned about making motherhood statements than she is about taking action. Therefore, it falls to the Assembly to take the lead. That is why this Assembly should be calling upon the Auditor-General to have a root and branch inquiry into the operation of what is clearly a dysfunctional medical imaging department in the ACT hospital system. I commend the motion to the Assembly.

MS FITZHARRIS (Yerrabi—Minister for Health and Wellbeing, Minister for Transport and City Services and Minister for Higher Education, Training and Research) (5.49): I welcome the opportunity to clarify for the Assembly the circumstances surrounding training at the radiology department at the Canberra Hospital. I would note—and I will reflect on this and take some advice, Madam Speaker, and, of course, being respectful of the right of everyone in this place to speak freely—that Mrs Dunne has done what I have not observed in my time in this place, and has made very specific mention of a very specific official. I would remind her that the freedom of speech which we all enjoy should be exercised very responsibly, particularly when it comes to our public officials, our public servants, and what I believe might well be one side of the story.

As I have said previously, and as I outlined during question time yesterday when Mrs Dunne asked me a question about radiology accreditation for training, I detailed a number of steps that ACT Health have taken. Far from being motherhood statements, they were direct examples of the numerous steps that ACT Health has taken, particularly since March, when the college undertook its accreditation preliminary assessment. I can provide advice to the Assembly that, as I indicated earlier today, as with many departments, the relevant colleges of radiologists accredit departments to undertake training. The preliminary accreditation report by the college related to an assessment of the training program, and that assessment did lead to downgrading the status of the training accreditation.

It is important to point out again that this has been entirely separate from the broader accreditation of Canberra Hospital and Health Services against the 10 national safety and quality health service standards. There are always a number of accreditation processes that hospitals and health departments go through. With respect to the most significant—and this is why I will not be supporting Mrs Dunne's motion today to request that you, Madam Speaker, refer this to the Auditor-General—an independent accreditation process, a very thorough one, has recently been undertaken in the same time frames.

I will read out again later, for the benefit of Mrs Dunne and for the benefit of all members in this place—and I really do invite her to listen to this—the feedback about some of the turnarounds in ACT Health over the past three months. I note, of course, that the original accreditation by the royal Australian college of radiologists was undertaken in March. As we have noted in discussions about accreditation, the re-accreditation process—which I am advised was a planned accreditation by the college, which refutes Mrs Dunne's earlier claims—is always an opportunity for

hospitals to identify areas of improvement and ensure that areas of the hospital are delivering high quality care, training and education for junior doctors.

The college's report on the department's training is an important assessment and ACT Health has openly welcomed all the findings, some of which have raised some key personnel and workplace issues that must be and are being addressed. The report provided a number of key recommendations, of which the majority are either being actioned or indeed have been met. This is significant because the point of the downgrade is that it sends a clear signal to the department about what it needs to do to address these issues.

I wish to reiterate to the Assembly that the radiology department is on track in actioning these recommendations and, as I stated, in many cases has already met a number of these recommendations. It is, of course, disappointing that this downgrade occurred, but Health is confident that the radiology training program will have instituted a significant level of improvement which will assist in restoring the accreditation levels for the radiology department. It is also important to note that accreditation remains until 31 December this year.

Earlier this month the college's final report was completed, and the department has moved swiftly to address the recommendations. The work and actions to date include Canberra Hospital and Health Services appointing two new directors of training. They have already started and they have not wasted any time in implementing the appropriate changes in line with the college's recommendations, which include, as I also indicated during question time yesterday, integrating a formal teaching program which aligns with the curriculum. The first four trainees have commenced completion of all the key conditions. The directors have ensured that they will be working with the college's trainee in difficulty pathway and remediation plans—a plan for trainees who need additional assistance with their training. They will also be accurately recording and reinvigorating the registrar training schedule.

It is important to note that the personnel issues in the radiology department were complex and senior managers have been working through appropriate channels over a long period of time, with staff, to address concerns. I am very pleased to inform the Assembly that the advice to me from ACT Health is that feedback from the registrars most recently indicates that they are very positive about the changes made so far. This is indicative of an improved culture and training environment at the department.

Where the college noted a negative environment and low morale amongst staff, more recently that working environment has turned around. That has been independently verified across ACT Health by the surveyors who performed the ACT Health accreditation advanced completion survey in early July. Our registrars are reporting greater confidence in the training at the department. As we all know, cultural change, personnel changes and morale do not transform overnight, but significant progress can be made. I am sure members would agree that, where a culture and environment changes positively and improves, we, as representatives and leaders not just in the Assembly but in the community, should all work to nurture that change.

I wish to publicly acknowledge the good work and solid commitment from the doctors, registrars and senior managers that have contributed recently to the improved environment and culture in the radiology department. Good culture breeds better culture, and I will not continue to engage in a dialogue that regurgitates historical situations when there is clear evidence before us that the situation is changing. In addition, both Minister Rattenbury and I have been very clear with ACT Health's leadership that the work underway to rebuild trust and genuine engagement with staff is a key priority. As we move to separate ACT Health into two organisations, this work must continue, and we are confident that the directorate is on the right track to drive these positive changes.

