



Debates

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Tuesday, 30 October 2018

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

**Justice and Community Safety—Standing Committee
Scrutiny report 23**

MS LEE (Kurrajong) (10.01): I present the following report:

Justice and Community Safety—Standing Committee (Legislative Scrutiny Role)—Scrutiny Report 23, dated 29 October 2018, together with a copy of the extracts of the relevant minutes of proceedings.

I seek leave to make a brief statement.

Leave granted.

MS LEE: Scrutiny report 23 contains the committee’s comments on 27 pieces of subordinate legislation, one government response and one regulatory impact statement. The report was circulated to members when the Assembly was not sitting. I commend the report to the Assembly.

Reporting date

MS LEE (Kurrajong) (10.02), by leave: I move:

That the resolution of the Assembly of 20 September 2018 that referred the exposure draft of the Motor Accident Injuries Bill and accompanying explanatory guide to the Standing Committee on Justice and Community Safety for inquiry and report be amended by omitting the words “1 November 2018” and substituting “27 November 2018”.

MR GENTLEMAN (Brindabella—Minister for the Environment and Heritage, Minister for Planning and Land Management, Minister for Police and Emergency Services and Minister assisting the Chief Minister on Advanced Technology and Space Industries) (10.02): I thank Ms Lee for this opportunity to speak to this motion. I rise to indicate that the government is concerned about the length of time being sought. I am mindful of the balance that needs to be struck between scrutiny and consideration of bills by the entire Assembly. To this end, I think it would be useful to recount the history of the inquiry.

The exposure bill was referred to the committee by this Assembly on 20 September 2018. Perhaps 10 weeks will have elapsed by the time of reporting. The committee has a very specific reference. The committee has not been tasked with inquiring into the entirety of the CTP scheme or whether there should be any reform. The

government has already engaged extensively on this through the community consultation that commenced in August 2017, through the six-month citizens jury process that incorporated detailed input from stakeholders as well as community members, and through direct engagement with stakeholders since the exposure draft was released.

The terms of reference for the committee's inquiry are specifically focused on the bill itself and how well it meets the objectives identified by the citizens jury as a result of their deliberations. I am also mindful of the remarks that Mr Rattenbury has made in this place concerning adopting the practice of the Senate and seeing more inquiries into legislation being brought forward. I think there is some merit in what Mr Rattenbury has suggested.

However, if committees are going to take the time that is being proposed here to inquire into the text of bills then this place will become unworkable. The work in progress of building a more vibrant and inclusive city will come to a halt and important reforms will not be progressed in this place. Madam Speaker, I think it is important that we look at the time lines here and ensure the appropriate responses.

MS LE COUTEUR (Murrumbidgee) (10.04): I move:

Omit "27 November 2018", substitute "14 December 2018".

I appreciate that the amendment is possibly being circulated right now. Basically, my amendment to Ms Lee's motion is to change the reporting date to 14 December. I think that the proposal to report on 27 November and then for the government to introduce the legislation in the same sitting week, basically, is grossly disrespectful to the process. It means that the committee will have reported but clearly its report will not have informed the legislation, because while PCO works miracles, even PCO needs a few more days in which to work its miracles. I think that is plainly an unworkable solution.

Obviously, I am not a member of the committee. I do not know its workload and its considerations, but given that the majority of the committee felt that it had to be postponed, I think we have to accept reality and suggest a slightly longer time. The reason I am suggesting 14 December is that it gives the committee a couple more weeks. That should be enough to finish. Then it gives the government plenty of time to look at the committee's report so that it can actually introduce legislation informed by the committee in the first sitting period in February, which I think is a much more respectful and reasonable process than introducing legislation two days after the committee has reported, which clearly would not be informed by the committee.

MS LEE (Kurrajong) (10.06): I have a few comments, particularly in response to Mr Gentleman's words. Members may recall that this inquiry was referred to the Standing Committee on Justice and Community Safety on 20 September. The committee wasted no time in calling for submissions. This call was published on 21 September, with a closing date of 12 October.

In that time the committee has received more than 60 submissions from organisations and more than 15 submissions from individuals, totalling 346 pages of submissions.

The bill itself is 364 pages long, and the latest submission that we received as a committee was only last Friday. Members who are following this debate will be aware that the submissions, although they have been authorised, have not yet been published. This has not given the public a chance to actually read them.

The JACS committee, despite Mr Gentleman's concerns about what we are doing, has been very busy undertaking the Crimes (Consent) Amendment Bill inquiry, which is due to report tomorrow and, of course, it has the ongoing domestic violence inquiry. We have also had the double sitting week and we have the annual reports hearings coming up, which impacts on the committee's ability to undertake public hearings on this important matter.

This issue, as most members in this place will be aware, has garnered a lot—a lot—of public discussion. As Ms Le Couteur has said, it would be only fair to ensure that it is given the proper treatment, the proper scrutiny and that there is a proper opportunity for everyone in the community to have their say. Speaking as a member of the committee, I put on the record that my preference would have been for the extension to be to February 2019. I can do the maths. On this occasion the Canberra Liberals will be supporting Ms Le Couteur's amendment.

Amendment agreed to.

Original question, as amended, resolved in the affirmative.

Public Accounts—Standing Committee Statement by chair

MRS DUNNE (Ginninderra) (10.09): Pursuant to standing order 246A, I wish to make a statement on behalf of the Standing Committee on Public Accounts relating to Auditor-General's report No 5 of 2018, entitled *ACT clubs' community contribution*. On 18 September 2018 I advised the Assembly that at its private meeting on 25 July 2018 the Standing Committee on Public Accounts had resolved to inquire further into Auditor-General's report No 5 of 2018, *ACT clubs' community contributions*.

At its most recent private meeting, on 10 October 2018, the reconstituted committee gave this further consideration. It agreed that the matters covered in the Auditor-General's report had been covered, or were being covered, in other reports, inquiries and processes and that it would serve the public interest better to focus on the more complex Auditor-General reports into which the committee is currently inquiring. The committee therefore wishes to inform the Assembly that it notes Auditor-General report No 5 of 2018, *ACT clubs' community contributions*, and will not inquire further.

ACT housing strategy Ministerial statement

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

for the Prevention of Domestic and Family Violence, Minister for Sport and Recreation and Minister for Women) (10.10): The ACT government went to the 2016 election with a commitment to develop a new housing strategy for our city. It should be no surprise that this is a priority for a progressive government like ours. The comfort and security of a good home is fundamental to so many parts of life—school, work, health, friendships, comfort, security and happiness. Whether it is breaking free from homelessness, securing a rental property or buying your own home, we all need to come to this from a different place.

It is well known that the housing market is driven by factors like Canberra's high average incomes and low unemployment. Too many people face housing stress. Homelessness can be just one or two big life events away for many of us. Home ownership seems like a mirage to many. But Canberra is also well known for being a caring community, always willing to give to the greater good, to the needs of others. The election of successive governments willing to intervene where the housing market fails is a reflection of our caring community. We are willing to provide for people who do not have equal means to secure housing, and it shows. Canberra comes to the housing challenge with a strong foundation.

The ACT government has been active in making housing more affordable for over a decade. Against average incomes we are the most affordable jurisdiction in which to buy a home and the second most affordable in which to rent. Land supply has been accelerated, and ongoing tax reform led by the Chief Minister has helped moderate house pricing growth and avoid the extremes of Sydney or Melbourne.

These reforms continue, often in the face of stiff opposition. For over a decade the government has pulled available policy levers to respond to homelessness. We have maintained the highest ratio of social housing in the country, with nearly 12,000 dwellings home to more than 20,000 people. We have maintained the lowest rate of rough sleeping in Australia and driven a reduction in homelessness, while nationally it has increased. And we have invested heavily in specialist homelessness services for people experiencing or at risk of homelessness, with additional funding in this year's budget, on top of the \$20 million provided to the sector every year.

However, there is more to do in building on this strong foundation. The ACT housing strategy I released yesterday sets out a simple vision: a housing market that meets the diverse and changing needs of the Canberra community and enables a sustainable supply of housing for individuals and families at all income levels. This vision responds to the contribution of many people through one of the largest community conversations we have seen in the ACT. Community organisations, industry, government representatives, unions, everyday families and individuals, as well as people with lived experience of homelessness were all involved.

Our community seeks a housing market that provides for our growing city, a housing market that allows the next generation to buy a home to live in and not be priced out by investors. They seek a rental market that provides fair, affordable rentals, where those renting have some agency in their home. They seek housing services that make it easier for people to get help or help others to get in touch with a support service.

And our community seeks a continued decline in homelessness, both through our own efforts and through advocacy on a national level.

The strategy guides the government's continued work to reduce homelessness and improve affordability for people in all housing contexts—from getting people into safe and secure shelter to finding an affordable house to buy or rent. The ACT strategy does so through five key policy goals: one, an equitable, diverse and sustainable supply of housing for the ACT community; two, reducing homelessness; three, strengthening social housing assistance; four, increasing affordable rental housing; and five, increasing affordable home ownership.

These goals will be achieved with a major public investment, guided by community voices, focused on equity and fairness. This government knows that, more than anything else, housing fulfils the most basic of human needs—the need for shelter—and providing this grounds the human dignity and wellbeing of a household.

The ACT has experienced remarkable economic prosperity and livability. It is a place people want to be, and this is showing in the city's rapid growth towards 500,000 residents by 2030. Our growth is bringing a new set of challenges through pressure on land availability, infrastructure and public open space. All these new residents mean an increasing need for housing, but it is not a case of any house, anywhere. Canberrans need a better supply of the right type of housing in the right locations.

Throughout the city, Canberrans need a variety of low, medium and high density housing options supporting a variety of household configurations and personal needs which will build on the social sustainability and inclusiveness that we are all so proud of. They also need environmentally sustainable housing, aligned with key infrastructure and access to jobs, education, services and community. They need this because of both social and cost of living factors and also because we have an obligation to respond to a changing climate.

The ACT housing strategy reinforces the important role of government in providing land and developing opportunities. The government has programmed 17,000 sites for release over the coming four years, providing an important opportunity to ensure an equitable, diverse and sustainable housing supply.

The government has renewed its commitment to release land that exceeds demand through an appropriate mix of greenfield and urban renewal locations. Importantly, more land will be set aside for affordable community and public housing, with 15 per cent of all government land release—some 550 dwellings in the current financial year—set aside for these purposes. This builds on the previous policy, where the requirement only applied to greenfield development. And, again, it reflects the consistent view of those involved in developing the strategy that we need to preserve one of the great strengths of this city—the diversity of people and wealth across our suburbs.

The strategy also continues our work exploring new ways to deliver diverse and creative housing options. We will remain true to our underlying priority of supporting

those people needing a hand up. We will explore different occupancy and ownership models, like community title for cooperative housing developments.

The ACT has a strong history of working with the community sector to provide services for the most vulnerable. For example, at a time when homelessness rose nationally by 11 per cent, homelessness in the ACT dropped by eight per cent, between the 2011 and 2016 census. Between 2015-16 and 2016-17 the ACT saw a significant reduction—a decrease of 306 individuals—in the number of people who presented to homelessness services who were already experiencing homelessness.

Despite this strong foundation and the incredible commitment of the ACT community, there is no doubt that there are people on low incomes and experiencing disadvantage who remain left behind in the current housing market. The first step towards a secure and affordable home is getting permanent housing. For this reason the strategy includes a priority of helping people who are facing or experiencing homelessness.

There are many different experiences of homelessness, including temporarily living with friends or relatives or living in supported accommodation or boarding houses with little or no security. Those who have experienced homelessness and those who have delivered support to the homeless come to this problem with unique insights and a deep understanding of the individual, social and economic factors which lead it.

Building on the successes of services like OneLink, which was expanded in the 2018 budget, the strategy will continue the co-design of new policies, programs and services to tackle homelessness. The ACT government funds critical initial assistance for around 300 people on any given day, through supported accommodation such as crisis accommodation and women's shelters. We will continue this vital work and look to address gaps. For example, in anticipation of the strategy, this year's budget committed more money—\$6.54 million—to support new and emerging groups who are more vulnerable to homelessness and financial stress, including older women, refugees and asylum seekers.

Women, children and families escaping violence is still a major reason for Canberrans experiences homelessness. Moreover, substantial evidence shows that early intervention and prevention works. It is less costly and can arrest the potential intergenerational impacts of homelessness. So the strategy includes continued action across the government and the broader community sector to strengthen and bolster our response to family and domestic violence.

The strategy will also see the government continue to step in and invest in providing pathways out of homelessness. It will do this through the principles of Housing First, because the experience of becoming and being homeless often exacerbates a person's existing mental and physical health issues and the impacts of past trauma.

Common Ground, a Housing First approach, has been received well in Canberra, and the ACT government's continued support for this model is reflected in the strategy. A second Common Ground site in Dickson will build on the success of the Gungahlin site to provide permanent housing for chronically homeless Canberrans and affordable rental units for people facing hardship in the private market.

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people also remain over-represented among people experiencing homelessness. The ACT government will continue to work with the elected body and support culturally appropriate social housing accommodation and support programs. Construction of a second \$4.5 million purpose-built housing complex for older Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people is already underway in Lyons, funded from the 2018 budget.

The strategy also strengthens the government's commitment to social housing assistance. Every person deserves a place to call home. Through circumstance and hardship some people do not have secure housing and the opportunity to stabilise and flourish. Where this is the case the government has a role to step in and provide housing. Public housing supports over 20,000 Canberrans. The ACT government owns around 11,900 homes for social housing, and we have the highest ratio of public housing in the country. I remain committed to this responsibility. The government will not outsource it but, instead, grow our public housing stock and ensure more people can have the security of a home.

The strategy commits the government to \$100 million in additional funding over the next five years that will build on the most extensive renewal of public housing Canberra has ever seen. Over the past five years the public housing renewal program has been replacing older, less efficient homes with newer, more efficient dwellings. By June 2019 this program will have replaced 1,288 homes, roughly 11 per cent of our current housing stock. Renewal will continue with around 1,000 further homes to be renewed, and the stock will grow by at least 200.

Our government will continue to say to public housing tenants that they belong as equals in every suburb in this city. This is the right thing to do for equality in our community. But it is far more than that—it is rational, cost-effective social policy which understands that housing people in need is far more sensible than letting them fall into homelessness and the acute service systems like health and corrections which would follow otherwise.

This program will also continue to support local industry, with thousands of jobs having been supported by the public housing renewal program so far. The strategy also includes actions to provide a better experience for public housing clients, like an online portal, electronic forms and a mobile app for access to information, services and tenancy accounts.

The strategy also recognises the significant contribution of the community housing sector and will enable its further growth. The 15 per cent land supply policy will enable community housing to grow within the capability of the sector. In addition, the government will initially provide 151 new dwellings for community housing, including 33 in a brand-new housing development soon to be completed in Kaleen. Where it can, the government will use its scale and capability to develop mixed housing, where public and community housing can grow together. This offers the social outcomes we are seeking and also helps community housing providers focus on the services they are best at. The strategy also sets out to support the growth of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community housing.

The housing strategy flags an ongoing program of work we will pursue to make sure the government strengthens its position as a model landlord and to encourage private landlords to do the same. The Attorney-General is leading further improvements to the Residential Tenancies Act, changes which will provide stronger protections and rights for tenants. This was the subject of significant feedback for this strategy, and these changes will make it easier for tenants to make minor modifications to their homes, allow pets as a default and make changes to no-cause evictions.

The rental bond loan scheme will be streamlined and made more accessible for Canberrans. The up-front cost of a bond can be eliminated with a no-interest loan payable over two years from Housing ACT, and this will be an option for many people to enter the private market.

Further, under the affordable rental heading, the new affordable housing real estate management model, to be run by CHC Housing, will soon take shape. There has been much discussion in the Assembly about the willingness of investors to offer properties at low market rent. As I have said, the government have the program to test this willingness and we are examining the land tax incentive in this context.

Finally, in relation to providing for more affordable home ownership, the ACT government will continue nation-leading tax reforms, eliminating stamp duty over time and increasing support for first home buyers through the abolishment of the duty altogether from July next year.

The ACT land rent scheme and the Housing ACT shared equity scheme will look for reforms and at how we can expand the schemes to enable a greater take-up by the ACT community. The land rent scheme was recently recognised by the Australia Institute as a nation-leading program offering a cheaper alternative to traditional home purchases, saving thousands of dollars to the up-front cost of owning a home. Further, in actions already well underway the government now maintains a database of Canberrans eligible for affordable home purchase and is exploring shared equity and resale covenant options to make sure affordable housing stays affordable when it changes hands.

I said at the outset that the development of this housing strategy would be a genuine community effort. I was criticised for the time it has taken, but I think the outcome has been worth it—a strategy and a set of actions which I am confident reflect the wishes and values of the great majority of the Canberra community. The point in all of this is to get more people into secure and stable housing, to give them the life chances which flow from that, and the chance at happiness that everyone deserves. I record my thanks to all members of the community and all organisations that contributed to the development of the strategy.

I also extend my gratitude to the group of individuals who have been guiding the strategy as part of the government's consultative group. They have provided significant and important advice since the lead-up to last year's summit and through the development of the strategy. This contribution has been invaluable, so thanks to each of them. The release of this strategy is only the beginning, and I look forward to updating the Assembly as the work rolls out.

I present the following papers:

ACT Housing Strategy—

Ministerial statement, 30 October 2018.

Strategy, dated October 2018.

I move:

That the Assembly take note of the ministerial statement.

MS LE COUTEUR (Murrumbidgee) (10.28): First of all, I would like to thank and congratulate Minister Berry on the release of this strategy, which is clearly the most comprehensive policy document on housing since the ACT government's 2007 affordable housing action plan. I would very much like to congratulate her on taking on the principles of Housing First. As she said in her speech, housing is one of the foundations of a happy, productive, fulfilling human life, and decent, safe, stable housing is something we all need. I would also, of course, like to congratulate the many people who have contributed to the strategy, including those who attended the housing summit in 2017, wrote submissions or provided feedback through other means; the minister's consultative group; and also the hardworking ACT government staff who worked on this strategy.

The government has put some of the outcomes of the 2017 housing strategy summit into the strategy. If all the measures contained in the strategy are enacted, they will significantly help to ameliorate our housing crisis. Some of the components of the housing strategy are already underway. They include measures funded under the first round of the housing innovation fund, such as the not-for-profit real estate agency and the professional development and training program for front-line housing and homelessness organisations which was announced in last year's budget. Some of the measures in this and in the strategy itself come from the Greens-Labor parliamentary agreement. I thank the minister and her directorate for her work on them.