Outside these issues, I would also like to outline some additional work currently underway within the radiology department. ACT Health has advertised widely for two new radiologists at a national and local level, a departmental orientation program has been completed and distributed to all radiologists and trainees within the department, and all trainees are being offered two and three-year contracts to align with their training schedule and will not be required to undertake reviews.

I am also pleased to confirm that all Canberra Hospital medical imaging equipment meets Medicare requirements and in fact has National Association of Testing Authorities accreditation right through to June 2020. All devices are under vendor service managed contracts and an asset replacement strategy, which is currently being finalised and will form part of future government considerations. These include two MRI scanners, a digital X-ray and a third CT scanner.

While I acknowledge the report noted imaging equipment being out of date, with no details of a replacement program, I am advised that this is not the case and it has been remedied. I am also pleased to confirm that the medical imaging department is currently installing a new \$1 million single-photon emission computed tomography camera, better known as a SPECT camera, and is currently procuring three new ultrasound units.

Fundamentally, though, the report from the college did cite a significant breakdown in communication between two previous directors of training, which unfortunately affected the management of trainees. Since that time ACT Health has taken appropriate steps, as guided by the college's report, to remedy this by appointing two new directors of training, as I have noted.

With reference to issues relating to clinical oversight, I am advised that the rostering of radiologists during this time was required to be overseen by the clinical director of radiology. The role of clinical director was to provide oversight of the roster and ensure clinical needs were being met within the department. The compilation of the roster was undertaken by the director of medical imaging, which is a legitimate part of any rostering process and reduces the need to take clinicians away from their clinical work.

I can confirm that consultant rostering will continue to be undertaken by the director of medical imaging, with the appropriate oversight of a clinical lead, and the rostering

and rotation of the registrars will be undertaken by the two new directors of training. I can also confirm that one of the previous directors of training was involved in the interview process and interview panel when interviews were undertaken. The panel also included an experienced, longstanding staff specialist radiologist, with both involved in the decisions regarding recruitment. The trainees were also offered interview practice and resume development by the medical support, credentialing, education and training unit.

More broadly, in discussing the medical imaging department at the Canberra Hospital today, it is also important for me to outline the significant improvements that have been made in recent years that have led to increased access to medical imaging and a reduction in wait times for patients. I am very pleased to say that there is currently no waitlist for children to have MRI scans under a general anaesthetic and for breast imaging modalities. Medical imaging at Canberra Hospital has also continued to improve wait times for inpatient, emergency and outpatient diagnostic procedures.

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

MS FITZHARRIS: The findings of the 2017 health round table, which mapped Canberra Hospital's average wait time performance against 13 other public hospitals, showed significant improvements across the board and that the Canberra Hospital is leading in this area. For example, for emergency department requests for MRIs at the Canberra Hospital compared to other public hospitals, there is an average wait time of just over three hours, compared to more than 24 respectively. For CT scans it is one hour compared to 2½. For X-rays it is down to 30 minutes, compared to an hour and a half at the other public hospitals.

Before concluding today, it is important for me to highlight that the training accreditation process is about making improvements to existing programs. ACT Health is committed to an open and transparent approach to all college recommendations and ensuring that our junior doctors are getting the best clinical training. As I mentioned earlier, I believe that the recent broad accreditation of ACT Health provides independent verification of a significant turnaround in ACT Health and commends many departments and many aspects of the accreditation process.

I remain disappointed that in the debate about these matters—which I acknowledge is the right of the Assembly, and it is good to have these issues aired—I do not believe that on any occasion the opposition have acknowledged my comments and the direct feedback from the Australian commission on health and safety when they came back and completed their accreditation process in July. I think this provides sufficient grounds for the government to not support Mrs Dunne's motion because there is a journey ahead for ACT Health. It has certainly been challenged in recent times, but that has turned around. I would encourage Mrs Dunne and the opposition to honour the work of ACT Health staff, particularly over the past few months, and particularly the very significant comments from the surveyors, which included—and I repeat—comments such as these:

The governance documents and supporting committee structures provided all staff with clarity of roles, responsibilities and lines of reporting. The quality improvement board captured in detail the excellent quality improvement work AMHU staff are undertaking and have achieved.

It was reported that ACT Health has embraced and embedded the principle and intent of standard 3, with significant improvements observed and reported by surveyors. The list goes on. It does go to what has been an outstanding effort by ACT Health. It does not mean that there will not be future challenges. It does not mean that there are not current issues that we are addressing.

I do believe that the findings of the independent accreditation, which were very significant right across the board in ACT Health, can give the community a very high level of confidence in ACT Health. But I—and Minister Rattenbury, I know—will continue to work with ACT Health to ensure that we have high quality training and a positive culture. I really would invite Mrs Dunne to respect the work of ACT Health staff in this regard. (*Time expired.*)

MR RATTENBURY (Kurrajong—Minister for Climate Change and Sustainability, Minister for Justice, Consumer Affairs and Road Safety, Minister for Corrections and Minister for Mental Health) (6.04): While the recent report from the Royal Australian and New Zealand College of Radiologists provides a disappointing result for the Canberra Hospital radiology department, it includes a series of recommendations to address these concerns and restore ACT Health's radiology training accreditation rank to a level A over the coming 12 months. I do not believe the motion before the Assembly represents a proposal that would add value to that process.