In housing, so many of the problems have complex causes and are intertwined with other policy areas. These include areas outside the ACT government's control, such as the federal tax and transfer systems and, in particular, speculative investment caused by the halving of the capital gains tax discounts in 1999; inadequate income support particularly for those on Newstart, and commonwealth rent assistance rates; and decades of underinvestment in social housing funding by successive commonwealth governments. Poverty, domestic and family violence, and mental illness all play a role in homelessness. Wages and the level of migration interact with the housing system and the supply and cost of housing. The increasing size of Australian houses also negatively impacts on affordability, as well as increasing the environmental impact of our housing.

I am hopeful that the government's housing choices project and the demonstration housing project will reduce some of the barriers in our planning system to more affordable housing. As Minister Berry noted when the strategy was launched yesterday, the ACT government is on a solid foundation to deal with our housing

crisis. We have a relatively high proportion of social housing. The ACT government has significant control over land release and is the planner for the ACT. However, having so many areas of housing policy, from land release to renters' rights, dealt with in a holistic document is very welcome. The corollary of this, unfortunately, is that the strategy is a high-level document and, at the risk of sounding trite, the devil is in the detail and of course in the funding. If the component parts of the strategy are not properly funded and implemented then it can only go some small way towards increasing housing affordability.

It is crucial that quantifiable targets for the measures outlined in the housing strategy be developed and published. The new ACT government homes and housing website should act as the natural clearing house for this type of information and provide links to other relevant information, such as the indicative land release program and the ACT land and property report.

As the strategy is rolled out, the Greens believe that it is also important that ACT Shelter be properly funded. This will enable the organisation to better perform its role as the voice for both housing and homelessness providers, as well as low income housing consumers. In addition, as this process has shown, there is a strong role for organisations such as Shelter in policy development.

One of the welcome headline measures in the housing strategy is the announcement of \$100 million over five years for new public housing stock and the renewal of existing stock. The Greens welcome this funding commitment. It is worth noting, however, that this only works out at \$20 million per year or, on the basis of the government's comments, we think about 40 additional public housing dwellings. Based on construction figures for the last three years, we can expect that this will represent less than one per cent of new housing stock. It is welcome but, on its own, certainly not enough to maintain our current level of social housing, even taking into account the ACT housing capital renewal program. To put this into perspective, the nation-building and economic stimulus plan social housing initiative provided \$87 million for the ACT between 2008 and 2010 and delivered nearly 300 new social housing dwellings.

The Greens also applaud the transfer of 151 dwellings to the community housing sector. This is a very welcome departure from some of Minister Berry's previous comments about the not-for-profit community housing sector. But the component of the strategy that has the potential to be most transformative is the commitment to dedicate 15 per cent of the indicative land release program to public, community and affordable purchase and rental housing. It is unclear to me how this relates to the target of 20 per cent affordable properties for purchase in greenfield sites, but I am assuming that it is going to make the 20 per cent target obsolete.

The 15 per cent target will cover infill as well as greenfield and affordable rental, as well as purchase. It is in the rental area rather than affordable purchase where the need is greatest and where the most difference can be made. What we do not yet know is how this 15 per cent is going to be made up. Will 14 per cent be affordable purchase and one per cent public and community housing, or vice versa? How much will be rental?

What discount, if any, will be applied to land for community housing—100 per cent or cost price? I look forward to hearing more about the details in the coming days and weeks.

It is really interesting and positive to reflect on the amount of goodwill and excitement, not to mention some really fabulous ideas such as land rent, that accompanied the 2007 affordable housing action plan. Unfortunately, despite the good work that arose from that plan—and external factors were a major reason for the outcomes—the situation is that the ACT's housing crisis is appreciably worse than it was in 2007. The actual amount of social housing is about the same but, instead of being nearly nine per cent of the Canberra market, it is now only seven per cent. This highlights the importance of the ACT Greens motion passed in April this year to maintain a minimum proportion of social housing dwellings.

As I noted before, this housing strategy has the potential to make a significant impact on our affordable housing crisis, provided it is properly funded and implemented. I am very pleased that it has been announced, and I look forward to hearing much more detail about the strategy in the coming days and months.

MR RAMSAY (Ginninderra—Attorney-General, Minister for the Arts and Cultural Events, Minister for Building Quality Improvement, Minister for Business and Regulatory Services and Minister for Seniors and Veterans) (10.36): The ACT housing strategy presents a vision and a road map that works right across all of our ministerial portfolios in government. I would like to start by echoing the public sentiment of our Chief Minister, who has been clearly describing safe and secure housing as a human right.

Whenever, in any of our portfolios, we have an impact on the living situations of Canberrans, as the Deputy Chief Minister has made clear, we will be guided by a focus on concrete actions to deliver more equitable, more diverse and more sustainable housing. So I would like to take this opportunity to reflect on how work that is underway in my own portfolios has been guided by our focus on fair housing and how it will continue to express the vision that is set out in the strategy that the Deputy Chief Minister has spoken of today.

The ACT's residential tenancies legislation is a foundation for fair relationships between people and organisations who offer their properties to house others and people who need a place to live. It covers a wide range of situations, including a lease that is signed by a family seeking to let a suburban home, the rights and responsibilities of students in share housing, and the rules and regulations for crisis accommodation providers. These are just a few examples of the diverse living situations that are covered by our residential tenancies legislation. It is important that we keep looking at the way our rental and other accommodation markets work fairly. Throughout this term, our policy on residential tenancies has been the product of close consultation and, most of all, listening to what our community has to say.

In particular, we have been looking for ways to support those who need help most: people experiencing homelessness, people facing family violence, and low income households in housing stress. This has been an ongoing process. In June 2016 the

government tabled the report on the review of the Residential Tenancies Act. The act was amended in 2016 to give effect to a first tranche of recommendations, including amendments to help people experiencing domestic violence change their tenancy arrangements. That legislation also brought forward requirements for rental properties to have smoke alarms.

We have continued to deliver reforms that support vulnerable people in the housing market since that time. In June this year the Assembly passed legislation to protect vulnerable people from bond alternatives. The idea behind these products is that, instead of paying a bond, a tenant can pay a monthly fee to a private company that guarantees payments to landlords. These are products that, by their very nature, are going to be marketed to people who cannot afford a bond. They carry significant risk for vulnerable people. We will not allow that to occur in the ACT. In that same legislation, we introduced protections for people who face housing stress by providing a clearer, fairer process for managing unpaid rent which benefits both tenants and landlords.

As we publicly announced last week, we will be going further in supporting tenants. This week we will bring forward reforms that support tenants to own pets, to make minor modifications and to be treated fairly when they leave a home or a landlord seeks a new rental rate. As a government we are committed to making housing more secure, more livable and more affordable. In particular, we want to ensure secure housing for vulnerable people. It is important that renters have the right protections to deal fairly with agents and landlords and to live as fully participating members in our community.

Over the next year we will be turning our ongoing consultation on residential tenancies into even more protections. We are continuing to engage with the Make Renting Fair Alliance and the Real Estate Institute on additional reforms. We will be looking at a range of further improvements, including how much notice tenants should get when a landlord wants to do something with a property, and ways to ensure tenants are not unfairly kicked out because they exercise their rights.

We will also bring forward changes to the way that occupancy agreements work in the ACT. Over the past year we have consulted with working groups that have people representing the interests of people in caravan parks, boarding houses, crisis accommodation and student accommodation. I look forward to bringing in further reforms that make their living situations safer and more secure.

There is clearly more work to be done. The housing strategy sets out what we heard from Canberrans about what to do and how to do it in our rental market. We will keep working over this term to implement the recommendations of the review of the Residential Tenancies Act and will keep working to support advice through the Tenants' Union, through Access Canberra and in our broader consultation processes to make sure that Canberrans are fully aware of their rights.

As the Attorney-General, I am proud to support the Deputy Chief Minister and all of my ministerial colleagues to deliver more equitable, more diverse and more sustainable housing solutions for Canberrans, because the government has a track

record of delivering reforms that first and foremost support the people who need support the most. We will keep doing that in our efforts to make this strategy a reality. I thank and congratulate the Deputy Chief Minister for her leadership in this ongoing action and in this government's ongoing commitments.

MS STEPHEN-SMITH (Kurrajong—Minister for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Affairs, Minister for Disability, Minister for Children, Youth and Families, Minister for Employment and Workplace Safety, Minister for Government Services and Procurement, Minister for Urban Renewal) (10.42): I also rise to commend Minister Berry for delivering a housing strategy for the ACT. The strategy is an important piece of work for the ACT government and I recognise the hard work of officials across government, particularly those in Housing ACT, in the Community Services Directorate, and in the Environment, Planning and Sustainable Development Directorate.

The housing strategy is a demonstration of Labor values: fairness and equality. We believe that when people are left behind or excluded by the housing market governments should intervene and provide people with a home, a good home, a home that is functional, a home that keeps people warm in winter and cool in summer, a home that is appropriate for their individual needs.

The ACT used to have one of the oldest public housing stocks in the country, although one of the most significant in terms of the proportion of housing. We are on a path to having one of the most modern and efficient. ACT Labor believes in providing quality public housing to those who need it. The Deputy Chief Minister has eloquently described why this is not only a moral imperative but also a good investment. Unfortunately, the Canberra Liberals only believe in running scare campaigns and in whipping up community fear and anxiety about public housing. We invite them to get on board with the importance of public housing.

As the housing strategy demonstrates, Canberra has a proud history of innovative housing solutions but we do need to do more and to do it better to meet the needs of our growing city and our diverse community. One of the ways we are doing this is through the demonstration housing project currently underway. It is managed by the Environment, Planning and Sustainable Development Directorate.

The demonstration housing project is also something that I am now responsible for, as Minister for Urban Renewal. The housing strategy considers the demonstration project as part of a wider effort to provide a diverse mix of housing types and choices to the ACT. Through the project, the ACT government is engaging with the community and industry stakeholders on how best to deliver demonstration housing that supports best practice design, including excellence in design quality, carbon neutral buildings, medium density infill, innovative planning and engagement approaches, innovative housing projects and typologies, close partnerships with industry bodies, and options for public and affordable housing.

This project will not only bring world-class design to our suburbs; it will enable new and innovative ways of ensuring our community has quality homes for a growing city in a changing climate. We need to address the missing middle of housing types in the

ACT. The work of the demonstration housing project will progress that. On 10 October I announced that 19 of the original 27 expressions of interest have been approved to submit a request for proposal. I understand that one proponent has since withdrawn from the process, but I look forward to following the progress of the 18 remaining projects in coming months.

Canberra's social housing portfolio caters to a diverse group of residents. Indeed, 29 per cent of these households include someone living with a disability. The housing strategy sets out that we need homes with higher standards of accessibility and adaptability. Housing ACT makes provisions within its budget to prioritise the construction of public housing accommodation to meet the class C adaptable housing standards. Adaptable housing ensures that people of all ages and abilities can live in a home and that it can be easily adapted to meet changing household needs without substantial modifications. Class C housing must include all essential features of the Australian standard for adaptable housing and be certified by an independent accessibility consultant.

In 2017-18 Housing ACT spent almost \$1.7 million on disability modifications to 393 homes. Housing ACT also employs three occupational therapists to provide an in-home occupational therapy assessment service to tenants. This service provides professional advice on the disability modifications required to assist tenants with a disability to live more independently in their public housing homes and is a clear demonstration of the ACT government's ongoing commitment to disability inclusion.

Canberra is changing, and this is nowhere more evident than in my electorate of Kurrajong. We have seen the densification of areas in the inner north and inner south, Braddon and Kingston being the prime, but not only, examples. This means that people are living closer to work, shops, cafes and public transport. Demand for properties in these areas shows that people do want to live in these areas and in apartments. The evidence simply does not support assertions that Canberrans do not want to live in apartments. Indeed, I speak to many people in my electorate of Kurrajong who have downsized or who are looking to downsize from the empty nest to a smaller, more modern and adaptable apartment.

For myself, I have lived in flats since 2001, when I bought a little place in Holder. I have never regretted this choice to live in a smaller home. But what has been important is good design and building quality. That is why these aspects are so important in the planning strategy refresh and in the work that Minister Ramsay has taken on from Minister Gentleman around building quality. That is absolutely critical to getting the housing mix right in this city.

Of course, the ACT government also understands that this type of housing is not for everyone, which is why the government is delivering changes through the housing strategy and the work being undertaken by Minister Gentleman in housing choices to diversity the housing mix in the ACT. I look forward to seeing the housing strategy in action across our city in the future and the changes that are being made across all the portfolios that are affected by the housing strategy. I again congratulate the Deputy Chief Minister on this comprehensive piece of work and on her leadership in this critical area for the future of Canberra.

MS ORR (Yerrabi) (10.49): I rise to make a few remarks on the ACT housing strategy and to recognise the valuable impact it will have on our community. As Minister Berry has stated, the strategy's action plan will enable the ACT government to deliver more equitable and affordable housing through more public housing and growth in the community housing sector; 15 per cent of land supply being dedicated to public, community and affordable housing; reforms for renters; and funding for new innovations in housing management, design and ownership.

Providing affordable and accessible housing for all Canberrans, the strategy reflects the views of the Canberra community as a result of the widespread consultation undertaken by the minister and the ACT government. This ACT Labor government is committed to providing the public housing that our community needs. \$100 million will be invested to further grow and renew the ACT public housing stock, as well as to provide new opportunities for growth in the community housing sector.

A commitment of 15 per cent of dwelling sites across Canberra to be for public, community and affordable housing builds on the previous policy where this requirement only applied to greenfield development. This new commitment will deliver more than 550 dwelling sites in the current financial year.

The ACT housing strategy provides the government with the directives to improve renting for all Canberrans and to strengthen the rights of renters, with reforms to the Residential Tenancies Act. This government will introduce legislative reforms in this place, making it easier for tenants to own a pet, easier to make modifications such as putting up pictures and shelves, protecting renters from unfair and unnecessary rent increases as well as providing security around the costs of ending a lease.

These reforms will benefit all Canberrans who rent. They are part of the ACT Labor government's commitment to make renting fairer across our city. The \$100 million innovation fund is supporting new models of affordable housing design and management. Funding new innovation in housing management, design and ownership will assist the ACT in leading the way in discovering new ways in this area.

The first round of funding identifies three projects which provide a valuable opportunity to seed housing models focused on increasing affordable housing options in the ACT. Canberra Housing Community will receive \$230,000 to establish a new affordable rental estate management model. In my electorate, CHC has already started work on a house and land program in Moncrieff. The program offers the opportunity for private landlords to rent their properties to households on lower incomes at below market rates, with CHC providing property management services.

The ACT government is putting housing first. The ACT housing strategy will guide the government to deliver secure and affordable housing for every Canberran. Here in the ACT, we have the highest ratio of social housing in Australia and the lowest rate of rough sleeping in Australia, as well as a reduction in homelessness despite an increase nationally.

Our approach is to ensure our disadvantaged remain a part of the community. Across different sites we will initially provide 151 new dwellings for community housing, including 33 in a brand-new housing development soon to be completed in Kaleen. Common Ground is an example of a partnership between community groups, the private sector and the ACT government to provide housing to low income groups and those experiencing homelessness. In Gungahlin, Common Ground offers a mix of around 50 per cent income earning households, with the aim of creating a community with good role models for all residents, rather than a concentrated pocket of disadvantage.

I would like to acknowledge the hard work that Minister Berry has undertaken, along with Housing ACT, to develop and launch this strategy. The strategy will make the ACT's housing supply more equitable, diverse and sustainable, benefiting the entire Canberra community.

MR STEEL (Murrumbidgee—Minister for City Services, Minister for Community Services and Facilities, Minister for Multicultural Affairs and Minister for Roads) (10.52): Firstly, I congratulate the Deputy Chief Minister on delivering the ACT housing strategy. The strategy builds on the extensive work of previous Labor governments' affordable housing policies, tax reform and, more recently, the public housing renewal program. The first goal of the strategy is for an equitable, diverse and sustainable supply of housing for the ACT community. Part of this means removing the concentrations of disadvantage that have historically existed in parts of Canberra where multiple public housing units were placed in high density together.

Instead, the focus is on salt and peppering small-scale public housing throughout our suburbs. In the electorate of Murrumbidgee we are welcoming many new people to our community, both in established suburbs and in emerging areas, through the public housing renewal program. These are people that will benefit from the same great lifestyle that we enjoy on the south side, close to bus routes and near schools and health services—the services that people need.

The strategy invests in the areas of highest need and in policies and programs that work: \$100 million for new public housing; ensuring that housing supply meets or exceeds demand; committing 15 per cent of all new sites for public, community or affordable housing. These are the headlines, but I would also like to take the opportunity today to highlight some areas of the strategy that will make a big difference to those receiving, and delivering, housing support but that might not make the front page of the newspaper.

Canberrans particularly care about addressing homelessness. This strategy commits to working with people with a lived experience of homelessness, as well as the community sector organisations working every day in response to homelessness, to co-design policies and programs with the government that will make a difference. The strategy also highlights the need to support the homelessness services. A strong and supported community sector workforce is critical to delivering homelessness services that lead to better housing outcomes for our community. It is why the government is investing \$350,000 to upskill specialist homelessness services to deliver trauma-informed support.

In most cases the ACT and federal governments provide support to assist refugees in finding appropriate housing as well. However, in many cases, such as where there are temporary protection visas, a range of federal government supports are not available. As such, there is a growing need to support this small but growing group in our community. The housing strategy recognises this. As well as those seeking refuge and protection, non-English-speaking migrants can find it challenging to understand the rental market and to navigate its complexities. Recently, I have heard from a constituent who has particularly highlighted this point. A family who were recently arrived migrants struggled to find support in gaining an understanding of how to manage their rental agreement.

As Minister for Multicultural Affairs, I am particularly pleased that the strategy involves a communication campaign to promote the existing supports for tenants and landlords. This will support them to maintain existing tenancies and provide information to all tenants on the support services available in the ACT. Again, I would like to congratulate the Deputy Chief Minister on leading the development of this important plan for housing in the territory.

MR PETTERSSON (Yerrabi) (10.56): I rise today to talk about the ACT housing strategy and I want to start by thanking the Deputy Chief Minister for all her hard work in bringing this strategy forward. I know many in our community were eagerly awaiting the strategy, and here it is. Thank you.

Housing should be an inalienable right. It should not be the plaything of investors and speculators. No-one should reap massive profits while families cannot afford to put a roof over their head. What this strategy does is bring those families and individuals who cannot afford a home, bring those experiencing housing stress, closer to secure housing. Many people underestimate the importance of having a home, somewhere they do not have to worry about getting moved on from and somewhere they can call their own. It is one of the vital, most fundamental rights we need to honour as a government. This package will make it easier for Canberrans to access not only housing but a home.

This government will make available \$100 million to support our community to invest, to further grow and renew our public housing stock as well as provide new opportunities for growth in the community housing sector. This massive injection of funding will build on the public housing renewal project, which has replaced hundreds of old and unsuitable homes with modern structures that better withstand the elements and better align with community expectations of housing. And we are breaking ground on Common Ground 2, an exciting and innovative housing model here in Canberra.

There will also be targets set in future land releases in both greenfields and urban infill sites. This means that 15 per cent of dwelling sites will need to be set aside for public, community and affordable housing. Instead of creating exclusive urban enclaves for the rich, we will see people of all backgrounds mingle and form a community. I, for one, believe that our communities are made stronger through diversity and that a greater shared empathy benefits us all. Canberra remains one of

the more equal cities, due to our lack of uber wealthy enclaves like Toorak or Vaucluse. This will help keep it that way.

This strategy is the result of public consultation stretching back well over a year, with a discussion paper developed and the housing and homelessness summit bringing together key stakeholders late last year. More than 125 organisations participated in 26 workshops, 166 people completed online surveys and 129 people attended six community drop-in sessions. Of the 110 recommendations in the resulting report, the strategy responds to 90 by recommending their adoption or further consideration.

This strategy will also provide funding for innovative ideas such as alternative finance and occupancy models. We need to think of different ways to get people into houses, and there are many promising schemes here in the ACT that will do just that. One idea is shared equity, where a buyer can obtain part equity in a home with an equity partner; for example, a financial institution or the government. This has the effect of reducing the up-front deposit required and the immediate mortgage repayments but provides a path to full ownership in the future. The equity partner recoups their cost later by selling their percentage to the owner or through the capital gain on the house.

The government will be providing support and potential funding for new ideas that can work in the ACT context. I am excited about our new housing strategy. Coupled with the new rental reforms announced by the Attorney-General last week, it is making Canberra better for the people of Canberra, not interstate property developers and speculative investors.

MR BARR (Kurrajong—Chief Minister, Treasurer, Minister for Social Inclusion and Equality, Minister for Tourism and Special Events and Minister for Trade, Industry and Investment) (11.07): I thank the Deputy Chief Minister for her policy work in relation to the development of the housing strategy. We are very pleased to have been able to deliver a series of nation-leading reforms in the affordable housing policy area, building on the work that has taken place in the territory over the last decade. This represents a significant further step to ensure that all Canberrans can achieve secure and affordable housing.

As our economy and city grow, all Canberrans must share in those benefits, and that is why we are, through this package, expanding our support for Canberrans who need it most. We have invested significantly in the renewal of public housing, and we will continue to both renew and expand the city's public housing. This strategy continues what has been a significant renewal effort over the last few years. The strategy is focused on reducing housing stress and complements the wider work that we are undertaking to make our city's housing market fairer.

We understand that buying a home is a challenge for many, particularly young people and those on low incomes, and that is why we have continued our approach to tax reform to make our tax system fairer. It was pleasing to see the confirmation yet again of the policy merits of that agenda from the Grattan Institute in their report yesterday. Through our tax reform plan we are cutting costs for home buyers, whilst providing a fairer and more stable revenue base from which to fund the essential services that Canberrans need.

Stamp duty is a very significant hurdle for many Canberrans and can add tens of thousands of dollars to the cost of home purchase, and that is why we have been focused on cutting stamp duty in every ACT budget since 2012. We will continue to do so, and by 2021 someone buying a half million dollar home in Canberra will be paying half the amount of stamp duty that they would have been if the reform had not been undertaken.

We are, however, acting further and moving faster on stamp duty reductions, and from 1 July 2019 all first home buyers with a household income under \$160,000 will pay no stamp duty at all. At the same time, we are abolishing the first home owner grants and redirecting all that funding into the full abolition of stamp duty for those with a household income under \$160,000. These changes will help housing affordability and follow on from other reforms that we have introduced.

We are particularly focused on using incentives within the tax system to encourage those who have vacant homes to put them on the market for rental, and that is why we have made changes to land tax to encourage property investors to make their properties available for rent. As our economy grows, we can better target support for people in different stages of their lives. This also includes help for people looking to downsize to more suitable accommodation and provides support for Canberrans who have long-term and permanent disability. We are also helping Canberrans who are experiencing short-term mortgage stress due to unforeseen circumstances.

I think it is important that we continue to advocate for national action on negative gearing and capital gains tax policy reform as this will assist in seeing the direction of housing policy aligned both at a territory level and nationally. It is fundamentally important that both levels of government are pushing in the one direction if we are going to make a meaningful impact on housing affordability. So much of this debate is conducted in a way that some argue for an improvement in housing affordability but argue against houses being cheaper. Those two are mutually exclusive, and we are going to see the mother of all scare campaigns between now and the federal election in relation to changes to negative gearing and capital gains tax.

We have seen the Master Builders Association model a series of policies that are not actually the policies that have been put forward by federal Labor and try to claim that this will lead to a contraction in housing supply. This was comprehensively debunked by the Grattan Institute in their report, and the comments of John Daley on ABC radio Canberra yesterday, I think, should put an end to any debate. The Master Builders Association nationally should be embarrassed by what they have put into the public arena, and the fact that it has only been promulgated in the national media by the *Australian* newspaper tells you something about just how baseless this scare campaign is.

What is fundamentally important to improving the supply of housing at all levels of the housing market is for there to be alignment in policy direction between state and territory governments and the commonwealth. Part of that is the reform of negative gearing and capital gains tax, and that will greatly assist the Australian housing market to respond to the supply-side efforts of state and territory governments.

I think it is also important to note in this debate that both the Reserve Bank and the Grattan Institute have indicated that in fact the greatest inhibitor to increased housing supply is planning and zoning rules in the states and territories, and that is why the work that Minister Gentleman is undertaking through the Territory Plan work and the missing middle of the housing market is so fundamental to addressing this challenge here in the ACT.

The policies that have been outlined by the Deputy Chief Minister in the housing strategy, the planning work that is being undertaken by the minister for planning, the taxation reforms that the ACT government has been progressively implementing over the last six years and will continue to implement, combined with policy alignment at the national level, a comprehensive agreement between the commonwealth and the states and territories on housing and homelessness, and reform to negative gearing and capital gains tax—all these policies combined will make a difference to improve housing affordability.

But fundamental to all this is that we must transition the debate in this nation on housing away from it being an investment class into it being a fundamental human right. That is what is at stake in this nation over the next five months. There is a very clear policy difference between the two major parties on this issue, and Australians will decide at the next federal election what sort of housing policy we are going to pursue as a nation.

But if you think about it and boil it down to the simple realities, we cannot have a situation in this country where people expect to invest in housing and have a capital gain of between five and seven per cent every year and an investment return of between five and seven per cent on a housing asset, and wages only growing by two to three per cent, and think that that can continue forever and that you can somehow solve housing affordability and access to housing in a situation where there is an expectation from a significant part of the community that they can just continue to invest in this economically unproductive asset and get returns like that whilst those who are trying to enter into the housing market are seeing their wages grow by only two to three per cent annually.

That equation is not sustainable in the long term. What has led to it is capital gains tax policy and negative gearing policy at the federal level. That is what is driving this. That has to change. And that, combined with a big supply-side effort from state and territory governments, could make a meaningful difference. That is what we are calling for nationally. That is what we are delivering locally. I commend the Deputy Chief Minister for this policy work.

MR GENTLEMAN (Brindabella—Minister for the Environment and Heritage, Minister for Planning and Land Management, Minister for Police and Emergency Services and Minister assisting the Chief Minister on Advanced Technology and Space Industries) (11.09): I rise to make some remarks on the statement my colleague the Deputy Chief Minister has delivered on the government's housing strategy. As both a Labor member for Brindabella and the planning minister I am delighted at the investments this strategy makes in new homes, in the renewal of others and its commitment to set aside land release for public, community and affordable housing.

The commitment to set aside 15 per cent of land release encompasses both in-fill and greenfield sites. This commitment means that we can deliver different types of housing to support low income and disadvantaged Canberrans while also meeting the future growth and housing needs of our city. This government is also helping renters and we have strengthened protections in helping tenants to make rentals their home.

We are a growing city and the government is working to make Canberra a vibrant and more inclusive city. The housing strategy is making investments that will benefit all Canberrans. It stands in the proud tradition of Labor governments. Our Labor government will invest \$100 million in public housing over the next five years and deliver at least 200 new homes and the renewal of a further 1000 homes.

We do not just talk and posture about helping our most disadvantaged; we act and we invest to build more inclusive communities that provide opportunities for all. We listen to what our community is telling us, including the delivery of mixed use of housing types and choices for Canberrans.

This strategy is wide-ranging and diverse, and I encourage every Canberran to take a look at the housing strategy website at www.act.gov.au/homes/housing and see what this strategy has to offer for you. The strategy has some very strategic vision. The strategy will encourage and promote a housing market that meets the diverse and changing needs of the Canberra community and enables a sustainable supply of housing for individuals and families at all income levels.

The goals and objectives are very clear: provide an equitable, diverse, and sustainable supply of housing for the community; provide land and housing development opportunities to meet demand; set a 15 per cent target for social and affordable housing; maintain a healthy land and housing development pipeline; provide a diverse mix of housing types and choice; facilitate innovative design and delivery mechanisms; and encourage well-designed, environmentally sustainable and accessible housing.

The goals on reducing homelessness are: build strong ACT government community sector partnerships to effectively address homelessness in the ACT; intervene early and reduce intergenerational impacts of homelessness; address gaps in our service system and respond to new and emerging groups vulnerable to homelessness; improve pathways out of homelessness; develop a strong and sustainable homelessness services sector supported to enhance workforce and organisation capability; establish an integrated and coordinated human services system across ACT government; strengthen social housing assistance to grow and renew social housing to better meet demand; build a range of housing options designed to meet a diverse and contemporary tenant need; develop a tenancy service that focuses on client outcomes and responds to individual needs; and provide a better customer experience through a modern and digital service platform for current and future tenants.

We are also increasing affordable rental housing to: grow and diversify the community housing sector; grow the supply of affordable private rental properties; strengthen rights and protections for tenants; and provide targeted advice and support

to tenants and landlords. We are targeting programs to: increase the supply of affordable housing for vulnerable and disadvantaged households; increase affordable home ownership and provide more affordable homes for purchase; and increase home ownership through alternative finance and occupancy models.

We have an implementation plan that contains the actions to deliver on the goals and objectives of the ACT housing strategy. The implementation plan will be monitored, reviewed, and updated annually.

I thank the Chief Minister—I particularly echo his words in regard to housing investment and wages growth across Australia—and the Deputy Chief Minister for their leadership in delivering this important strategy. I also thank the many public servants who helped in the creation and delivery of the housing strategy and especially acknowledge the leadership and officials within my directorate of Environment, Planning and Sustainable Development. I commend the strategy and the statement to the Assembly.

MS CHEYNE (Ginninderra) (11.14): The ACT housing strategy is clearly something of major interest to all of us in this chamber. As I can echo from what we have heard previously: every Canberran should have access to a secure home; and housing and having a roof over your head should be a fundamental right. While the ACT on average is the country's most affordable jurisdiction in which to buy and second-most affordable jurisdiction in which to rent, there is no doubt that many people on low incomes are struggling.

Canberra is growing; our population is set to hit 500,000 residents by 2030. If this growth rate continues as expected an extra 3000 new homes will be needed each year to accommodate everyone, putting pressure on land availability. All land is finite but in the ACT it is especially so. In the meantime, a mix of high wages and low unemployment has placed pressure on our existing housing stock, and it is important that we act now.

I commend Minister Berry, like my colleagues, for the significant amount of work and consultation that has gone into developing the ACT housing strategy. It will guide housing in the ACT for the next decade, and I know that it has not been easy. This is complex; it is hard policy. But this strategy aims to: ensure a diverse and sustainable supply of housing for the community; tackle homelessness and strengthen social housing assistance; and increase affordable rentals and affordable home ownership. These objectives will shape housing policy, planning and delivery. It is a complex piece of work, and it is something that is really important to get right.

As you might be aware, given that some of Belconnen's suburbs fall within your own electorate, Madam Assistant Speaker, Belconnen's backbone is social and public housing. I am sure that constituents right across Belconnen will be embracing the housing strategy. Indeed, anyone who looks at the indicative land release program for the Belconnen region will see that significant releases are proposed over the next five years from Strathnairn to the Belconnen town centre and quite a few areas in between.

Dedicating 15 per cent of the government's annual indicative land release program each year to growing Canberra's supply of public, community, and affordable housing is fantastic and will go a long way to tackling housing affordability in the ACT.

The ACT housing strategy also complements projects like Ginninderry in Ginninderra and the initiatives underway there, such as the developments of the flexi-living series. Like other new residential areas, 20 per cent of homes at Ginninderry will meet a range of affordability criteria. It is also pleasing to note today's announcement that Ginninderry will be proceeding to the next approval stage after a rigorous environmental assessment.

When focusing on the provision of affordable housing, it is important that we ensure that Canberra's renters are not left behind. Safeguards for tenants and the strong support these have already garnered in the community, particularly in the past week, underpin key elements of the ACT housing strategy. Reforms proposed for the Residential Tenancies Act are about fostering fairness in the conditions set by landlords, including increases in rents, and fairness in the decisions that impact tenants, such as whether our dear pets are allowed.

Aside from strengthening the rights of tenants the strategy also aims to grow the supply of affordable private rentals in the ACT and provide targeted advice for tenants and landlords.

The ACT housing strategy is about more than a roof over one's head. Good, safe housing impacts many facets of our lives, including our employment, education and mental health to name a few. We need to make sure that we have the focus here, and with Minister Berry we absolutely have this focus. I commend the strategy.

Question resolved in the affirmative.

Courts construction project update

Ministerial statement

MR RAMSAY (Ginninderra—Attorney-General, Minister for the Arts and Cultural Events, Minister for Building Quality Improvement, Minister for Business and Regulatory Services and Minister for Seniors and Veterans) (11.19): Before I provide the Assembly with an update on the new ACT law courts project, I would like to take the opportunity to remind members of the genesis and the nature of the project. In December 2013, the government announced that the new court facilities would be the first project in the territory to be delivered by way of a public-private partnership, the PPP model. Among the key benefits of a PPP delivery model is that the government is insulated from delivery risks while the private sector is incentivised to deliver whole-of-life cost efficiencies, innovation and outcome-focused service delivery.

The law courts project provides the Australian Capital Territory with cutting-edge modern court facilities that meet the current and future needs of our justice system. This project represents an investment of \$160 million for the ACT government and brings the ACT's court system into the 21st century with a fit-for-purpose facility that will serve our community for decades to come.

The project is being delivered in two main stages. Stage 1, which, I am pleased to announce, officially reached technical completion on 25 September 2018, includes the new four-storey building fronting Vernon Circle, refurbishment and reconfiguration works in the existing Magistrates Court building, and a new entrance foyer linking the two existing buildings. While I am sure that members will have noticed that some of the facade facing Vernon Circle is still missing, I am advised that the arrival of the missing cosmetic panels is imminent.

Stage 1 was moved into over the weekend of 13 and 14 October this year, with its first official use on 15 October a ceremonial sitting to mark the pending retirement of the Director of Public Prosecutions. This sitting was, importantly, preceded by a smoking ceremony conducted by Ngunnawal elder Adrian Brown to prepare the building for use with cultural integrity.

Stage 1 of the ACT courts project features six new courtrooms, including five jury courtrooms, new judges chambers, an extensive new library, a new public entry serving both the magistrates and supreme courts, and contemporary jury facilities. The new foyer includes two magnificent large-scale artworks, a cafe and a modernised security clearance area. Jury access and circulation have been carefully designed to be private and secure, meaning that jurors no longer have to move through public areas whilst serving. The court registry area has also been fully refurbished, bringing these areas up to modern standards. All jury deliberation rooms have access to outdoor spaces, comfortable furnishings and inbuilt technology to assist in reviewing evidence.

The new facilities feature a dedicated remote witness zone with seven new videoconference suites and waiting areas for the comfort, privacy and safety of those giving evidence. The remote witness suites each have a family room attached, catering for witnesses who may have children in their care, and extend into informal spaces and kitchen facilities for their convenience.

New technology is a major feature of the new courts, with all courtrooms equipped with state-of-the-art systems that allow multimedia evidence to be broadcast to all participants and the public gallery simultaneously. In addition, we now have the ability for in-court and remote witnesses to use touchscreen annotation of electronic evidence in real time to augment verbal evidence during proceedings. The ACT is the first jurisdiction in Australia to provide this technology in all of its courtrooms and remote witness rooms.

The new facilities have been welcomed by the judiciary and the legal profession. The building as a whole will achieve a five-star green star rating and has an abundance of natural light throughout the complex, including in the new courtrooms. The new facility will enable efficient access to justice, particularly given the greater number of jury courtrooms.

The construction of stage 1 has presented some challenges for the courts given the proximity of the building work to the existing courts. I thank the judiciary, both magistrates and judges, for their patience, their cooperation and their support during this period. However, it is important to note that during the construction phase for

stage 1 the court has retained the use of the same number of courtrooms, both jury and non-jury, as were available prior to commencement of the project, and the essential work of the courts has not been impeded by the works. In the coming months the precinct will continue to transform, with installation of the feature artworks being completed, the facade being finished and landscaping continuing.

Like stage 1, stage 2 works will be managed so that there is minimal disruption to the courts' functions, and it is expected that stage 2 will be completed in the third quarter of 2019. Stage 2 will include refurbishment of the two remaining courtrooms in the heritage court building as well as construction of mediation suites, hearing rooms and spaces for justice support groups.

Again I take this opportunity to thank everyone for their commitment in the delivery of this major milestone for the project, and I look forward to the completion of stage 2, while stage 1 will significantly improve access to justice for all Canberrans.

I present the following paper:

Courts Construction Project—Update to the Legislative Assembly on the progress, October 2018—Ministerial statement, 30 October 2018.

I move:

That the Assembly take note of the paper.

Question resolved in the affirmative.

Zero emission vehicle and climate action summits

Ministerial statement

MR RATTENBURY (Kurrajong—Minister for Climate Change and Sustainability, Minister for Corrections and Justice Health, Minister for Justice, Consumer Affairs and Road Safety and Minister for Mental Health) (11.26): I am pleased to provide a report back on my recent overseas trip where I represented the ACT at the Zero Emission Vehicle Summit in the United Kingdom and the Global Climate Action Summit in the United States. Between 5 September and 17 September, I took part in both these summits and participated in a number of meetings and site visits which were relevant to both my climate change and sustainability and mental health portfolios.