It is clear from the college's interim report that a number of significant issues need to be addressed. We should not shy away from that fact, and the minister has been very clear about that in her remarks this evening. As both the minister for health and I noted in our comments in relation to the recent hospital accreditation process, these reviews provide us with an opportunity to improve. Based on my conversations with ACT Health staff, including the Chief Medical Officer, that is exactly where their focus is now, as it rightly should be. That is why ACT Health has accepted all 16 recommendations in the report and is working to have them all completed within the designated time frames.

We have spoken in this place over recent weeks about the culture in ACT Health, and I note that Mrs Dunne's motion raises this issue once again. As I have said before, in an organisation with over 7,000 staff, there will inevitably be issues that arise, and we need the right processes in place to deal with those issues sensitively and appropriately. Any allegations of bullying must be taken extremely seriously, in line with ACT Health's zero tolerance approach to bullying. As part of the public commentary on this issue ACT Health has also acknowledged some issues with personnel in the radiology department, and I understand that changes have been made. Two new directors of training are now in place and recruitment is underway for two new consultants.

Let me return for a moment to this issue of culture. Mrs Dunne has reflected on it again today. I listened very carefully to what she had to say about her reluctance to bring complaints forward because of people's fears about repercussions. I take at face value Mrs Dunne's commentary on that. I think we need to collectively think about how we can address that, because it is highly problematic if complaints are coming in and stopping at Mrs Dunne's office.

That is not a critique of Mrs Dunne; it is problematic in terms of actually trying to break this culture. This is the conversation I sought to have with Mrs Dunne as we walked up the stairs last week, and about which we had a further exchange yesterday. There is a serious issue here. I am very open to suggestions from Mrs Dunne on how we might deal with that, because it is not an acceptable situation going forward that Mrs Dunne's office becomes a black hole for these things.

Mrs Dunne had a go at me yesterday for not being aware of the issues, but I cannot be aware of them—and neither can Minister Fitzharris—if they stop at Mrs Dunne's office. I accept that she is doing that because people have asked her to respect their confidentiality, and it would be totally inappropriate for her not to respect that confidentiality. I do not critique that point. I raise the important policy question that if we are going to deal with this and if we want to get an effective outcome, we need to find a way to move past those things coming to a dead halt in Mrs Dunne's office. I am open to suggestions on that. Certainly Minister Fitzharris and I are working hard to engender a culture in the organisation that gives people confidence that they can come forward. If there are other suggestions then we should hear them.

Clearly issues regarding interpersonal relationships and management arrangements can be complex and take some time to be worked through. However, progress is being made to address these issues. We have worked to address a number of the recommendations in the college's report, and these are already underway in terms of specific issues arising in the radiology department. I hope the signals being sent by me, Minister Fitzharris and the director-general and by the acceptance of and action on these reports gives staff confidence that there is a clear intention to try to break these cultural issues.

I take this opportunity to reiterate my confidence in the leadership team at ACT Health in their efforts to set and be clear about a different direction. They have done a tremendous amount of work over recent months to address the issues of governance and culture that were identified in the hospital accreditation process. It was great to see this work acknowledged by the surveyors in their follow-up visit in July, with a draft report recognising ACT Health's commitment to and focus on driving sustainable, positive change in the culture of the organisation.

They found that the organisation had moved from being fragmented and divided to being a cohesive organisation focused on teamwork and what is best for the patient. This is a remarkable turnaround in such a short period, and I believe the broader work that has been happening on governance and culture will have a direct flow-on effect to departments at the Canberra Hospital, including radiology.

The other item I understand the Chief Medical Officer spoke about during the recent estimates hearing was the need to create a network with other facilities to enable trainees to broaden their learning and experience. This is a challenge for a number of specialties in the ACT as we are a small tertiary-level hospital that cannot always provide the breadth of experiences needed for students and junior doctors to complete their training. ACT Health are working with hospitals across New South Wales to build those partnerships, particularly so that our trainees will get experience in more specialised areas. This is an item that may take some time, but I know it is one ACT Health are committed to progressing. I am hopeful all of this work will see the radiology department's accreditation status reinstated to level A in the next 12 months.

Mrs Dunne's motion provides a list of issues identified through the radiology department's training accreditation process and calls for an independent review of these issues by the Auditor-General. There are two significant reasons why the Greens cannot support those calls by Mrs Dunne today. The first is that the Canberra Hospital radiology department has just undergone an independent external review. That is exactly what the college's accreditation process is about.

Not only does it seem unnecessary but it diverts time and resources to conduct another independent review to look into the items identified in the review we have just completed. While it may serve Mrs Dunne's political purposes to keep it on the agenda and provide another opportunity for critique, I do not think it would contribute to improving policies and processes in the radiology department. Instead, we should give the staff in the department the time and resources required to respond to the recommendations in the college's report. It would then be appropriate for the Assembly to seek an update on progress against these recommendations at a later date.