The trip was an important opportunity to promote the ACT's leadership role in action on climate change, to learn what other jurisdictions around the world are doing to reduce their emissions and to develop relationships which will help us to meet our own climate change goal. This work will help inform the development and implementation of our new climate change strategy, which lays the groundwork for getting the ACT to zero net emissions by 2045.

There were a number of highlights from my trip, including signing the ACT on to a multilateral agreement called the Birmingham declaration to encourage the uptake of

zero-emission vehicles; co-hosting an affiliate event to the Global Climate Action Summit with the City of Sacramento, California, and signing the ACT on to an agreement with Sacramento called the carbon zero cities declaration, whose focus is to enable mid-sized cities to work more effectively together to reach zero greenhouse gas emissions; speaking to a large global audience on panels on zero emission vehicles and 100 per cent renewable energy panels and at a plenary session to announce that the ACT has joined the global Powering Past Coal Alliance; and meeting with various mental health stakeholders and visiting facilities in the UK, including visiting a recovery college in London and the mental health triage team at Oleaster psychiatric hospital in Birmingham. These are successful pioneering initiatives in mental health policy which are being implemented or can inform future service delivery in the ACT.

I would now like to provide some further details about these highlights and other aspects of the trip. The Zero Emission Vehicle Summit was hosted by the UK government in Birmingham on 11 and 12 September. The UK is seeking to accelerate its work on zero-emission vehicles and has a goal to have no more non-electric cars sold by 2040. The Zero Emission Vehicle Summit was the world's first global summit to focus on zero-emission vehicles and brought together ministers, city leaders, policymakers, industry leaders and financial and academic institutions.

I was invited to the summit to be a panellist on local leadership in the transition to the zero-emission vehicles. This was an excellent opportunity to speak about the work of the ACT government and be recognised on the global stage as a leader in transitioning to zero-emission vehicles. I also spoke about the importance of local jurisdictions taking a strong leadership role in tackling climate change, as we are doing here in the ACT.

With transport expected to create over 60 per cent of the ACT's emissions by 2020, mostly from private car use, we are strongly committed to reducing greenhouse gases by encouraging active travel, providing high quality low-emissions public transport options and transitioning to zero-emission vehicles. The conference provided the opportunity to talk to leaders in zero-emission vehicle action from around the world and to learn about the challenges and successes they have experienced. This is useful information as the ACT seeks to actively transition to zero-emission vehicles.

Attending this summit also provided an opportunity for me to sign the Birmingham zero-emission vehicles declaration on behalf of the ACT. The Birmingham declaration expresses a shared commitment to achieving the transition to zero-emission vehicles by supporting the development of zero-emissions technology and collaborating internationally.

The statement of the ACT government, made as a supplement to the Birmingham declaration, commits us to a number of key actions. These include but are not limited to: transitioning the ACT government's passenger vehicles fleet to zero-emission vehicles from 2020-21 where fit for purpose; requiring all new multi-unit and mixed-use developments to install vehicle charging infrastructure; providing transit lane access to zero-emission vehicles until 2023; and supporting new and innovative

business in the zero-emission vehicle sector to maximise job creation and economic development in the territory.

In the days leading up to the Zero Emission Vehicle Summit, I was able to attend a number of meetings and site visits. I met with Dame Julia King, Baroness Brown of Cambridge, who is the chair of the UK's subcommittee on climate change adaptation.

The UK, like Australia and like the ACT, is already feeling the impacts of a warming climate. The UK's climate and environment are quite different from those of the ACT, of course. Still, in many ways the climate change impacts for which they are preparing are the same; they are already seeing significant heatwaves that are threatening people's health, and they are preparing for more extreme weather events.

In other ways their challenges are quite different and unique. The UK rarely worries about bushfires, as we do, but they are now increasingly experiencing bog fires. The UK is home to vast amounts of natural peat bog, and the increased temperatures are now causing these to catch alight. It is a strange and previously very rare event which does not tend to cause a threat, but does quickly destroy an already rapidly diminishing natural soil resource. At current rates of destruction, primarily erosion, they think their peat bogs have only 40 more years of life left.

The UK is already seeing sea level rise that is impacting coastal communities, and a number of towns are planning for how they defend the town, with seawalls, for example. Smaller, isolated towns face a troubling utilitarian quandary, as building structures to defend from sea level rise is very expensive.

Like the ACT, the UK is looking at various measures in its cities to adapt to climate change. It is getting hotter, so buildings need to be designed to deal with heat, something the UK previously rarely thought about. Cities, too, will need more green spaces and living infrastructure to help combat the urban heat island effect. That is something I think that the ACT can lead in. We are already the bush capital, and our first living infrastructure strategy is in development.

As with anyone who is looking at climate change, the message from the climate adaptation committee chair is: "Take action." Governments need to take real action and make real commitments—serious ones, science-based ones—and they need to do it now. It is not a surprise. The UK are literally seeing floodwaters rise and cost lives and millions of dollars. Their temperature rise charts are predicting temperature rises in the range of four to five degrees in parts of the UK in the next 50 years.

The action message is a good and important message for us as the ACT finalises its next action plan to take us to zero net emissions by 2045, and a reminder that adaptation strategies must be an important component of this plan.

In Birmingham, I met with Councillor Waseem Zaffar, Cabinet Member for Transport and Environment for Birmingham City Council, to draw lessons from how Birmingham is tackling climate change and promoting the uptake of zero-emission vehicles. Birmingham is aiming to reduce greenhouse gas emissions by 65 per cent on

1990 levels by 2030; that is close to the new interim targets we have just adopted in the ACT.

Birmingham has a population of about one million people. It has traditionally been a heavily car dependent city and is now at a stage where it desperately needs to deal with the problems that this has caused. Its congestion and air quality issues are now so serious that it is working to implement a clean air zone. This places limits on the types of vehicles that may drive in the city, with banning of the more polluting vehicles. This is not an easy change to implement, and the council particularly needs to consider how it will impact on its more vulnerable residents.

In some ways Birmingham offers a glimpse of where fast-growing Canberra could be headed if we do not act quickly and early to build a more compact city that favours sustainable transport modes over the private car. Our transport, planning and climate policies need to ensure improved public transport, walking and cycling, and high quality urban infill and compact design.

Birmingham is excelling in several areas which we in the ACT can study and learn from: it is building “living infrastructure” like green walls and roofs, it has an interesting energy efficiency retrofitting program, and it is advanced in its use of zero-emission buses.

I also took the opportunity to travel from London to Brussels to have a number of meetings with EU and international counterparts. These meetings with the European Commission and ICLEI—Local Governments for Sustainability—particularly focused on learning about action being taken in Europe at a regional and city level to reach zero emissions in the next decades, and the practical steps that cities like Canberra can take. When we are part of these city networks and relationships we do not need to do it all alone; we can trade our best practice initiatives and make progress faster.

It was refreshing to see that the EU are not mired in the gross, denialist politics that infect the Australian parliament. Climate change action is generally very well accepted in the EU and even has cross-party political support. The EU are instead focused on how they can meet the climate change challenge. In fact the organisations we met with see transitioning to a carbon-free future as a voyage full of new opportunities. That is what we are focused on in the ACT as well. Interestingly, the EU makes seven-year forward budget commitments. The latest one commits 25 per cent of all new spending to climate change initiatives. That is some €32 billion.

Visiting the UK also provided the opportunity to explore some interesting initiatives related to my mental health portfolio and see how they were being implemented in a health system that is not dissimilar to our own. In London I visited the South West London Recovery College. This is a facility that takes a recovery-based approach to mental health, offering courses to people facing mental health challenges. Available courses are designed to empower people dealing with and recovering from severe and enduring mental illness and include things like: leading into healthy lifestyle; planning your own recovery; mindfulness; dealing with stress; and telling your own story. The philosophy is to help people become experts in their own self-care and wellbeing, and in this way assist them in their recovery journey.

The recovery college is focused on the idea of co-design and co-production. This means that the teachers and students create and deliver the courses collaboratively. The peer-teacher model is also central, that is, the people running courses are peers who have shared experience with mental illness. The south-west London college I visited was the first of its kind to be developed in the UK. As well as the obvious health benefits, it has proved to be a cost-effective model for treating people with mental illness, meaning a reduction in bed days and community contacts; that is, the use of other funded services. As members will recall, the ACT government has funded a recovery college project here in the territory. Visiting the London college enabled us to garner valuable insights into the operation of a college as well as to make connections to allow future collaboration.

While in Birmingham, I also met with the managers of the Oleaster psychiatric hospital and toured the facility. There are several impressive features of this hospital. Of most interest to me was the fact that it employs a model called the PACER model. PACER stands for police, ambulance and clinical early response. Under this model, there is a joint crisis response from police, ambulance and mental health clinicians to people experiencing a behavioural disturbance in the community. The key to the model is that these three services are combined into one response unit.

I saw this PACER model in action, including by accompanying a PACER group to an incident and talking to the people on the ground about how it operates. It appears to be a smart and efficient response in terms of resource management, as well as ensuring that there is a patient focus when it comes to incidents involving people with mental health issues. Responding with the PACER approach helps to see these incidents through the prism of mental illness rather than as a law enforcement response.

The Oleaster hospital also has a facility called a place of safety. The place of safety is used when a police officer detains someone in a public place under the Mental Health Act because they believe that he or she is mentally disordered and may be a danger to themselves or others. The place of safety is a safe and appropriate environment. Patients are met by nursing staff who will provide support and reassurance and make a decision as to whether or not a full Mental Health Act assessment is appropriate. This is another patient-focused approach, which works in harmony with the PACER response.

Following my trip to the UK, I attended the Global Climate Action Summit in San Francisco, which was held from 12 to 14 September. This event was attended by more than 4,500 people and brought together leaders from 73 national, state and local governments, as well as businesses, scientists and citizens. The summit showcased climate action taking place around the world and allowed participants to discuss and commit to actions to overcome the remaining challenges we face to lower greenhouse gas emissions.

The three-day summit was co-chaired by the Governor of California, Jerry Brown, with attendees including the former US Secretary of State John Kerry and former US Vice-President Al Gore. I participated in a panel session on future clean energy systems and moving towards 100 per cent renewable electricity. I was able to talk to a

global audience about the ACT's world-leading commitment to 100 per cent renewable electricity by 2020 and the progress we have made towards reaching this target. I also spoke about the next steps for the ACT after reaching 100 per cent renewable electricity, primarily reducing emissions from the transport and energy sector, and our goal of zero net emissions by 2045.

In recognition of the leadership role that the ACT is taking in reducing reliance on coal and other fossil fuels, I was invited to speak during a plenary session of the summit about the Powering Past Coal Alliance. I officially announced that the ACT was joining the global initiative and commented on how joining the alliance fits with our climate change commitments. Powering Past Coal Alliance members are committed to sharing their skills, experience and best practices in support of an international effort to phase out coal power generation. It was a privilege to have representatives from Spain, the UK, the USA and the Netherlands, as well as Canada's Minister of Environment and Climate Change, join me on stage.

On the final day of the summit, I co-hosted a zero carbon cities affiliate event to the main summit event with the Mayor of Sacramento, Darrell Steinberg. The purpose of the event was to bring together mid-sized cities to discuss the barriers and opportunities in developing and implementing strong, enduring climate action.

During the affiliate event, I signed a carbon zero cities declaration along with the Mayor of Sacramento. This declaration expresses a shared commitment to work together to tackle climate change, including by exchanging knowledge and actively pursuing policies to become carbon zero cities. I am looking forward to continuing to work with Sacramento and other cities to assist the ACT in meeting our zero net emissions target by 2045.

At our affiliate event there was strong interest in the continued collaboration between mid-sized cities on addressing climate change. I will be focused on expanding these initial contacts into a more active partnership over the coming months, to ensure that the ACT is better placed to deliver on its own objectives and mid-sized cities are further strengthened in their efforts to take action on climate change.

To sum up, the trip to both the Zero Emission Vehicle Summit and the Global Climate Action Summit was very beneficial to progressing the ACT government's objectives. Firstly, I shared with a number of different audiences the ACT's strong climate change commitments, demonstrating our continued global leadership on this issue. Secondly, I strengthened connections with other governments, organisations and key stakeholders, as a base to build stronger collaboration, sharing of best practice and staying up to date with the latest innovations. Thirdly, I had the opportunity to learn lessons from other jurisdictions and organisations on how they are progressing with reducing emissions which can be used to improve our climate change work here in the territory. Finally, I had the opportunity to investigate interesting policies in the mental health space being implemented in the UK which may have valuable application here in the territory.

I present the following paper:

Zero Emission Vehicle Summit (UK) and Global Climate Action Summit (US)—Report—September 2018—Ministerial statement, 30 October 2018.

I move:

That the Assembly take note of the paper.

Question resolved in the affirmative.

Review of work safety compliance Ministerial statement

MS STEPHEN-SMITH (Kurrajong—Minister for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Affairs, Minister for Disability, Minister for Children, Youth and Families, Minister for Employment and Workplace Safety, Minister for Government Services and Procurement, Minister for Urban Renewal) (11.42): I am pleased to have this opportunity to table in the Assembly the independent review of the ACT's work safety compliance infrastructure, policies and procedures in the Assembly. As the Assembly may be aware, the independent review was commissioned in May 2018 to evaluate the appropriateness and effectiveness of the ACT government's work health and safety compliance and enforcement strategies to ensure that they are delivering for workers.

The review terms of reference provided that it consider: the approach to safety compliance and enforcement detailed in WorkSafe ACT's compliance framework; the appropriateness and effectiveness of WorkSafe ACT's governance structure including the roles, legislative responsibilities and functions of the Work Safety Commissioner, the regulator and relevant ministers; the appropriateness and effectiveness of WorkSafe ACT's organisational structure, including consideration of its independence and operational effectiveness in its current status as a business unit within Access Canberra; and the ACT's collection, use and analysis of data and the impact and effectiveness of information sharing within Access Canberra and across government to drive work safety compliance and enforcement activities.

The review was led by Dr Claire Noone of Nous Group. Dr Noone also chaired Victoria's independent review of Worksafe compliance and enforcement. This was the most comprehensive review of the ACT's work health and safety compliance and enforcement arrangements conducted since the territory's adoption of the national model work health and safety legislation in 2011.

The approach to the review as outlined in the report featured a research-based methodology and included extensive stakeholder consultation with business, government, employee representatives, and government officials. The final report of the review makes 27 recommendations ranging from changes to business operations and administrative improvements to recommendations in relation to the governance structure and compliance framework for WorkSafe ACT. In considering the

appropriateness and effectiveness of WorkSafe ACT's compliance framework, compliance approach, governance, and organisational structure, the review has identified a number of areas where the administrative operations and governance of WorkSafe can be strengthened.

It is clear that a number of changes are required to strengthen the governance and compliance framework for enforcing work health and safety laws in the ACT. Key recommendations from the report include: clarity and consistency around the compliance framework used by the regulator; better and more strategic use of data to inform the activities of the regulator; better clarity and independence in relation to the governance arrangements for the regulator and the role of the Work Safety Commissioner; increasing capability, collaboration and engagement within the regulator; and changing the organisational structure of the regulator to improve clarity and independence in relation to enforcement and compliance activities as well as education and awareness-raising activities.

I am pleased to inform the Assembly that the ACT government supports all the review recommendations in principle. The ACT government will now work to ensure the effective implementation of the recommendations over the coming months. It is acknowledged that key changes to areas such as the organisational structure of WorkSafe will require consultation with WorkSafe staff, their unions and other key stakeholders to ensure that we get it right. These discussions will be commencing shortly.

The ACT government is committed to ensuring that all workers in the ACT are in safe and healthy workplaces and that the effectiveness of our work health and safety compliance framework is a key part of achieving this outcome. I consider that the implementation of the report's recommendations will better enable WorkSafe ACT to be an effective and efficient work health and safety regulator for the ACT into the future.

I present the following papers:

ACT's Work Safety Compliance Infrastructure, Policies and Procedures—
Independent review—

Government response—Ministerial statement, 30 October 2018.

Final report, dated 27 August 2018.

I move:

That the Assembly take note of the ministerial statement.

Question resolved in the affirmative.

City Renewal Authority and Suburban Land Agency Amendment Bill 2018

Ms Berry, pursuant to notice, presented the bill, its explanatory statement and a Human Rights Act compatibility statement.

Title read by Clerk.

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 Sport and Recreation and Minister for Women) (11.47): I move:

That this bill be agreed to in principle.

I am pleased to present the City Renewal Authority and Suburban Land Agency Amendment Bill 2018. This bill will amend the City Renewal Authority and Suburban Land Agency Act 2017 to ensure that assets, contracts and liabilities of the former Land Development Agency are correctly located to either the City Renewal Authority or the Suburban Land Agency.

When the former Land Development Agency ceased operations on 30 June 2017 the majority of its assets, contracts and liabilities were transferred to the City Renewal Authority or the Suburban Land Agency by notifiable instruments under division 9.6 of the Financial Management Act 1996—the FMA—on 30 June 2017. These instruments are: Notifiable Instrument NI2017-342 Financial Management (Land Development Agency Transfer to City Renewal Authority) Declaration 2017 and Notifiable Instrument NI2017-343 Financial Management (Land Development Agency Transfer to Suburban Land Agency) Declaration 2017.

Former Land Development Agency assets, contracts and liabilities not expressly listed in division 9.6 FMA instruments automatically transferred to the territory represented by the Environment, Planning and Sustainable Development Directorate under division 9.7 of the FMA.

Since the transfers occurred on 30 June 2017 the authority and agency have identified a number of assets, contracts and liabilities that should have been transferred to one of the new entities through the instruments noted above. These include, for example, a potential personal injury claim, project delivery agreements for the development of a number of blocks in Taylor, and unpaid debts to the territory.

In addition, from 1 July 2017 the territory unintentionally became legally responsible for liabilities arising under executed Land Development Agency contracts, for example, sales of land settled or civil works contracts completed before 1 July 2017 but for which the full statutory period of limitation has not concluded.

The territory was not aware of this unintended consequence of the operation of the FMA when the 30 June 2017 instruments were drafted. This is the first time an ACT government entity has been abolished and split into two new entities. In the past when an entity was abolished, the functions and responsibilities were absorbed into one directorate on behalf of the territory and hence this issue under the FMA did not arise.

In practical terms the FMA instruments required preparation and notification via the ACT legislation register prior to the abolishment of the LDA. The LDA, however, rightly continued to operate until 30 June 2017 and hence further commitments and liabilities arose during this period. It was simply not possible for these commitments or liabilities to be captured within the FMA process. Further, the issue of contingent liabilities resting with the directorate was not anticipated and could not have been listed in the FMA instruments.

In preparing the proposed legislation, the directorate sought to balance the need for transparency, certainty and legal clarity with the impost of introducing amending legislation. The introduction of the bill ensures that the government does not inappropriately rise beyond the scope of the transitional powers in the City Renewal Authority and Suburban Land Agency Act 2017.

The option we have pursued—to rectify this through an amendment bill—is the most comprehensive and transparent solution. The bill will provide certainty to land entities, stakeholders, government and the wider community by in effect deeming all relevant assets, contracts and liabilities including any matters that have not yet manifested or been discovered to have been transferred as intended on 30 June 2017.

This solution has taken some time to resolve. However, there has been little impact on the suppliers and contractors of the land entities. In some cases the directorate is the legal owner of the contract instead of the authority or agency. However, contracts are still being executed as agreed. Overall, this bill will ensure that the government's intention in establishing the new land entities has been delivered. I commend this bill to the Assembly.

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

Disability Services Amendment Bill 2018

Ms Stephen-Smith, pursuant to notice, presented the bill, its explanatory statement and a Human Rights Act compatibility statement.

Title read by Clerk.

MS STEPHEN-SMITH (Kurrajong—Minister for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Affairs, Minister for Disability, Minister for Children, Youth and Families, Minister for Employment and Workplace Safety, Minister for Government Services and Procurement, Minister for Urban Renewal) (11.53): I move:

That this bill be agreed to in principle.

I rise to present the Disability Services Amendment Bill 2018 to the Assembly. The bill gives the official visitors for disability services better access to monitor and investigate the welfare of potentially vulnerable persons in disability accommodation. The official visitors for disability services, currently Ms Narelle Hargreaves and Ms Mary Durkin, play a vital role in monitoring and investigating the welfare of

individuals with a disability as well as ensuring that people with disability and their families and carers are able to raise concerns about the services they receive.

I would like to take this opportunity to thank Ms Hargreaves and Ms Durkin, as well as former official visitor Sue Salthouse, for their ongoing commitment to the safety and wellbeing of vulnerable Canberrans and for their input into the amendments included in this bill. The amendments are primarily made in response to changes in the service environment due to the introduction of the national disability insurance scheme, or NDIS, and recommendations from the official visitors themselves.

There have been significant changes to the way disability services are delivered in the ACT since the role of the official visitors for disability services was established. Specifically, the transition of disability accommodation management to non-government providers under the NDIS has changed the way the Disability Services Act 1991 operates. This has impacted on the official visitors' ability to carry out their important safeguarding role.

In order to ensure that the official visitors can continue to deliver on the intent of the official visitors scheme, the bill contains three amendments to the Disability Services Act 1991. All are aimed at supporting the official visitors for disability services to continue their work safeguarding the rights and dignity of vulnerable people in the current service context.

The first amendment updates the definition of a visitable place. Historically, any accommodation service run by the ACT government or in receipt of funding under the act was recognised as disability accommodation. Due to the NDIS funding arrangements now in operation, this means of identifying a visitable place is redundant.

Another problem arising from the current definition relates to the meaning of a private home. Previously, private homes were specifically precluded from the definition of a visitable place under the act. In the current environment, however, it is not uncommon for a person with a disability to reside in a tenanted property and receive support services therein. In this situation, as the act currently operates, the place would be defined as a private home and therefore precluded from the definition of a visitable place.

The risk in this case is that a provider, through acting as both tenancy manager and service provider, is able to exercise whole-of-life control over a vulnerable person who may experience any number of barriers to seeking external support and advocacy. The importance of official visitor oversight in this situation is clear. Other examples of circumstances where oversight is warranted include where there is a tenancy manager content to leave all interaction with a person with disability to the service provider or the person is in a respite service.

This bill amends the definition of a visitable place to allow the official visitors to visit people in such situations, while precluding private homes where people with disability reside with family or where services are provided by other than specialist disability support providers. These would usually be family or friends.

There is provision for a declaration that a particular type of service does not require visitation. This is important because the current declaration of specialist disability services includes a wide range of services and support. If a person receives a service in their house for only a few hours a week, this would be unlikely to meet the threshold of being a visitable place for the purposes of the official visitors scheme, although a person would still be able to make a complaint or request a visit. The amendments also add a provision for a person with disability to ask not to be visited by the official visitor.

A final change to the visitable place definition concerns residential aged care facilities. Previously the definition, which stipulated a residential aged care facility that accommodates a person with a disability who is less than 65 years old, potentially suggested that accommodation provided to persons with a disability once they reached the age of 65 years would not be a visitable place. This age proviso has now been removed, while importantly retaining the official visitors' ability to visit persons with a disability in residential aged care facilities.

The second amendment will allow the Director-General, Community Services Directorate, to comply with the legislated requirement to keep a register of visitable places, previously approved accommodation services. The register is a key mechanism to support the official visitors for disability services in their important role.

Prior to the introduction of the NDIS, information for the register was drawn from accommodation services run by or in receipt of funding from the ACT government. As the ACT government no longer has direct input into the delivery of services it no longer has sight of where individual properties are located.

In order to allow the maintenance of an up-to-date register of visitable places the bill compels service providers to report information to the director-general within five days of starting or taking on a new accommodation service. In addition, service providers relinquishing management of a visitable place to another provider are equally compelled to report this to the director-general. Service providers are already required to report a range of information to the Community Services Directorate under this act. The addition of information on accommodation will not create a significant burden.

Finally, the requirement to give 24 hours written notice before entering a visitable place would be removed from the Disability Services Act 1991 under this bill. Currently, this requirement can be avoided if the official visitors reasonably believe that a person with a disability is at risk of harm or has received a complaint or that person consents to the visit. Nevertheless, the official visitors and service providers have found this requirement to be impractical in the disability sector due to the large number of places to visit, the movements of people with disability from day to day and the communication difficulties experienced by many residents. Removal of this requirement will provide the flexibility necessary for arranging visits.

In making these amendments, due regard has been given to human rights and the bill's compatibility with the Human Rights Act 2004. A balance has been sought between

the right to privacy and the right to safety and dignity for vulnerable people. I am comfortable that situations such as that previously detailed where a provider can exercise whole-of-life control over an individual justifies any potential limitation on the human right to privacy. A person with a disability has the option of opting out of official visitor contact.

I commend the Disability Services Amendment Bill to the Assembly. The bill will support official visitors to safeguard the rights and dignity of vulnerable people in the ACT community.

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

Statute Law Amendment Bill 2018

Debate resumed from 20 August 2018, on motion by **Mr Ramsay**:

That this bill be agreed to in principle.

MR HANSON (Murrumbidgee) (12.01): The Canberra Liberals will be supporting this bill. Like all statute amendment bills, its object is to update the ACT statute book as an entire body of law by amending acts and regulations but doing so for revision and update purposes only. Under guidelines for the technical amendments program, the central criteria for the inclusion of amendments in these types of bills are that the amendments are minor or technical and non-controversial. In my view, this bill follows those guidelines. It is split into schedule 1 “minor amendments”, schedule 3 “technical amendments” and schedule 4 “repeal of redundant or obsolete legislation”. The bill actually does contain a schedule 2, usually used for structural amendments, but this legislation does not actually have any clauses. It is included in the bill to preserve the usual numbering schedule of schedule 3.

I will turn first to schedule 1, the minor amendments. In this bill one of the minor amendments is updating applied over several acts, for example the Health Act 1993, the Mental Health Act 2015, the Public Health Act 1997 and the Road Transport (Alcohol and Drugs) Act 1977. They are all amended to change the various definitions relating to “authorised nurse practitioner” and “nurse practitioner” positions. It replaces all of those with the term “nurse practitioner”. Similarly in the Ombudsman Act it makes several changes from “officer” to “information holder”.

Other amendments are in response to changes made by the introduction of other legislation. For example, the Ombudsman Act 1989 is amended in response to the passage of the reportable conduct scheme specifically to allow the ombudsman to use the services of a public servant or territory facilities, to engage consultants and to delegate functions to a member of the Ombudsman’s staff. The Freedom of Information Act 2016 is also updated as a consequence of the scheme. Other amendments are standalone but also minor. In the Public Sector Management Act 1994, section 152 gives statutory office holders the power to delegate a function to a staff member, an officer or employee or the Head of Service. The act clarifies the definition and use of “management positions”.

Amendments to the Rent Tribunal Act 1995 and the University of Canberra Act 1989 appear to effectively remove the power of the Rent Tribunal to determine the remuneration allowances and other entitlements of a member of the University of Canberra Council. From my research and information provided by the attorney's office, this follows the actual practice of the university since 2015 and removes a redundant process from the legislation. Amendments to the Workers Compensation Act 1951 reinstate an entitlement to compensation that was inadvertently removed by a previous amendment, and addresses that the retirement age is no longer a fixed age. So this is a fix-up.

Turning to schedule 3, the technical amendments, it contains minor or technical amendments of legislation initiated by the Parliamentary Counsel's Office. Each amendment is explained in an explanatory note in the schedule. These are confined to updating language, adding notes, improving syntax, omitting redundant provisions, and other minor changes to update or improve the form of legislation.

Schedule 4, the repeal of redundant or obsolete legislation, repeals the Health Regulation 2004, which is consequential to the change in description of "authorised nurse practitioner" amended in schedule 1.

As is our usual practice, consultation was conducted with the legal profession. No adverse comments have been received. As is our usual practice, we support the ongoing improvement and refinement of our body of statute law and recognise the need for timely updating when required. These amendments fit these requirements. As I indicated, we will support this legislation.

MS CHEYNE (Ginninderra) (12.06): I rise to join, I think, the entire chamber to support the Statute Law Amendment Bill 2018. As Mr Hanson noted, it is a bill that improves the quality of statute law in the ACT by amending and repealing legislation.

The ACT's statute book might not be a riveting page-turner among the likes of Harry Potter or a Stephen King thriller—maybe it is for some—but it is important. The ACT statute book, as Mr Hanson also said, is all the ACT legislation taken as a body of law. A statute book that is kept up to date is one that enhances access to legislation. It means it is easier to find, easier to read and easier to understand. Statute law amendment bills like this one make technical amendments to ensure that the territory's laws reflect the changes in society and the changes in technology.

The Statute Law Amendment Bill 2018 is part of the ACT's technical amendments program for legislation. This is a program which provides greater flexibility in drafting amendments for the revision of statute law, minimising costs and boosting efficiency. These amendments and repeals individually might seem small but cumulatively they have a significant impact on the ACT's statute book. Cumulatively they can have a significant impact on the quality of ACT law as a whole. The Statute Law Amendment Bill 2018, when enacted, will make the ACT statute book simpler, more consistent and more coherent.

It includes a number of minor amendments introduced by ACT government directorates and agencies, some of which are worth highlighting and emphasising, as Mr Hanson did. Among them are amendments that reflect the growing role of the Ombudsman. Changes to the Ombudsman Act 1989 enable the Ombudsman to delegate functions to a member of their staff including, naturally, the Deputy Ombudsman.

These amendments also allow the Ombudsman to enter into arrangements with the Head of Service so they can use the services of public servants, consultants and contractors. This is a pretty sensible change, as the functions of the Ombudsman under ACT law have expanded over the past few years. This expansion is a result of amendments made to the Ombudsman Act 1989, including the introduction of the reportable conduct scheme as well as the enactment of the Freedom of Information Act 2016.

The bill also impacts on public servants. One subsection of the Public Service Management Act 1994 enables a public sector employee to delegate certain functions to a staff member, officer or employee or the Head of Service. Now an amendment will allow a public sector employee to also delegate to an SES member, including a director-general or executive, if needed. This is another pretty sensible change, enabling certain office holders the appropriate management powers to carry out their work where they previously were not able to. The public service is working more collaboratively across different levels and agencies and it is important that our statute law be updated to reflect this.

The Statute Law Amendment Bill 2018 also includes amendments that impact on the University of Canberra, specifically the university's council, which is the institution's governing authority. Amendments of the Remuneration Tribunal Act 1995 and the University of Canberra Act 1989 shift the responsibility for determining the payment, allowances and entitlements of council members away from the Remuneration Tribunal. Why is this important? It is because the conditions of a council member's appointment should be agreed simply between the executive and the member, subject to a resolution of council. If no resolution is passed, that is when it is appropriate for the Remuneration Tribunal to step in. It is a simple process.

The Statute Law Amendment Bill 2018 also enables us to adapt to broader changes. Amendments within the Workers Compensation Act 1951 will enable us to clearly state how long injured workers of pension age or older are entitled to receive weekly compensation as we move from a system based on a pension age of 65 years to a variable pension age.

The area of health is not immune from a series of changes either. A number of acts need to be amended to reflect the new regulatory scheme for nurse practitioners under the Health Practitioner Regulation National Law (ACT). As a result of the new scheme a number of terms have become obsolete. Fans of concise text might be glad to discover a switch from the term "authorised nurse practitioner" to the much simpler "nurse practitioner". The Statute Law Amendment Bill 2018 also repeals the Health Regulation 2004 which dealt with the positions and scopes of practice for nurse

practitioners. Again, with nurse practitioners now regulated under the Health Practitioner Regulation National Law (ACT), this piece of legislation is no longer needed.

This bill also contains some technical amendments of legislation introduced by the Parliamentary Counsel's Office. For example, in the Animal Diseases Act 2005 one amendment replaces the incorrect "compensable endemic disease" with the correct "compensable disease". Another amendment introduces a new definition of the phrase "travelling stock": "Stock that is being travelled other than on the property where the stock is ordinarily kept".

Sometimes decisions made up on the big hill spark the need for technical changes to ACT statute law. For example, swapping the Department of Immigration and Border Protection for the Department of Home Affairs, or whatever it is called this year, necessitates an amendment of the Criminal Code 2002 so that its wording reflects yet another federal government change. These technical changes might seem small but, again, it is about making the ACT's statute book simpler, more consistent and more coherent for whoever is reading it.

The Statute Law Amendment Bill 2018 might not captivate some people in the same way other bills debated in this chamber can, but it certainly captivates me and it is no less important. This bill, as we have reflected in this chamber already, will enhance the ACT's statute book by amending and repealing legislation for the purpose of revising statute law. In doing so it will ensure that our statute book is kept up to date and that it is kept up to the highest standard. The Statute Law Amendment Bill 2018 will also help with the ongoing modernisation of our own territory's legislation. It is about keeping up with the changing world we live in. It is a task this government and this city does really quite well across so many areas. I commend this bill to the Assembly.

MR RAMSAY (Ginninderra—Attorney-General, Minister for the Arts and Cultural Events, Minister for Building Quality Improvement, Minister for Business and Regulatory Services and Minister for Seniors and Veterans) (12.15), in reply: I thank Mr Hanson and Ms Cheyne for their enthusiastic support and their captivating contribution to this debate. This bill carries on the technical amendments program that continues to develop a simpler, more coherent and more accessible statute book for the territory through minor legislative changes. It is an efficient mechanism to take care of non-controversial minor or technical amendments to a range of territory legislation. At the same time it conserves the resources that would otherwise be needed if the amendments were each dealt with in individual pieces of legislation. Each individual amendment is minor but, viewed collectively, they are a significant contribution to improving the operation of the affected legislation and the statute book generally.

This government takes high quality legislation very seriously. High quality legislation supports access to justice by making it clearer and simpler for anyone—for members of the public, for lawyers, for the courts and for our public servants—to read and to understand the legislation.

Briefly, the bill in schedule 1 amends the Health Act 1993, the Mental Health Act 2015, the Public Health Act 1997 and the Road Transport (Alcohol and Drugs) Act 1977 to reflect the changed regulatory scheme for nurse practitioners under the Health Practitioner Regulation National Law (ACT). These changes recognise new definitions and terminology that come with the health practitioner national law.

One of the many improvements that this bill delivers is a strengthened set of delegation powers. Schedule 1 amends the Ombudsman Act 1989 to allow the Ombudsman to enter into arrangements with the Head of Service to use the services of a public servant or territory facilities to engage consultants and contractors and to allow the Ombudsman to delegate the Ombudsman's functions to a member of the Ombudsman staff. These changes will make it clearer that the Ombudsman has the powers necessary to engage the right services and the right staff to carry out its functions and to delegate as necessary to support efficient work.

There are also improvements in this bill to the way ACT public servants make delegations. Amendments to the Public Sector Management Act 1994 will mean that a public sector employer can delegate a function to any senior executive service member, which includes a director-general or an executive. The section currently provides for delegations to a staff member, an officer or employee or the Head of Service. This change will provide for more flexible delegation arrangements to reflect the dynamic structure of our ACT public service.

The legislative framework for governance of the University of Canberra is also improved in this bill. Amendments to the Remuneration Tribunal Act 1995 and also to the University of Canberra Act 1989 will remove the power of the Remuneration Tribunal to determine the remuneration, allowances and other entitlements of a member of the University of Canberra Council appointed under the University of Canberra Act 1989. This is because the University of Canberra Council determines its own pay arrangements and has not relied on the Remuneration Tribunal's determination.

Schedule 3 contains minor or technical amendments of legislation that are initiated by the Parliamentary Council's Office. It includes the correction of minor errors, updating of language, improving its syntax, omitting redundant provisions and improving the form of legislation.

Finally, schedule 4 of the bill repeals a redundant regulation. The Health Regulation 2004 regulated nurse practitioner positions and scopes of practice for nurse practitioners. However, the regulation was superseded in 2010 by the Health Practitioner Regulation National Law (ACT), which now regulates nurse practitioners.

I would like to express my appreciation for all members' support for the technical amendments program. Again I would like to place on record my thanks to the members of the ACT public service who continue to work so very hard to ensure that the legislation in this territory is indeed fit for purpose. The technical amendments program is another example of the territory striving for the best and leading the way

with a modern, high quality, up-to-date and easily accessible statute book. I commend the bill to the Assembly.

Question resolved in the affirmative.

Bill agreed to in principle.

Leave granted to dispense with the detail stage.

Bill agreed to.

Sitting suspended from 12.21 to 2.30 pm.

Questions without notice

ACT Health—SPIRE project

MR COE: My question is for the minister for health. Minister, will you please table in the Assembly, by the close of this sitting week, all of the briefs that you have received regarding the SPIRE project?

MS FITZHARRIS: I will take that question on notice.

MR COE: Further to this, minister, by the close of this sitting week will you include a verbal update to the Assembly on the state of the SPIRE project?

MS FITZHARRIS: Yes, I will do that before the close of this sitting week.

MRS DUNNE: In that briefing, minister, can you explain the basis on which you say that the construction of SPIRE will begin in 2020? Can you table the drink coaster on which the SPIRE policy was written?

MS FITZHARRIS: Yes, I will detail elements of the timing of that project and I will treat with the contempt that it deserves the second part of Mrs Dunne's question.