But let's be clear about what happens when something like an Auditor-General's report is put on. Staff are required to spend a significant amount of time assembling documents, having conversations, investigating staff, reviewing drafts. All of these things are legitimate processes, and if there had been no exploration one might rightly pursue that. But, given that the college has just done the exact investigation being proposed here, it seems on the face of it, to anyone observing it, that this would be a duplicative effort.

Given that ACT Health has accepted all of the recommendations and is now committed to implementing them, one can only imagine that in any practical sense staff would be diverted from that implementation strategy in having to assemble all the other documentation and do the necessary work that would go into engaging in an Auditor-General's report. On a simple merits ground I cannot come to a point where I can accept that as a good use of resources at this time.

Secondly, and importantly, the Greens cannot support this motion because it calls for the Speaker to interfere with the independence of the Auditor-General, which would be a breach of the Auditor-General Act. I am somewhat surprised that there is a need to even canvass this issue, but it is important to be clear on this point. We must maintain a clear line of independence between the Auditor-General and the Assembly so that the functions of that office are not misused or perceived to be misused for political purposes.

Section 7 of the Auditor-General Act is very clear on this issue. Part 1 notes that the Auditor-General has complete discretion in the exercise of the Auditor-General's function, and part 2 notes that the Auditor-General is not subject to direction from anyone in relation to whether a particular audit is to be carried out, the way in which a particular audit is to be carried out or the priority to be given to any particular matter. This could not be any clearer. The Auditor-General is an independent body and is not subject to direction from anyone, including the minister, the Speaker or the Assembly. That is why we cannot support the call in Mrs Dunne's motion for the Speaker to instruct the Auditor-General to undertake a performance audit of the medical imaging department at the Canberra Hospital.

I was surprised by this text because Mrs Dunne, of course, has been the Speaker, and I wonder whether we have a different interpretation of this or whether this was an oversight. I doubt it was a deliberate attempt to interfere with the independence of the Auditor-General. Governments, of course, should be subject to scrutiny, and there are appropriate processes for that, through both the Assembly and other independent oversight mechanisms. We do not shy away from the need for these issues to be addressed and reported on, but we cannot support this proposal because it seeks to instruct the Auditor-General, and that is a very specific word.

I have been thinking about the history here. There have been times when the Assembly has requested the Auditor-General to consider a matter, and it has been that sort of language.

Mrs Dunne: You're using the old text of the motion.

MR RATTENBURY: Mrs Dunne is suggesting to me that—

Mrs Dunne: The text is out of date.

MADAM SPEAKER: It came to my attention too, Mr Rattenbury. I understand that the notice paper uses the word "request".

MR RATTENBURY: Thank you; I am pleased to be corrected. I was surprised, and I hope that was reflected in my remarks, because it is an important distinction. I will leave that point now, but my first point nonetheless remains the same.

I will conclude by simply observing that the Canberra Hospital radiology department has some work to do on a range of issues raised in the training accreditation report that must be addressed. The department now has a clear set of recommendations, all of which it has accepted. The appropriate next step is to allow the staff and management at Canberra Hospital to make the necessary improvements to maintain the highest possible accreditation level, and to seek updates on this process through the Assembly.

We will not support the motion today for the reasons I have outlined, but that is not to diminish the findings of the accreditation report. I look forward to seeing the progress that has been committed to to ensure that the higher accreditation level is achieved.

MS CODY (Murrumbidgee) (6.16): I note Mrs Dunne's pursuit of a workers' rights agenda, and I congratulate her for it. The right to work in a safe, harassment-free environment is one I am glad we can agree on. Well, at least all in Labor, all in the Greens and Mrs Dunne. I will let her speculate on the views of her union-busting colleagues. I will save speculating about those things for another day. I will also restrain myself from referring to Mrs Dunne as "Comrade Dunne" in this speech because she would not appreciate it and I am not sure she is all the way across yet. But I continue to live in hope; nobody is beyond the reach of our solidarity.

Mrs Dunne has pointed out some serious concerns that have been raised. As a workers' rights issue, this is a matter that I have been following very, very closely. I have seen the minister listen, acknowledge the problems and work to solve them. Despite Minister Fitzharris's amazing skills, she does not have a magic wand. And if she did try to use magic to manage her department, I believe we would have some other concerns.

With the minister having got the big calls right, the ongoing building of a collaborative, respectful environment is the goal. The best solution for building positive work cultures, as Mrs Dunne should know, is union. If Mrs Dunne needs any introductions to either the concepts or the people, I am very happy to facilitate that—unions like the CPSU, the HSU, the AMWU, Professionals Australia, the ANMF, and/or if she really wants to get militant about things, the AMA.

Whilst I absolutely agree with the importance of bullying and harassment being raised in any and every forum, solving them is a different issue. I said earlier that Minister Fitzharris does not have a magic wand. I may stand to be corrected, but I also believe Mrs Dunne does not have a magic wand or any of the associated powers. As I said earlier, raising these issues is valuable; however, solving them is far more important. And that is the contrast: Mrs Dunne is raising issues that have already been well and truly raised, and Minister Fitzharris is solving them. It is not the first time that this contrast has been made in ACT politics and it probably will not be the last.

MRS DUNNE (Ginninderra) (6.19), in reply: I was quite pleased when the minister said at the outset that she was going to clarify some issues, but she used some of the language that was used in estimates. She said that this was one side of the story, but she did not actually elaborate as to what other part of the story we were missing. I potentially stand corrected. The advice to me, and I have not had any evidence otherwise, was that this was not a planned accreditation. But irrespective of that, you have to remember that during this planned accreditation into whether or not the radiology department should continue as a training facility, it got 28 of 33 criteria assessed as a C or a D, downgraded from A. It did not get one A in 33 criteria.

I want to go back to Mr Rattenbury's comments and then conclude by talking about Minister Fitzharris's comments. Mr Rattenbury said that the Greens could not support this motion because we have already had an independent review of the radiology department. No, Madam Speaker; we have had an independent review of whether or not the radiology department should be accredited as a training institution. That highlighted a whole lot of other issues. In addition to those issues, which I have

highlighted here, there are the issues about how a certain number of public interest disclosure issues had been raised, and there are a whole range of other cultural issues which are not touched on in the accreditation review.

It is interesting that you have both ministers walking both sides of the street. I have raised this issue over and over again. The minister has gone to great pains to emphasise that this is not an accreditation of the operation of the radiology department; it is only an accreditation of its training arm. We have one minister saying we have had a root and branch review and the other minister saying, "No, it is only about training." They cannot even get their story straight, Madam Speaker.

I acknowledge the point made by Mr Rattenbury. I did get a little carried away with myself earlier in the week. The original version of the motion circulated did actually attempt to compel the Auditor-General, but the Clerk's office pointed out quite rightly that I could not do that, and we modified it. Since it has been on the notice paper, it has used the words "calls on the Speaker to request the ACT Auditor-General". So those issues had already been addressed, but I thank Mr Rattenbury for raising them.

There are a couple of issues about Mr Rattenbury wanting a way that we can deal with some of these issues that come to me. They do not fall into a black hole when they come into my office. I find ways of dealing with them. I take them to the Auditor-General. I take them in a de-identified way to ministers. I raise them in estimates. And, quite frankly, Madam Speaker, I get really unsatisfactory responses.

I raised an issue in estimates. I raised the same issue with the Auditor-General. The Auditor-General referred it to the director-general. I got a response back from the director-general today to say that he had looked at it. Nothing else. He had looked at it. These were serious complaints, and all I got was that the director-general had looked at it. I do not know what the director-general has done with it, if anything, but I get the impression that nothing has been done about it.

This is why it is very difficult for us, and this is why, in a sense, the people of the ACT who are coming to me do not trust the government and why I do not have confidence, and my staff do not have confidence, that if we take these things to the minister, they will be dealt with. On top of that, I have a responsibility to people who say, "Please protect my identity," to do what I can to protect the identity of the people who ask for protection. It would be a radical breach of the procedures of this place if somebody came to me seeking confidentiality and I blurted out their details.

Ms Fitzharris: I am not asking for their names. You have never written to me.

MRS DUNNE: Do you want to put that on the record, that I have never written to you?

Ms Fitzharris: About these issues.

MRS DUNNE: You need to be very careful about that. There are a few issues that were raised by the minister that beg more questions than they ask. The minister said that this is historical. Madam Speaker, this is a report that was written in March. This

is the reinvention of history when something that happened six months ago is historical. It is still happening. It is still happening at the moment. Some of the people who are outlined in this report as having bad relationships are still there.

It is not sufficient to say that this was all about the two directors of training. It is clearly not just about the two directors of training. I will quote from the summary of the preliminary report as reported:

The assessors found the most significant issue—
facing the Canberra Hospital—

was the negative environment within the department.

It referred in particular to the poor relationships between the directors of training—yes—the head of the department, the medical director, the director of medical imaging and the hospital executive. There is more to this than just blaming two people who do not have their jobs anymore. There is more to this than that. It goes on to say:

... internal political issues make working in the department difficult and cause low morale amongst staff ... These issues are having a significant impact on the wellbeing of the trainees.

This was a report into the capacity to conduct training.

The Canberra Hospital is not part of a network. This was the only issue that was raised by the director of medicine in the estimates report: “Canberra Hospital is not part of a trainee network and trainees do not rotate to any private or rural sites. There have been attempts in the past to develop links with other sites; however, these have been unsuccessful.” It goes on to say, and this is absolutely gobsmacking when you think about it: “Recently BreastScreen ACT applied for accreditation to enable Canberra Hospital trainees to gain exposure to mammography; however, the application was withdrawn.”

So medical imaging at the Canberra Hospital does not even talk to BreastScreen ACT. How important would that be, to have people who are trained in the ACT reading the films of the women who go to BreastScreen ACT? From time to time in the past, we have imported people from interstate to do that because we did not have sufficient trained people to do it here.

This is not historical; this is today. There are people who have current, live public interest disclosures that are not being dealt with. This is today. It is interesting that the minister coughed up the information—an issue which I have never raised—that all the equipment now meets Medicare requirements. That begs the question: how long was equipment in medical imaging not meeting Medicare requirements? Was there equipment that was not sufficiently maintained to ensure that they could bulk-bill against a Medicare item number? There are rules about this, Madam Speaker.