Housing—new housing strategy

MS LE COUTEUR: My question is to the minister for housing and relates to the 15 per cent of new buildings in the indicative land release program that will be affordable under the newly released housing strategy. Minister, can you advise the Assembly of the proportion of public, community and affordable-purchase housing that will make up this 15 per cent of affordable housing in new greenfield and infill developments?

MS BERRY: Those numbers will be decided year on year, based on need, as well as the capacity of affordable and community housing providers to build them.

MS LE COUTEUR: In that case, Minister, can you provide us with indicative figures for the 2019 land release program?

MS BERRY: The 2018-19 indicative land program is available online.

Canberra Hospital—Chief Medical Officer

MRS DUNNE: My question is to the Minister for Health and Wellbeing. Minister, why did the Chief Medical Officer of the Canberra Hospital announce his resignation yesterday?

MS FITZHARRIS: He announced it because he had resigned.

MRS DUNNE: Minister, has the Chief Medical Officer, who announced his resignation yesterday, advised patients that he has not resigned to pursue other opportunities?

MS FITZHARRIS: If Mrs Dunne could repeat the question, please.

MADAM SPEAKER: Mrs Dunne.

MRS DUNNE: Has the outgoing former Chief Medical Officer advised patients that he has not resigned to pursue other opportunities?

MS FITZHARRIS: I have a lot of regard for the Chief Medical Officer. Mrs Dunne's question, I think, misunderstands the nature of the role of the Chief Medical Officer. I understand that Dr Fletcher has advised his colleagues, and many people in the community who hold him in high regard for his clinical work, of his intention to resign on 21 November. What I would say is that I do not intend to discuss an individual staff member's personal circumstances but I do, as I say, have a high regard for Dr Fletcher, for the work he has done in the community and the work he has done as a paediatrician here in Canberra and the region, and also wish him all the very best.

MISS C BURCH: Minister, why has there been such a high level of churn in senior management in ACT Health over the past year?

MS FITZHARRIS: I would refer Miss Burch to my previous answers on these questions.

ACT Health—elective surgery

MS LAWDER: My question is to the Minister for Health and Wellbeing. I refer to a series of cost-cutting measures attached to a briefing on elective surgery that you noted on 31 August. One of the proposals was for long-wait patients to be taken off the elective surgery waiting list after "one strike" of refusing a date. Minister, what is the status of this "one-strike" proposal?

MS FITZHARRIS: None of the measures outlined, from my recollection, in that particular brief has been implemented. I know that the new CEO of Canberra Health Services is paying attention to many aspects of operations across Canberra Health

Services, in particular, timely care. Within that, I know that she will be looking at how we further improve and provide even more access for even more patients to elective surgery in the ACT.

MS LAWDER: Minister, is the “one strike” proposal still a possibility, even though I note that you have just said that it has not yet been implemented? Is it still on the cards?

MS FITZHARRIS: I will take that on notice. That brief was provided to me prior to the separation of the two organisations. I will look forward to discussing options for increasing access to elective surgery with the new CEO of Canberra Health Services.

MRS DUNNE: Minister, what consultation occurred with medical consumer groups about this proposal, and was any consideration given to significant family events, such as a funeral or a wedding, that may prohibit people from taking up an offer of surgery and therefore result in their being struck off the list?

MS FITZHARRIS: Many of those questions are hypotheticals but I refer Mrs Dunne to my previous answers.

Housing—new housing strategy

MS CHEYNE: My question is to the Minister for Housing and Suburban Development. Minister, can you update the Assembly on the government’s election commitment to deliver a new housing strategy for the ACT?

MS BERRY: I thank Ms Cheyne for her interest in housing in the ACT. As members will know, I launched a new housing strategy yesterday with the Chief Minister and with many community organisations who provide vital support to people across the ACT. The strategy has been on a long journey and has been built on thousands of conversations with the Canberra community, highlighted by the summit last year.

It has been strengthened by the input of the consultative group that was made up of experts and community members from the sector, industry and community organisations, as well as public housing tenants. I want to thank them again for their important contribution.

The strategy that I tabled this morning will drive the government’s priorities in housing for the next 10 years and is a significant public investment in social and affordable housing. The ACT comes to the housing challenge with a strong foundation and has been active in making housing more affordable for over a decade.

Land supply has been accelerated and ongoing tax reform, which has been led by the Chief Minister, has helped moderate house price growth and avoid the extremes of Sydney and Melbourne. In social housing and homelessness, it is a record that we can be proud to stand by: the highest ratio of social housing in Australia, the lowest rate of rough sleeping in Australia and a reduction in homelessness, despite a national increase.

That is why social housing sits at the heart of the new housing strategy and why the ACT government will continue to invest in our community to build more homes for people who are in need of affordable housing.

MS CHEYNE: Minister, what are the key government actions of the strategy?

MS BERRY: There have been a number of actions outlined with the community to make housing more affordable for Canberrans on lower incomes. The ACT government will provide \$100 million in additional funding for new public housing over the next five years and build on the most extensive renewal of public housing that Canberra has ever seen. The renewal process will continue with around 1,000 further homes to be renewed, and stock will grow by at least 200.

Our government will continue to support public housing tenants and will see more public housing in our suburbs and town centres in all regions of the ACT. The ACT government will also be providing support to further grow the community housing sector. Where we can, the government will use its scale and capability to develop mixed housing so that the public and community housing portfolios can grow together. This offers the social outcomes that we are seeking and helps community housing providers focus on the services that they are best at.

Across different sites we will initially provide 151 dwellings for community housing, including 33 in a brand-new housing development soon to be completed in Kaleen. Both of these programs will be enabled by the new commitment to maintain at least 15 per cent of all government land supply for public, community and affordable housing. This builds on the previous policy, where this requirement applied only to greenfield development. It means more than 550 dwelling sites in the current financial year. This strategy delivers on the government's election commitment to continue to make housing more affordable in the ACT.

MS LE COUTEUR: Minister, the 15 per cent figure which is part of the strategy, is that going to be for the whole indicative land release program or is it suburb by suburb?

MS BERRY: It is 15 per cent across greenfield and infill developments across the ACT.

ACT Health—joint replacements

MS LEE: My question is to the minister for health. I refer to a document attached to a brief from the Director-General of ACT Health, which you noted on 31 August, proposing possible cost-cutting measures for elective surgery. One of the proposals was capping the cost of primary joint replacement prosthetics to \$9,500. This would apply for 410 people who need joint replacements. Minister, what is the status of the proposal to introduce a cost cap for primary joint replacement prosthetics?

MS FITZHARRIS: I indicated in my previous answer that none of those options has been pursued, and I refer Ms Lee to my previous answer where I said that these matters are now under consideration by the CEO of Canberra Health Services.

MS LEE: Minister, what analysis has been done to assess the impact on quality of life for people undertaking joint replacement surgery, and will you table that analysis this week?

MS FITZHARRIS: As I indicated in my previous answer, these were potential measures in the very early stages. They were also based on clinical advice. I will continue to seek and take the guidance of the clinical advisers in Canberra Health Services and the advice of the CEO.

MRS DUNNE: What is the risk that some patients would not be able to get their surgery because the prosthetics would cost more than \$9,500? And was ACT Health considering giving people sub-optimal joint replacements so as to keep costs down?

MS FITZHARRIS: To the second part of Mrs Dunne's question, no. And, once again, I refer members to my previous answer and once again note the Canberra Liberals scaremongering consistently, never once having anything positive to say about ACT Health or its staff. Not once. Not once in this term have they had anything to say about ACT Health staff. They hear the Canberra Liberals, and they have heard their relentless negative campaign against ACT Health, against doctors and nurses in our community. They have done it in the past; they will do it in the future.

Opposition members interjecting—

Ms Berry: Point of order, Madam Speaker.

MS FITZHARRIS: What are they hiding? What are they hiding about their plans for health in the ACT?

MADAM SPEAKER: Minister, please resume your seat. A point of order. Stop the clock.

Ms Berry: Madam Speaker, the opposition have made several comments that, in my view, are unparliamentary, making personal reflections on the minister's work. They should withdraw.

MADAM SPEAKER: In the cut and thrust of the debate, I am not going to have anyone withdraw comments but I will say, again, members on my left: no interjections, and if you have a question for the minister, at least allow her to answer it. Minister, do you have anything further to add?

Mrs Jones interjecting—

MADAM SPEAKER: Is that a comment across the floor from members on my left?

Mrs Jones: No. I believe it was a comment between members on the left.

Mr Barr interjecting—

Mrs Jones interjecting—

MADAM SPEAKER: Mrs Jones, welcome back, but, please, Mr Wall is on his feet.

ACT Health—non-ACT patients

MR WALL: My question is also to the Minister for Health and Wellbeing. Minister, I refer to a series of cost-cutting measures attached to a briefing on elective surgery that you noted on 31 August. One of the cost-cutting measures was to remove patients from the waitlist who were not geographically associated with the ACT. Minister, what is the status of this proposal?

MS FITZHARRIS: I largely refer Mr Wall to my previous answer but I can, of course, confirm that ACT Health, and certainly Canberra Health Services, are major providers of health services to the population of the south-east region of New South Wales. That is considered to be quite different from the broader New South Wales population. I would like to give some certainty to those patients of doctors in Canberra Health Services who are in the south-east region of New South Wales that they do, and will continue to, receive services from Canberra Hospital, if that is what their clinical advice is.

MR WALL: Minister, what consultations has ACT Health or your office had with the New South Wales government or ministerial representatives about this proposal and what has their response been?

MS FITZHARRIS: I refer Mr Wall to my previous answers about the status of this brief and the extremely early stages at which these issues were raised.

MS CHEYNE: Minister, are you confident that the CEO is adequately considering elective surgery wait times?

MS FITZHARRIS: Yes, I absolutely am.

Mrs Dunne: Madam Speaker, a point of order. The question was clearly asking the minister to express an opinion. She opened with, “Are you satisfied?”

MADAM SPEAKER: I must admit that I was not listening to the question. I was distracted by another member on my left. Can you repeat your question, please, Ms Cheyne?

MS CHEYNE: No, I am good, thank you.

MADAM SPEAKER: You do not want to repeat it? Can you give me the question? I did not hear it.

MS CHEYNE: Minister, are you confident—not “satisfied”—that the CEO is adequately considering elective surgery wait times?

Mrs Dunne: It's still an expression of opinion.

MADAM SPEAKER: I do not believe so, Mrs Dunne. Minister, would you at least answer that?

Mrs Dunne: You have got to be kidding me!

MADAM SPEAKER: No, I am not kidding you, Mrs Dunne. Mrs Jones.

Centenary Hospital for Women and Children—plumbing issues

MRS JONES: My question is to the Minister for Health and Wellbeing. Minister, I refer to reports in the media on 27 October 2018 that a ward in the Centenary Hospital for Women and Children was flooded due to plumbing issues. Minister, was a ward in the Centenary Hospital for Women and Children flooded at any stage between July and today and, if so, was it closed?

MS FITZHARRIS: I can confirm that there were some leaks. I would not agree that it was flooded. But certainly in relation to that there are two projects underway in terms of remediation in the Centenary hospital. The actual source of the particular leak that Mrs Jones refers to is, I am advised, a pinhole in the hydraulic pipework and remediation of the paediatric medical ward is ongoing and expected to be completed by late December of this year.

MRS JONES: Minister, due to this leak, did the ward close and/or were children moved into adult wards or other wards, and how many children were affected?

MS FITZHARRIS: Certainly, those rooms that were affected were closed. The advice to me is that all patients and their families were communicated with during this period and what is known as the overflow paediatric ward was opened so that all children could continue to receive the care that they needed, and there was no clinical impact.

Mr Coe: A point of order.

MADAM SPEAKER: A point of order?

Mr Coe: It is on relevance. The specific question that Mrs Jones asked was: how many children were affected? So far the minister has not actually answered that part of the question.

MADAM SPEAKER: Minister, you have another minute.

MS FITZHARRIS: I will take that particular aspect of the question on notice.

MRS DUNNE: Minister, is there building warranty insurance on the building or other insurance for water ingress and, if so, has a claim been made against the policy? And can you clarify: is the medical children's ward still closed?

MS FITZHARRIS: It has been relocated to the paediatric overflow surgery ward. In relation to Mrs Dunne’s first question, I believe that those issues are being worked through at the moment as to whether it could be the subject of an insurance claim. I will also take that aspect of the question on notice.

Government—celebration of International Day of People with Disability

MADAM SPEAKER: I call Ms Cody.

MS CODY: Thank you, Madam Speaker. I know I’m wearing flat shoes; I must be a little bit difficult to see! My question is to the Minister for Disability. Minister, how is the ACT government supporting the celebration of the International Day of People with Disability in December?

MS STEPHEN-SMITH: I thank Ms Cody for her question. As you know, Madam Speaker, International Day of People with Disability, or I-Day, is indeed held on 3 December each year. It is a United Nations-sanctioned day that aims to increase public awareness, understanding and acceptance of people with disability and celebrate their achievements and contributions.

The theme of I-Day this year is “empowering persons with disabilities and ensuring inclusiveness and equality”. According to the United Nations, 2018’s theme focuses on empowering people with disabilities for inclusive, equitable and sustainable development as part of the 2030 agenda for sustainable development.

The ACT government proudly supports individuals and organisations in our community to celebrate I-Day through the I-Day grants. These grants encourage greater community participation for people with disability, showcasing their contributions and achievements, and building ongoing opportunities for people with disability to connect with their communities.

Earlier today I was pleased to announce the successful recipients for 2018: People with Disabilities ACT, Women with Disabilities ACT, Deaf Advocacy, Sports and Recreation ACT, Epilepsy ACT, TADACTION, and the Ainslie and Gorman arts centres. I would like to again congratulate the six successful recipients on their ideas on programs and events that bring together people with disability, community organisations, businesses, individuals and government. I would also like to thank DeafACT, who came out to Regatta Point at lunchtime today to give me a taste of what to expect at their “come and try” event.

The I-Day grants encourage people with disability and the wider community to connect and socialise in a relaxed, inclusive environment and build ongoing connections through art, dance, sport, collaboration and conversation. I encourage everyone to join in I-Day events and activities and take the opportunity to acknowledge and celebrate the contributions, skills and achievements of people with disability.

MS CODY: Minister, what else can individuals and groups do to recognise and celebrate I-Day in Canberra?

MS STEPHEN-SMITH: I thank Ms Cody for the supplementary. In addition to attending one of the events funded through the I-Day grant program people can get involved with any number of events taking place across the territory. I would recommend that everyone check out the event calendar for International Day of People with Disability at www.idpwd.com.au and explore the range of public events happening in the community.

People with Disabilities ACT's annual supplement in the *Canberra Times* also provides a wealth of information for I-Day, highlighting services, activities and issues facing people with a disability and promoting inclusiveness, equality and the empowerment of people with disabilities. The ACT government is proud to support this publication, which this year will be published on 1 December, ahead of I-Day on 3 December.

I would also encourage clubs, schools, community groups, workplaces, businesses and organisations to think about how they can celebrate the day, including by hosting their own event. The IDPWD website includes event planning kits to help organisations plan the perfect activity and include and celebrate people with disability. Whether it is an arts show highlighting the talents of local artists with disability, an expo showcasing local organisations with a connection to disability, a fundraiser for a local organisation that supports people with disability, an event with a guest speaker with lived experience, or an accessible sporting challenge, you can find out more and register your own event on the IDPWD website.

Again I encourage all Canberrans, including members of this place, to start thinking about how they will celebrate I-Day and use the opportunity to reflect on the contribution that people with disability make to our community and on what each of us can do in our daily lives to promote empowerment of people with disability and ensure an inclusive and equal community here in the ACT.

MR PETTERSSON: Minister, what else is the ACT government doing to empower persons with disabilities and ensure inclusiveness and equality?

MS STEPHEN-SMITH: I thank Mr Pettersson for the supplementary question. Empowering persons with disabilities and ensuring inclusiveness and equality is not just the theme I-Day in 2018 but also a priority across government all year round. This government is committed to ensuring that the services and supports we deliver are accessible and inclusive for people with disability, whether they be education, transport, housing or even our national parks.

This morning I talked about how the housing strategy will promote accessible and adaptable housing and what Housing ACT is already doing to support tenants with a disability to lead ordinary lives with dignity.

The Environment, Planning and Sustainable Development Directorate is working with a National Disability Insurance Scheme provider to film and produce a series of virtual reality experiences of nature based activities which will be tailored for people with a disability and others who may not be able to access our parks and reserves directly.

EPSDD is also undertaking a series of accessibility road tests of our parks. Through these projects the directorate will bring both virtual reality and real-life experiences to people with a disability to ensure that they are able to experience and enjoy the wonderful parks and reserves of the ACT that most of us take for granted.

The government has also partnered with the Canberra Business Chamber and the ACT Inclusion Council to provide the inclusion in employment project. The project aims to expand employment opportunities for people with disability in Canberra's private sector. The results so far are even better than the business chamber projected. The ACT government is also committed to ensuring that community groups, small businesses and not-for-profit organisations become more inclusive and welcoming of people with disability, which is why we doubled the funding for the hugely successful disability inclusion grants in the 2018-19 budget.

Canberra Hospital—plumbing issues

MR MILLIGAN: My question is to the Minister for Health and Wellbeing. I refer to media reports on 27 October of plumbing problems in the neurology ward of the Canberra Hospital. Have there been plumbing issues in the neurology ward at any time this year that have caused patients to be moved or receive services elsewhere at any time?

MS FITZHARRIS: Yes, there was a leak; and no, my recollection of the advice—and I will confirm if this is correct—is that, no, there was no impact on clinical areas. There was an impact on a clinical tearoom. I will provide further advice if that is available.

MR MILLIGAN: Minister, have the plumbing problems in the neurology ward added to fall risks for patients and staff?

MS FITZHARRIS: No, I do not believe so.

MRS DUNNE: What were the plumbing problems in the neurology ward? What has it cost to fix them?

MS FITZHARRIS: I will take that question on notice and note, of course, that Canberra Hospital is a significant campus with many buildings with which there will always be a number of issues, which our very capable infrastructure and maintenance teams will address.

Light rail—stage 1 update

MR PETTERSSON: My question is to the Minister for Transport. Minister, with the final rail installation happening on light rail last week and significant progress being made on the light rail stops and landscaping and dynamic testing of the vehicles now taking place, can you further update the Assembly on the construction of light rail stage 1?

MS FITZHARRIS: I thank Mr Pettersson for the question. Last Friday, I was very pleased to help Canberra Metro lay the final piece of light rail track. The installation of the final section of rail is a very significant moment in any rail project, and from here we expect to see more light rail vehicles being tested right along the alignment in the coming weeks.