The minister coughed up the information: “Well, there’s nothing to see here at the moment.” What was the situation like? Has ACT Health been involved in Medicare

fraud? I do not know. It certainly has been an issue that has been raised with me. The fact that the minister coughed up the information that all the equipment now complies with Medicare requirements seems to indicate that there has been a problem in the past. That might be historical, but it is still an issue, and there are many issues that still need to be addressed.

Mr Rattenbury does not want to have an inquiry because that would be onerous. More importantly, it will be onerous for the people of the ACT if we do not have a functioning medical imaging system; if we have delays in reading scripts, which I have had complaints about, that result in adverse medical outcomes; or if we have inappropriate procedures that require people to come back and back to have more and more readings, ultrasounds and the like because we cannot get our act together to do it all on the one day. That has adverse medical outcomes.

I am more concerned about the people of the ACT getting good X-ray results and the people who provide those X-ray services not feeling harassed and sick than I am about whether or not it would be onerous to have an inquiry.

Question put:

That the motion be agreed to.

The Assembly voted—

Ayes 7

Noes 10

Miss C Burch
Mr Coe
Mrs Dunne
Mr Hanson
Mrs Kikkert

Ms Lawder
Ms Lee

Ms J Burch
Ms Cheyne
Ms Cody
Ms Fitzharris
Mr Gentleman

Ms Le Couteur
Ms Orr
Mr Pettersson
Mr Rattenbury
Ms Stephen-Smith

Question resolved in the negative.

Adjournment

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

That the Assembly do now adjourn.

Senator Fraser Anning—first speech

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) (6.34): Words have meaning and words have power. We know this in our daily lives: the compliment that can make our day or the slight that can ruin it. For those of us who have the honour of representing our communities as elected officials, the power of our words is amplified. With this honour comes a duty and a responsibility to ensure that our words are wielded with consideration and respect.

Last night in his first speech in the Senate, Senator Fraser Anning instead used his words and his platform to appeal to the most vile and racist sentiments that fester in our nation. As federal Labor's shadow minister for citizenship and multicultural Australia, Tony Burke, said in his speech last night:

Senator Anning's words are not the words of a proud Australian. They are the words of people who hate modern Australia, people who hate who we are as Australians.

Senator Anning has since said that his words were not intended to denigrate the Jewish community. What Senator Anning has clearly failed to understand is that his words did far more than that. He denigrated not only the Muslim community quite deliberately but Australia itself as a successful, modern and multicultural nation. His words and everything they stand for must be condemned. In fact, not only must we condemn the words spoken, we must also condemn silence in the face of this type of abhorrent vilification.

Tonight, on behalf of the ACT Labor government I condemn Senator Anning's comments. I call on everyone in this place and all Canberrans to heed the Prime Minister's call to reject and condemn racism in any form. I welcome Malcolm Turnbull's and the federal Liberals' condemnation of Senator Anning's words—of course I do—but we cannot let them off the hook completely.

Unfortunately, this is the same Liberal Party that has been trying to fuel panic in Victoria about the apparent threat of African gangs, vilifying an entire community. This is the same Liberal Party which is seeking to introduce a university-level English language requirement for citizenship and which sought to water down our laws on hate speech. Hearing the federal Liberals condemn racism on the one hand and use it as a political tool on the other may seem like a bizarre inconsistency but it reveals a cynical truth about the federal Liberals. They have decided that there are votes in prejudice, and they are willing to go there.

On ABC Radio Canberra this morning local advocate and president of Australian Muslim Voice, Diana Abdel-Rahman, responded to Senator Anning's remarks. Diana said:

I couldn't sleep last night. I have to say that I was purely, at first, disgusted, and then I think, a dreaded fear.

Diana, someone many of us know well, went on to explain how the political environment has emboldened people to make vile remarks in the vein of Senator Anning's speech. She said:

I've been watching a language over the last maybe 10 years or more—what's been happening is, as our politicians have been allowed to say defamatory things in Parliament about immigration or multiculturalism, or about the Muslim community or the African community or the Chinese community, it's been let go—which then emboldens the next politician to go that step further, and here we are.

I do not believe that this is the intention of the Prime Minister. I do not believe he is a hateful man. What I believe is that some in the Liberal Party have decided that they cannot afford to put principle above politics, that they cannot afford to put the cohesion of our community above the votes won through fear. This is simply unacceptable and should be called out in the same way as Senator Anning's comments have been condemned. It is not good enough to stand up to racism and vilification only when it is politically expedient. We must always stand up to fearmongering and prejudice.

Diversity and inclusion make us stronger. I see this every day in my portfolios of multicultural affairs, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander affairs, disability, and social inclusion. I know that those opposite see it too, and I want to make clear that I am not seeking to tar them with the federal Liberals' brush. I see the Leader of the Opposition and Mrs Kikkert, Ms Lee and other members opposite often at multicultural events around our community and they speak at those events with genuine warmth and commitment to a strong and diverse Canberra. I know they must disagree with the federal Liberals' approach, and the community is waiting for them to speak out.

We do not live in a European land that was terra nullius before the British came along. We live on land that is, was and always will be Aboriginal land. We live in cities built with the blood and sweat of migrant labour, in a nation nourished by the flavours of the world. There is no place in this nation for vilification and racism.

Senator Fraser Anning—first speech

MRS KIKKERT (Ginninderra) (6.39): I rise today to respond to a disturbing speech that was given in the federal parliament yesterday by Senator Anning. The senator spoke fondly of a time in Australia's past when our immigration program "actively discriminated in favour of Europeans". To point out the obvious, neither I nor my Liberal colleague Ms Lee would be here now under such a program. Many of the very best Australians that I know, likewise, would not be here under such a program. Senator Anning may think that Australia would be better without us but he is wrong, and I have no shyness about saying that.

I am grateful that the policies that Senator Anning would like to see come back are long gone. I am honoured to stand in this place today as a migrant, as a woman, as one whose first language is not English and as a proud member of the party that, under the leadership of Liberal prime ministers Sir Robert Menzies and Harold Holt, dismantled the white Australia policy that was inflicted upon this nation by the Australian Labour Party and its union backers upon federation. The migration that has occurred in the wake of these changes has been a boon to the modern nation of Australia, enriching our society in so many ways.

During his speech Senator Anning made specific and ugly references to Muslim Australians. I wish to take this opportunity to speak in support of my Muslim friends and neighbours. The senator from Queensland called these people's faith the most retrograde force that exists in the world, before making an appeal for the complete end

to all further immigration of Muslims. The senator's remarks are offensive, manipulative and, using his own words, retrograde.

Though he has a right to express his own opinion, I strongly believe his words are an attempt to fuel hatred and contention amongst our citizens and I and the Canberra Liberals condemn his remark. This is not how a member of the Australian Senate should behave. This is not how we "make this commonwealth of ours renowned of all the lands". To quote again from our national anthem:

For those who come across the seas
We've boundless plains to share.
With courage let us all combine
To advance Australia fair.

We must rise above divisive ideology with courage and embrace others with different cultures and religions. This is how we advance Australia fair. The senator needs to put forth some effort to actually come to know the good-hearted, peace-loving Muslims whom I know and whom I hold dear, as cherished friends.

Territory rights

MS CHEYNE (Ginninderra) (6.42): Just a little over an hour ago an article appeared in the *Guardian* online saying that the euthanasia bill, the restoring territory rights bill, is in doubt as two senators reverse their position. It states that a tie of 38-all in the Senate, which is what is now looking likely, would, as we in this place know, result in the bill not progressing.

I want to put on the record that I implore all senators to seriously consider their vote over the coming few hours as the debate continues tonight, and indeed tomorrow if the debate happens to continue tomorrow before the vote. This is about our rights as territory citizens. I ask them to consider how they would feel if their rights as citizens, largely citizens of the states, were taken away.

It is just reprehensible that we do not have the same rights as people who live 15 minutes away from us in Queanbeyan, or a bit further north in Yass, where those people are represented on this issue by New South Wales parliamentarians in their state parliament; that this cannot happen here and cannot happen in the Northern Territory; and that it is state senators who are deciding this for us.

I also want to put on the record my disappointment with the Canberra Liberals on this really important issue, not just those opposite, a few of whom I know are genuinely on the more progressive side, but also the federal Canberra Liberals. The fact that not one person on that side of the chamber has reached out to Senator Seselja and implored him to restore our rights, particularly when he was formerly a member of this place, is absolutely baffling at the least and appalling at the worst. I really expected a bit better. It is about rights. We can debate voluntary assisted dying and their aversion to it in this place, but this is about rights, and that needs to be decided on the hill. I really expected better leadership from people in this place who should have done better and should have done better by Canberrans.

I am particularly appalled at the behaviour of Senator Seselja. He purports to represent us. Indeed, he is elected to represent us. But instead he continues to represent his own personal interests. He is not representing the views of territorians but just himself, thereby rendering us voiceless on critical decisions regarding our lives and regarding the end of our lives.

Make no mistake: if this fails by just one vote, because we know that Senator Seselja has said that he is not voting in support of it, then territorians will know exactly who to blame for this. Make no mistake: I will not let territorians forget who was to blame and I will not let Senator Seselja forget who was to blame.

Canberra Symphony Orchestra

MRS DUNNE (Ginninderra) (6.46): Yesterday the ACT flagship arts organisation the Canberra Symphony Orchestra announced its artistic program for 2019. Once again the orchestra's Australian born, Germany-based chief conductor and artistic director Dr Nicholas Milton has built a very accessible program for the Llewellyn Series. It features well-known works from the classical repertoire as well as works by a number of Australian composers. A special treat will be the world premiere of a work entitled *To the Memory of Nelson Cooke: an Elegy for Cello and Orchestra*. Ken Lampl, the director of the ANU School of Music, and his past partner Kirsten have written this piece, and it will feature Canberra's award-winning cellist David Pereira.