Mr Wall interjecting—

MADAM SPEAKER: Mr Wall, no interjections, please.

MS FITZHARRIS: Significant progress is being made, and we expect construction to be completed this year. All the light rail vehicles are now in Canberra, over 25 kilometres of concrete track slab has been laid, and tree planting and landscaping are underway across the full length of the alignment. Anyone who travels the route can see the changes day by day, and it is incredibly exciting to see the progress that has been made.

Other works recently completed or currently underway include the following. At the Gungahlin terminus on Hibberson Street, the majority of the civil and landscaping works have been completed. Works are ongoing at all 13 stops. Stop canopies have been installed, with fit-out on the canopies and other finishing works continuing, including the installation of the very beautiful glass panels on each of the stops. Overhead poles and wires have been installed from Gungahlin to Alinga Street and in most of the depot area.

It is clear to all that significant progress is being made on the project. As was released last week, services will start in early 2019. Along with Transport Canberra and Canberra Metro, I look forward to continuing to update the community on the final stages of construction and on the operations of light rail for Canberra.

MR PETTERSSON: Minister, what are the remaining key milestones for the construction of light rail stage 1?

MS FITZHARRIS: As I outlined in my previous answer, a huge amount of progress has been made on the construction of the Gungahlin-to-city light rail project, the first stage of light rail in Canberra. A number of important works are also nearing completion, including the energisation of the final section in the coming weeks.

Energisation of a large portion of the alignment has already occurred. There are five traction power stations along the route with stations 1, 2, 3 and 4 having been both installed and energised. Traction power station 5 has been installed on Mort Street and will soon be energised.

Another key milestone for the project will be the completion of the Mitchell depot. Current works are focused on the internal fit-out of the building, with the administration and maintenance facilities nearing completion. Canberra Metro are expected to relocate to the Mitchell depot in the coming weeks.

Like many Canberrans, the government is very much looking forward to seeing light rail vehicles running along the length of the track. Testing of the vehicles and equipment continues on the northern part of the track and we expect testing to progress southwards to Dickson in coming weeks.

MS ORR: Minister, given the remaining construction and accreditation work, can you update the Assembly on the time frame for the commencement of light rail services?

MS FITZHARRIS: Following completion of construction, Canberra Metro will need to finalise third-party rail accreditation from the Office of the National Rail Safety Regulator and the Independent Certifier before light rail services can begin operations. While this means that we do not have an exact date yet, I can confirm that we are expecting services to begin in early 2019.

The ACT government and Transport Canberra are also working on a plan to design a launch weekend that will give as many Canberrans as possible the chance to ride light rail on the first weekend. We will release details about these plans soon.

As with any complex infrastructure project, there are risks that affect timing, such as weather, the testing and commissioning of rail and signalling systems, and finalising of the stops. This is the biggest, most complex infrastructure project that the ACT has ever seen, and we should not underestimate the significant progress that has been made.

The government is delivering a reliable, efficient and integrated public transport network for Canberra. I would like to take this opportunity to thank Canberra Metro for their hard work and the community for their patience and understanding as construction nears completion. It is clear that significant progress has been made, and I look forward to giving further updates to the community.

Canberra Hospital—pharmacy service

MR PARTON: My question is to the Minister for Health and Wellbeing. Minister, you said recently, in answer to a question on notice, that 30 pharmacy staff at the Canberra Hospital had resigned in the 18 months to 30 June this year. This is 60 per cent of the relevant classifications. You also said that reasons given in exit interviews included income security, a perceived lack of career progression opportunities, and insufficient supervision. The media has reported that pharmacy services were in crisis, with patient safety at risk, pharmacists looking elsewhere, and warnings of industrial action. And on 24 October it reported that finally, after at least a year of negotiations, a deal had been reached.

Minister, why did it take you so long, to the point where there were public warnings about patient safety, concerns about income security, and threats of industrial action, to negotiate suitable employment arrangements with pharmacy staff?

MS FITZHARRIS: I do not negotiate those. They are agreed between pharmacy staff and ACT Health, and now Canberra Health Services. I very much welcomed the conclusion of those negotiations and I very much welcomed the representations made

directly to me by pharmacy staff and by their union. I was very pleased to see that an agreement had been reached. We continue to work with pharmacy staff on the issues that they raised and continue to provide further advancements for them in Canberra Health Services.

MR PARTON: Minister, why must departments in ACT Health be in crisis before you will take action to address the problems they face?

MS FITZHARRIS: They will not.

MRS DUNNE: Minister, have you asked the independent inquiry into culture in ACT Health to examine why you are consistently slow to address concerns of staff that go to the heart of culture and, if not, why not?

MS FITZHARRIS: Mrs Dunne and the Canberra community can see the terms of reference for the independent panel looking into workplace culture, and I would invite her to reacquaint herself with those terms of reference and my previous statements on my expectations of the panel.

Light rail—stage 1 update

MISS C BURCH: My question is to the Minister for Transport. Minister, have you received any advice as to which month in early 2019 fare-paying customers can expect to be on light rail?

MS FITZHARRIS: Yes, I have.

MISS C BURCH: Minister, what is that advice, and how many months of track testing need to take place before these first fee-paying passengers can be on the tram?

MS FITZHARRIS: Certainly, the amount of testing required is that required to meet the requirements of ONRSR, the Office of the National Rail Safety Regulator. That is when accreditation will be received, and that is when full-fee-paying passengers can start riding Canberra's light rail.

MR WALL: Minister, how will you simulate the conditions of the winter months during track testing?

MS FITZHARRIS: As Mr Wall may recall, there has been testing during winter months already.

Canberra—sister city relationships

MS ORR: My question is to the Chief Minister. Chief Minister, can you please update the Assembly on the activities that took place last week to celebrate the 25th anniversary of our sister city relationship with Nara?

MR BARR: I thank Ms Orr for her question. Indeed, 25 years ago, on 26 October 1993, then Chief Minister Rosemary Follett signed the official proclamation for the

ACT government to establish Canberra's sister city relationship with Nara. Since that time, there have been numerous delegations between the two cities, focusing on education, culture and business.

Earlier this month, in the lead-up to the 25th anniversary, I again had the honour of visiting Nara as part of a broader trade mission to Japan and, whilst in Nara, met with Mayor Nakagawa to discuss his upcoming visit to Canberra. Last week, the mayor and an extensive delegation, including more than 50 school students from Nara, arrived in Canberra to celebrate the 25th anniversary.

During his visit, the mayor and his delegation, amongst other things, undertook a ceremonial tree planting at the National Arboretum; attended a reception hosted by the Japanese ambassador; took a tour of the new light rail corridor; attended a last post ceremony at the Australian War Memorial; and enjoyed a lunch here in the Assembly, hosted by you, Madam Speaker.

Finally, on Saturday evening, the mayor and I, and the Nara delegation and about 17,000 Canberrans, attended the 16th annual Canberra Nara candle festival. I am advised that this was a record attendance, of around 17,000 people, which was up 40 per cent on last year's attendance. It was wonderful to see. It was a fantastic evening and a wonderful celebration of Canberra and Nara, indeed, of Australia and Japan.

MS ORR: Chief Minister, are there any upcoming activities planned with our other sister cities?

MR BARR: Yes, there are. This week the mayor of Wellington will be in Canberra. The delegation, led by Mayor Justin Lester, will be discussing a range of issues, including business, tourism, culture and research collaboration. We will also be focusing on re-establishing an aviation connection between our two cities.

Later this week, perhaps on a lighter note, we will be launching a bespoke sister city beer, the Ale of Two Cities, which is a collaboration between Canberra's own BentSpoke and Wellington's Fork and Brewer.

As a follow-up, next month I will be leading our annual delegation to Wellington as part of the third Canberra Week. We will continue to raise the profile of our city in Wellington, support the development of local businesses and foster further knowledge-sharing between the two capitals.

In 2020 we will celebrate the 20th anniversary of our sister city relationship with Beijing. Work has recently commenced on a program of activities to mark this important occasion. I plan to visit Beijing in 2019.

MS CHEYNE: Chief Minister, are you looking at the potential for any new sister city relationships?

MR BARR: We do receive regular approaches to form sister city relationships. There are only so many that we can support. So we are reviewing the guidelines and

requirements for new sister city relationships. Whilst this review continues, it will form the basis for future ACT government policymaking and decisions in relation to entering into any new sister city agreements.

Members might be aware of a longstanding commitment that we have to form such a relationship with Washington DC. During my visit earlier this year as part of then Prime Minister Turnbull's trade delegation and our involvement with the national governors association, the equivalent body to COAG within the US, we did undertake some further discussions with the Mayor of Washington DC and the mayor's international engagement office. During that meeting we of course noted the commonalities between our two city-states and the similar challenges faced by each jurisdiction.

Both cities are of course home to our respective federal governments. Both are subject to a local economy very much engaged in knowledge and service sectors, and both of our governments combine the delivery of city-level municipal governance with some state-level services. As a result we have sought to establish a closer relationship with Washington DC and look at a range of potential partnerships, particularly a collaboration being led by our national institutions with the Smithsonian Institute as a practical example.

Beyond tourism we are also looking at economic development, sustainability, social inclusion and the delivery of government infrastructure. We will progress these discussions and opportunities as this is potentially a very significant economic, social, cultural and political partnership for Canberra into the future. (*Time expired.*)

I understand that, in the absence of Mrs Kikkert and Mr Hanson from question time, there are now no further questions that can be asked. So I ask that all further questions be placed on the notice paper.

Paper

Mr Barr presented the following paper:

Trans-Tasman Mutual Recognition Act, pursuant to section 7—Trans-Tasman Mutual Recognition (NSW Container Deposit Scheme) Endorsement 2018 (No 1)—Notifiable Instrument NI2018-565, dated 12 October 2018.

Official Visitor (Homelessness Services)—annual report 2017-18

Paper and statement by minister

MS BERRY (Ginninderra—Deputy Chief Minister, Minister for Education and Early Childhood Development, Minister for Housing and Suburban Development, Minister for the Prevention of Domestic and Family Violence, Minister for Sport and Recreation and Minister for Women) (3.12): For the information of members, I present the following paper:

Official Visitor Act, pursuant to subsection 17(4)—Annual report 2017-18—Official Visitor (Homelessness Services).

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

Leave granted.

MS BERRY: I am pleased to table today the 2017-18 annual report for the official visitor, homelessness services. Official visitors play a vital role in safeguarding and promoting the interests of vulnerable people in our community who find themselves in difficult circumstances. The official visitor scheme serves as a monitoring and complaints system for entitled persons in visitable places who are dependent on the service provider or on accommodation managers for care and support.

The objective of the official visitor, homelessness services, is to detect and prevent systemic dysfunction that may affect people residing in multi-occupancy supported accommodation homelessness services provided by organisations funded by the territory. Ms Dianne Lucas is currently serving her second three-year term as the official visitor for homelessness services. In this capacity, Ms Lucas visits properties operated by the ACT specialist homelessness services. She is available to talk with people about their experiences of the services and to receive and consider complaints from people experiencing homelessness or people at risk of homelessness who are residing in shared occupancy accommodation services.

As part of the official visitor duties, Ms Lucas makes two scheduled visits a year to each visitable place. In addition to these visits, the official visitor fulfils her role by monitoring and resolving service issues locally, inspecting records, reporting on the standards of programs and properties and providing quarterly reports to me, which are collated into the annual report I present today.

During the year Ms Lucas conducted 33 visits to visitable places providing supported housing to young people, single men, single women, women and children escaping domestic violence, women who are pregnant or with babies and women exiting the Alexander Maconochie Centre. At these visits Ms Lucas talked with 94 clients about their accommodation and any issues they may have had with the service provider.

She facilitated discussions between clients and service providers or raised concerns with service managers and Housing ACT, as required, to clarify service policies and procedures and to secure the early resolution of issues. Ms Lucas has reported that consistently throughout the year clients spoke highly of the support they were receiving and the responsiveness of staff to the diverse needs of people staying in the services. As in previous years, there were no referrals to investigative entities and no systemic failures identified.

I note that in 2017-18 only one issue of concern was raised relating to the accommodation needs of a client with a disability. On this occasion, Ms Lucas facilitated a quick resolution that ensured the client's needs were attended to efficiently and with sensitivity. The low number of complaints is a testament to the quality of services provided by the ACT specialist homelessness sector and their commitment to good practice and meeting human rights standards when addressing the effects of homelessness.

In her report, Ms Lucas commends the supportive environment across the services and the increased confidence of clients in securing better outcomes for themselves. Further, she found that clients are receiving support appropriate to their situations and that the accommodation provided is comfortable and of a good standard.

Papers

Mr Gentleman presented the following paper:

Confiscation of Criminal Assets Act, pursuant to subsection 258(4)—Annual report 2017-2018—ACT Policing—Confiscation of Criminal Assets, dated 9 October 2018.

Mr Rattenbury presented the following paper:

Official Visitor Act, pursuant to subsection 17(4)—Annual Report 2017-18—Mental Health Official Visitors, dated 30 October 2018.

Official Visitor (Disability Services)—annual report 2017-18 Paper and statement by minister

MS STEPHEN-SMITH (Kurrajong—Minister for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Affairs, Minister for Disability, Minister for Children, Youth and Families, Minister for Employment and Workplace Safety, Minister for Government Services and Procurement, Minister for Urban Renewal) (3.17): For the information of members, I present the following paper:

Official Visitor Act, pursuant to subsection 17(4)—Annual Report 2017-18—Official Visitors for Disability Services.

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

Leave granted.

MS STEPHEN-SMITH: I am pleased to table in the Legislative Assembly today the official visitors for disability services annual report for 2017-18. The Official Visitor Act 2012 requires me as the operational minister for the Disability Services Act 1991 to provide to the Legislative Assembly an annual report collating the information received throughout the year from the appointed official visitors.

The role of official visitors is to visit, talk with, receive and consider complaints from, and exercise other functions in relation to persons considered to be entitled persons under the Disability Services Act 1991. Ms Narelle Hargreaves has been reappointed as an official visitor for disability services until the end of August 2019. Ms Mary Durkin has been appointed as the second official visitor for disability services for the same period.

In the current reporting period, the official visitors undertook 204 visits to 144 visitable places and saw 551 residents, exceeding the requirement of one annual visit per place. The official visitor scheme is part of a suite of important oversight and quality assurance mechanisms designed to provide rigorous scrutiny of and support to services, with the goal of ensuring the best possible outcomes for people with disability in the ACT.

These include the formal oversight functions of the Public Advocate, the Disability and Community Services Commissioner and the Human Services Registrar, and informal mechanisms such as advocacy and support through the office for disability and other community advocacy bodies like ADACAS and Advocacy for Inclusion.

The annual report indicates that this network of supports continues to be an effective approach to supporting and protecting vulnerable Canberrans. I note that the official visitor is the only means by which some people who may not be able to make a complaint about poor service receive regular visits from people dedicated to ensuring the individual wellbeing and quality of service for each person with disability living in a visitable place providing disability accommodation.

The report noted that few referrals have been received by the official visitor about the care of people with disabilities in group houses. The Community Services Directorate is working on a communications strategy to boost the profile of the official visitors. I would like to commend the official visitors for undertaking a rolling program of visits to service providers to increase awareness of their role.

The report also notes a positive change as a result of the transition to the NDIS, with people with disability receiving increased supports and better access to the community. In terms of challenges, the official visitor annual report points to particular concerns for younger people living in aged-care facilities. The report also points to complexities over what now constitutes a visitable place and how, in the face of ongoing transitional changes in the disability sector, we can ensure that knowledge of and access to the official visitor is maintained and promoted to people who are considered to be entitled persons.

Legislative amendments to the Disability Services Act 1991 were introduced today to address a number of these issues. The ongoing work of the official visitors for disability services is being supported by the Human Services Registrar, including collaboration with them on how best to address the issues raised in the report. As noted in the annual report, a number of matters raised during the year were addressed with service providers or in collaboration with other oversight bodies. Work is ongoing in relation to administrative and systemic matters, including in the context of implementing the review of the official visitor scheme.

I would like to commend the official visitors on their commitment to ensuring that vulnerable people in Canberra have a voice for their concerns and for the official visitors' actions to remedy systemic issues that affect people with a disability.

Official Visitor (Children and Young People)—annual report 2017-18

Paper and statement by minister

MS STEPHEN-SMITH (Kurrajong—Minister for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Affairs, Minister for Disability, Minister for Children, Youth and Families, Minister for Employment and Workplace Safety, Minister for Government Services and Procurement, Minister for Urban Renewal) (3.21): For the information of members, I present the following paper:

Official Visitor Act, pursuant to subsection 17(4)—Annual Report 2017-18—
Official Visitor (Children and Young People)

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

Leave granted.

MS STEPHEN-SMITH: I am pleased to table the children and young people official visitors annual report for 2017-18. The Official Visitor Act 2012, which became operational in September 2013, requires me as operational minister for the Children and Young People Act to provide the Legislative Assembly with an annual report collated from the information received from the official visitors throughout the year.

Official visitors provide an independent adult who will listen to the concerns of young people in detention or residential care and follow up those concerns with the Community Services Directorate or with me directly. The children and young people official visitors play an important role in the rigorous oversight mechanisms that exist in the ACT to monitor detention places and residential care places. They work alongside other oversight bodies such as the Public Advocate, the Children and Young People Commissioner and the Human Services Registrar. In future the Inspector of Correctional Services will commence their oversight of Bimberi Youth Justice Centre.

The official visitors' key focus is to engage directly with young people and ensure their voices are heard. The official visitors, Ms Narelle Hargreaves and Ms Tracey Whetnall, do this by visiting children and young people in Bimberi Youth Justice Centre and in residential places of care and by being available via telephone if a child or young person in one of these places wishes to speak with an independent adult.

In their reports the official visitors have consistently expressed their satisfaction with the support provided to young people in the Bimberi Youth Justice Centre. In this reporting period the official visitor visited on 52 occasions, essentially one every week in the reporting period. They also note that young people continue to achieve pleasing results and outcomes through the Murrumbidgee Education and Training Centre.

In relation to residential care, the official visitors made 149 visits to 16 residential places of care over 2017-18. The official visitors were pleased with the care provided to children and young people in residential care and highlighted the important role

played by care teams for these children and young people. The official visitors worked closely throughout the year with the ACT Together consortium partners that deliver residential care—Premier Youthworks, child and youth protection services and the Public Advocate’s office—to support children and young people in residential care.

I would like to take this opportunity to thank the children and young people official visitors, Ms Whetnall and Ms Hargreaves, for their continued dedication to providing Canberra’s most vulnerable children and young people with an independent voice.