As well as the Llewellyn Series, the Canberra Symphony Orchestra next year will present a series of other performances. Classic Afternoon in September 2019 will feature no fewer than three oboe concertos. The orchestra's 2019 Artist in Focus, the acclaimed Diana Doherty, the principal oboist with the Sydney Symphony Orchestra, will perform these works.

There is also the Annual Opera Gala, featuring music from Monteverdi to Sondheim. The highly respected musical educator and conductor Richard Gill will take the baton for this performance. Members may recall Richard from his past appearances on *Spicks and Specks*. The popular, family-friendly proms concert in the grounds of Government House will feature. Next year the theme is West End, with music from *West Side Story*, *My Fair Lady*, *Wicked* and *Phantom of the Opera*, to name a few.

Diana Doherty will feature in the recital series to be held in the Great Hall at University House. As well there will be recitals by the Grigoryan brothers, pianist Andrea Lam and cellist Umberto Clerici, who will perform my favourite piece of music ever, the Elgar Cello Concerto, so I will be there with bells on. Symphony in the Park in March will feature the best of the Bee Gees. Music by the River in Elizabeth Park in Queanbeyan will feature some of the more recognisable classics you will hear.

The CSO has a vibrant education program. Next year the Music in MY School program will expand beyond primary school into high schools and colleges with CSO for Teens. The CSO also presents programs for more vulnerable people in our community. There are programs for people with hearing loss or Parkinson's disease,

and concert tickets are made available to people who normally could not afford to buy them.

Finally, in a program unique in Australia, the Canberra Symphony Orchestra runs a residency for early career musicians from around the country. For 18 months they will play with the orchestra and participate in education and outreach programs as well as teaching young students in the community.

The Canberra Symphony Orchestra is the jewel in the ACT's considerable artistic crown. They should be proud of their achievement and we should continue to support them. I congratulate them on their innovative program for 2019 and wish them continuing success.

I want to put on the record that the CSO punches well above its weight, given the small amount of money it receives by way of government subsidy. The fact that it fills Llewellyn Hall at almost every one of its Llewellyn Series concerts is a testament to that. The CSO has much bigger audiences than some other, much more highly subsidised, orchestras around the country. They are a credit to their management and the guidance and the work of their artistic director, Nicholas Milton.

Senator Fraser Anning—first speech
Territory rights
Light Up Lyneham
Campbell Community Association

MS LEE (Kurrajong) (6.50): Before I get on to the topic of my adjournment speech, I want to say for the record that I wholeheartedly agree with my colleague Mrs Kikkert in condemning the comments made by Senator Anning. It was disappointing. Only last night, as you are aware, Madam Speaker, I was speaking about how some of Australia's political leaders have been an inspiration for many young Korean Australian future leaders. To have someone in that capacity who is a role model make those comments is nothing short of disappointing and, to reprise Mrs Kikkert's words, ugly.

The second thing I want to address is Ms Cheyne's campaign, and I congratulate her efforts, in relation to territory rights, euthanasia or whatever you want to call it. The only thing I would say, Ms Cheyne, is that you cannot know any discussions that we individually may or may not have had with either our federal senator or anyone else. That is all I will say on that.

I have risen this evening to discuss two great local community events I attended recently. The first was Light Up Lyneham. I spoke in this place about the Light Up Lyneham celebrations after last year's inaugural event. On 4 August I was able to return and see how much the festival had grown in just one year. This year approximately 700 people came together to follow the Prosperous Mountain lion dance group on a lantern-lit walk around the Lyneham Wetlands and past the Lyneham community food forest on the Lyneham Commons, which Minister Rachel Stephen-Smith spoke about last night.

There was music from the Lyneham High School Senior Jazz Band, BASK and The Cashews. There were stalls selling warm clothing, soup and cakes and, of course, a sausage sizzle, and some brave souls tucking into free ice cream. There were more than \$700 worth of donated prizes awarded for best lantern and best clothing art.

There was even a show by fire twirler Pyro Monkey. If you have not seen him perform yet, I have a beautiful video of a snippet of what we got to see on the evening, so please check it out. I congratulate the Lyneham Community Association for all their hard work in putting together the event and thank them for their continuing work in bringing the community together.

As I said in yesterday's adjournment, achieving a first in anything, no matter what it is, is hard. Campbell Community Association held their inaugural meeting on Sunday, and I was very humbled to be asked to address the meeting on the importance of community engagement.

Luisa, Marg, Sara, Tom and Julie have done a tremendous job establishing the group and getting their neighbours engaged. Through letterbox drops, doorknocking and a wide range of social media portals, they brought in well over 50 residents on a cold Sunday afternoon for their first meeting.

Campbell is a well-established suburb in my electorate of Kurrajong and has a rich history of an active neighbourhood watch and neighbours who value the unique characteristics of their suburb. In recent times Campbell has been the subject of many developments, and the residents are keen to make sure that the future of Campbell is sustainable and befitting the suburb they love and hold dear.

Having had the opportunity to meet with many Campbell residents and the core committee, I have no doubt that the Campbell Community Association has a bright future, and I look forward to working with them.

Question resolved in the affirmative.

The Assembly adjourned at 6.55 pm.