Language services policy Paper and statement by minister

MR STEEL (Murrumbidgee—Minister for City Services, Minister for Community Services and Facilities, Minister for Multicultural Affairs and Minister for Roads) (3.24): For the information of members, I present the following paper:

ACT Language Services Policy, dated October 2018.

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

Leave granted.

MR STEEL: Thank you for the opportunity to table the ACT language services policy in the Assembly today. Canberra offers great employment and career opportunities, stunning natural surrounds and access to world-class facilities. Our diverse population consists of people with varied experiences and perspectives, all of whom enhance the social and economic fabric of our city. We are a community that embraces and promotes opportunities to build a socially cohesive and inclusive community for all.

Language enables communication, and communication is essential to maintaining connections with friends, family and community and fostering social and economic wellbeing and cultural identity. It enables us to express our feelings, moods and ideas, share information, ask questions and of course access support and assistance.

Understanding, valuing diversity and removing language barriers are key to countering discrimination, reducing social isolation and building community cohesion and belonging. That is why the ACT government is committed to ensuring that all Canberrans who experience challenges communicating in English have the same access to programs, services and information as those who do not have such barriers. This includes our Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community members, people from linguistically diverse communities and people who use Auslan.

The ACT language services policy provides a framework for the ACT government to address language barriers for Canberrans who communicate in a language other than English. The policy demonstrates the ACT government’s priority to continue to be client focused in service delivery and to engage in the use of interpreters when necessary so that clients can effectively access the assistance they need. Just as

importantly, the policy promotes the distribution of information about services and activities in accessible formats for all Canberrans who communicate in a language other than English.

In short, the policy establishes our government's commitment to meeting the communication needs of all members of our community, including those of culturally and linguistically diverse people, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people, migrants, refugees, asylum seekers and people who have limited speech or use sign language.

While this policy focuses on language services, I look forward to hearing about how we can support languages more broadly in the community at the upcoming multicultural summit, to be held on 22 November, and specific actions supporting languages that we can take forward under the multicultural strategy as an outcome of the summit. By removing language barriers, all Canberrans can fully participate socially and economically and be proud to tell all those who listen that Canberra is their home.

Freedom of speech in the workplace

Discussion of matter of public importance

MADAM SPEAKER: I have received letters from Miss C Burch, Ms Cheyne, Ms Cody, Mrs Dunne, Mr Hanson, Mrs Kikkert, Ms Lawder, Ms Lee, Mr Milligan, Ms Orr, Mr Parton and Mr Wall proposing that matters of public importance be submitted to the Assembly. In accordance with standing order 79, I have determined that the matter proposed by Ms Cheyne be submitted to the Assembly, namely:

The importance of freedom of speech in Canberra's workplaces.

MS CHEYNE (Ginninderra) (3.27): I am pleased to rise to speak on this important topic today. Canberra has an economy that, as we all know, is one of the fastest growing in Australia. It has over 27,000 businesses which provide services for a population of over 400,000 people. The landscape for workplaces in the ACT is changing. As we know, Canberra is much more than a city of public servants. Our workforce is distributed across health care and social assistance sectors, education and training, scientific and technical services, retail, construction, accommodation and food services, manufacturing, and many other important industries. Strong economic growth and a rise in the territory's population will persist, and this persistence will continue to drive this change.

This changing landscape lends itself to consideration of why freedom of speech in these workplaces is so important. Despite freedom of expression being one of the cornerstones of a free and democratic society, it remains a fact that in Australia, including in the ACT, there is no legislated right to free speech or expression on which workers can rely to freely and openly discuss work or their employer. Where the health and safety of workers is concerned, this is particularly problematic.

Indeed, in the 2015 case of *Anderson v Thiess*, the full bench of the Fair Work Commission said:

In the employment context, the express terms of the employment contract, employer policies incorporated into or authorised by the employment contract, and the employer's lawful and reasonable directions may also operate to impose significant constraints upon an employee's freedom of expression.

However, the right to freedom of speech and expression is provided for in articles 19 and 20 of the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, to which Australia is a party. Article 19 specifically states that everyone shall have the right to hold opinions without interference and that everyone shall have the right to freedom of expression.

It also states that the exercise of rights to freedom of expression carries with it special duties and responsibilities and may therefore be subject to certain restrictions. However, these restrictions must be provided for by law. For example, it is necessary and acknowledged that, together with a right to freedom of expression, there is also a corresponding need to respect the rights and reputation of others, and for the protection of national security or of public order.

It should be acknowledged that the right to freedom of speech and expression is obviously vitally important, but that right is also not absolute. It carries with it responsibilities that all must be mindful of. Therefore, it is important that in Canberra's workplaces both employers and workers are not just protected by the seven core international human rights treaties but are also aware of them and of their obligations as citizens. This awareness must also extend to industry and employee codes of conduct.

For workers, it is about being aware of their rights and about speaking up when rights and entitlements in the workplace are being adversely affected, while adhering to codes of conduct. Where they are not able to speak, their representatives need to be able to speak for them. For employers, it is about embracing freedom of speech and providing platforms to enable that freedom of speech for their workers, and to set a high standard as workplaces while providing codes of conduct which are workable and conducive to a genuinely democratic society.

To conclude, we have healthy workplaces in the ACT, and continuing to support freedom of speech with everyone—and that is everyone—being aware of their rights and obligations within that is vitally important to ensuring that healthy workplaces continue.

MR WALL (Brindabella) (3.32): It is an interesting choice of topic by the government today, particularly in the ACT, where currently the climate is such that ACT Health employees are too afraid to speak out against workplace culture and bullying for fear of recrimination and the government's refusal to acknowledge that there is a problem. For many, an MPI such as this, addressing the importance of freedom of speech in the workplace, is just galling.

This is most offensive in particular to those employees who have suffered and continue to suffer because of a lack of action taken by the Labor-Greens government

to hear their concerns. It may come as a surprise, but those on this side of the chamber, the Canberra Liberals, actually do support the premise of freedom of speech, not just in the workplace but across the board. In fact, the Liberal Party of Australia as a whole adopts a belief in those most basic of freedoms—the freedom of thought, the freedom of worship, the freedom of speech and the freedom of association.

The bullying and poor workplace culture that makes it impossible for employees to feel safe enough to speak and share their experiences and views extends across the public service. There is a distinct lack of freedom of speech in workplaces in these instances. Currently, this is best demonstrated by ACT Health, where we see employees too afraid to speak out against the culture and bullying in their workplace. ACT Health employees, as we have learnt, are suicidal and are suffering from mental health issues—all as a result of a fear of speaking out in a toxic workplace culture. We have learnt of staff who have been performance managed out of their positions for using their freedom of speech to raise concerns where they exist.

Whilst Health has been in the spotlight in recent times, this poor workplace culture has extended to the Education Directorate and the corrections and disability directorates over many years. And let us not forget the work of our late colleague Steve Doszpot in highlighting the bullying culture that existed within CIT. These have not been addressed by successive Labor and Labor-Greens governments. There have been public statements by ministers and chief ministers stating that there is a zero tolerance approach to bullying in the ACT public service workplace, but the reality does not match the rhetoric. Canberra is a small place, and there is a fear in this town—a fear that if you speak out and share your thoughts, you may be punished.

We have seen, as part of the industrial relations reform agenda of the current government, a fear that if you are an employer in this town and you speak out against a trade union, you will be punished. You will not be awarded government contracts. You will be overlooked for contracts and work and, even worse, you may actually be targeted by those associated with the government and the trade union movement and harassed and bullied if you do not bend the knee to union demands.

The current Labor-Greens government have made it abundantly clear that their intention is to circumvent the laws that are in place in the industrial relations space, particularly the Fair Work Act, and make up their own rules, in conjunction with allowing greater access by trade unions into businesses. These contraventions mean that actual discrimination can occur if you are not a union member or a union affiliated workplace.

The jobs code legislation makes it a requirement for an employer to discriminate between employees on the basis of union membership by generally implementing arrangements for workplace representation that favour union members over non-union members—a clear contravention of the Fair Work Act and, I would say, an impingement on an individual's freedom of speech.

Again, the fact that this subject has been raised by a Labor member in our Assembly today shows the sheer hypocrisy of this government. For us on this side of the

chamber, the MPI is an opportunity to reiterate our core belief in the freedom of thought, worship, speech and association.

I will take this opportunity to acknowledge and pay tribute to the many ACT public service employees who have not experienced fair and just freedom of speech rights in the workplace and who are suffering as a result. This is simply not acceptable. I say to those who have felt in any way intimidated enough to not express their opinion in a workplace and beyond that freedom of speech is the ability to share your opinions and ideas without fear of recrimination or censorship. Those opposite would do well to put into practice this action.

MS CODY (Murrumbidgee) (3.37): I thank Ms Cheyne for bringing this very important matter forward. The right of freedom of speech is one for which we should all advocate. The right of freedom of speech in our workplaces is something that, unfortunately, in some instances we have to continue to fight for. Of course, this right is something I was taught in school with regard to the Eureka rebellion. I know I often talk about the fact that I left school early, but some things that I was taught at school have stuck with me, and the Eureka rebellion was one such thing.

As I am sure many in this chamber know, the Eureka rebellion was instigated by goldminers in Ballarat, Victoria, who in 1854 revolted against the colonial authority. This was the only way these miners felt their voices could be heard. They were sick of being told how much their licences would cost and how much tax they had to pay and all without the opportunity of support or representation. Sound familiar?

To make their point, the miners sewed a new flag, the Eureka flag. The Eureka flag, a long-time symbol of individuals rising against an unfair government, is now sought to be banned in workplaces by the Liberals across the lake. Yes, you heard me correctly, the Liberal Party of Australia. Earlier this year there was a call from Turnbull—no, wait, I mean Morrison. Actually, I am not really sure which Liberal leader it was; we have had a few. But my point is: the Liberals across the lake are going to ban the right of individuals to freedom of speech in some workplaces by banning the Eureka flag. Unbelievable.

Last week we were speaking about the rights of individuals to have their say. We even passed a bill to protect workers in Canberra by ensuring that when the government buys goods or services we engage only ethical providers. Yes, the secure local jobs code is what I am referring to. The Barr Labor government, with Minister Stephen-Smith at the helm, has made a law that enables workers in the ACT to have the right to be protected in their workplaces, to be able to have their say in their workplaces and, most importantly, to be able to be a proud member of a union in their workplaces.

In this workplace I am a proud union member. In some workplaces that sort of talk is banned. We should not allow our workplaces to become some sort of authoritarian dictatorship where people cannot speak up. We know from so many workplace reports that workers being intimidated against speaking up is so often a contributing factor. We know we have a wage theft crisis across Australia and, yet again, people are too scared to speak up. That is a problem.

In the Australia I grew up in, calling your boss a dill was a grand tradition, one that is under threat from the political correctness police in the Liberal Party. It is positively un-Australian. We have also seen aggressive approaches in the commonwealth public service and other places to the expression of views by police employees on social media, outside paid time and not leaking and not being racist or homophobic or bigoted in any way. Thankfully, due to the excellent work of the Community and Public Sector Union and the sensible approach often taken by our courts, disciplinary actions have generally been thrown out. What has not been thrown out is the intimidation by the extreme right-wing thought police.

Canberra should be a place where everyone gets to have their say. If someone wants to call me a dill, they should go for it. I get the average amount of abusive social media commentary for a left-wing female politician—and that is quite a lot. But I would never dream of trying to get someone sacked for it. If only the snowflakes on the right would do the same. I encourage all Canberra employers to back off on policing your employees' thoughts. I encourage all Canberra employees to speak up and support each other—wear a union pin; wave a flag. When you go to work they are buying your labour, not your life.

MS STEPHEN-SMITH (Kurrajong—Minister for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Affairs, Minister for Disability, Minister for Children, Youth and Families, Minister for Employment and Workplace Safety, Minister for Government Services and Procurement, Minister for Urban Renewal) (3.43): I thank Ms Cheyne for bringing the matter of freedom of speech in Canberra's workplaces to the attention of members of the Assembly. The right of freedom of expression in Australian workplaces in a respectful manner is important. The right of workers to have a voice, to be represented and to be heard is paramount to an effective, fair and safe workplace. This is something those opposite and their colleagues in the other place—the current Abbott-Turnbull-Morrison coalition government—do not appear to fully understand.

As a government one of our priorities is workplace safety. This is clear in the important work of WorkSafe ACT; the recent amendments to the Work Health and Safety Act to protect workers' voices; the recently passed secure local jobs bill, which ensures the ACT government contracts only with businesses that uphold the highest ethical and labour standards; and in our willingness to review work health and safety compliance and enforcement, a report of which was released today, to ensure we are keeping up with best practice.

What we see from the Liberals, however, is an ideologically driven crusade against workers, their rights and, unfortunately, their safety. This ideological crusade is typified by the federal coalition government's anti-union Australian Building and Construction Commission, the ABCC. Its singular focus is on stamping out the voice of the workers—a voice that speaks up about safety issues on site, a voice that represents the front line, and a voice that ensures that workers go home safely each day.

The particular voice the ABCC is working so hard to stamp out is the voice of workers' unions. The ABCC and the federal coalition government are obsessed with

union stickers on hard hats, Eureka Stockade flags and union barbecues on worksites, instead of doing their utmost to do better to provide a safe environment for workers.

The Eureka Stockade flag is a great symbol of resistance in our nation—a symbol of solidarity for the goldminers during the rebellion, for shearers during the 1891 strike, for labourers during the green bans, for Gough Whitlam’s supporters on that notorious day in 1975, and now for construction workers on building sites across the country. The flag is a reminder of a worker’s right to organise. It reflects workers’ rights to take collective action, to protect their rights and conditions, to stand by each other and to stand up for their progressive values, values that continue to benefit us all. It is a reminder of the sacrifices that have been made in order to make Australia what it is today. The Eureka flag is a sign of mateship, camaraderie and solidarity. It is not a drain on productivity or a sign of an unsafe workplace.

Attacks on freedom of expression in the workplace, like the attempted crackdown on the Southern Cross, are not merely matters of symbolism; rather, they are the latest volley in the campaign by the Liberals to suppress trade unionism and collective action in this country. It is no secret that the ACT Labor government strongly opposes the intent and application of the ABCC to remove the rights of working people to actively engage with their union representatives to limit workers’ rights to these expressions of free speech.

As I said, the ABCC typifies the Liberals’ ideology that working people should not have a voice. Their agenda is clear across the economy. It is seen in the Australian public service’s draconian social media policies that you mentioned, Madam Assistant Speaker; in the way the commonwealth sits idle while wage theft is rampant and penalty rates are cut for the most vulnerable workers. It is seen in the way, just over 12 months ago, the media was tipped off to a raid on a union office that resulted in nothing but shame for the federal coalition government; and it is seen in this place when those opposite speak time and again against bills that seek solely to benefit workers.

We believe in the right to free speech, whether the voice of the few or the collective voice of the many. We believe consultation and collaboration between workers and employers is a crucial element of improving health and safety performance in the workplace. We will continue to work towards ensuring that workers have their voices heard, that workers have a right to representation and that ACT workers can go home safely at the end of each day.

MR PETTERSSON (Yerrabi) (3.48): I rise to speak about the importance of freedom of speech and association in workplaces, a freedom that is coming under increasing attack from the so-called Liberal Party, the free speech champions of Australia. Just ask them. Workers are under attack for freely choosing to associate with an organisation dedicated to their safety and to fighting for their fair pay. Increasingly we are seeing big business favoured over workers, freedoms trampled and hard-won rights and conditions eroded. This can all be laid at the feet of the Liberal Party.

Freedom of speech is fundamental to our society. But we have seen a crusade by this federal Liberal government, aided and abetted by the local Liberals here, against

freedom of association and freedom of speech. The “fair work building commission” and their friends the Australian Building and Construction Commission are making it harder for working people to associate, express themselves freely and ultimately join their union. To prevent people from unionising is to empower large companies and make it harder for workers to argue for safety changes, for pay rises and for better conditions.

One recent change which, frankly, borders on the ludicrous is the ban on union paraphernalia on construction sites. In what one assumes is a fit of madness, the fair work building commission has banned union stickers. That is right: stickers. It really makes you think how feeble the ideological right wing are when they are scared of a few centimetres of plastic on a hard hat. If you believe in free speech, as the hard right conservatives claim to do, why are you scared of stickers? It goes further than small plastic stickers. It goes to flags and equipment that bears a union logo or anything that could be associated with union activity. Can you believe that, in modern Australia, the Eureka flag is banned on worksites?

The Liberals have been trying this for over a decade now, but this time they are blackmailing companies into complying by threatening to withhold government contracts. Imagine that! A government issuing threats to businesses because they have a good relationship with a union! Is this really modern-day Australia? There will never be justice while the ABCC and fair work building commission exist with the powers they have and the hard right ideological viewpoints they hold. They need to be abolished.

In justifying this limitation on the right to freedom of expression, the building code explanatory statement states:

... the limitation is reasonable, necessary and proportionate in the pursuit of the legitimate policy objective of protecting the rights and freedoms of employees in the building and construction industry to choose to become, or not become, a member of a building association and ensuring that this choice does not impact on an employee’s ability to work on a particular site.

What a joke! It makes no sense. It is not reasonable. It is not necessary. It is not proportionate.

We need a federal government that is more concerned with going after dodgy contractors and bosses who cheap out on safety than going after hardworking Australians. This federal Liberal government have put an enormous amount of money and effort into destroying the union movement, and it shows, with their strange ideas like banning stickers and flags and taking free speech with them in pursuit of it. People have the freedom to associate with groups like unions as they wish, and they should have their fundamental right to express themselves through speech protected, not attacked.

The federal government and its lackeys are attempting to coerce businesses into becoming anti-union, to deny unions their legitimate role in workplaces. They are ideological zealots, convinced that unions are evil and cannot be trusted. But the

history of unions is struggle. It is because of unions that we have our working conditions today, such as sick leave, the eight-hour day, annual leave, maternity leave, safety regulations, a ban on child labour, and a myriad of others. This attempt to smash unions and working people is the clearest demonstration of why we need to change the rules.

MR GENTLEMAN (Brindabella—Minister for the Environment and Heritage, Minister for Planning and Land Management, Minister for Police and Emergency Services and Minister assisting the Chief Minister on Advanced Technology and Space Industries) (3.52): I rise to support this excellent matter of public importance brought forward by Ms Cheyne and to join in the remarks my Labor colleagues have made in this debate.

Often in this place we hear from the Liberals about the importance of freedom of speech, but they seem to go silent when it comes to having this freedom in the workplace. Too often we see workers' freedoms to engage in public debate or share their opinion with others curtailed through workplace contracts. We have seen workers sacked for sharing their views. Yet the supposed bastions of free speech, those opposite—who famously supported the former Attorney-General when he shamefully said that people have the right to be bigots—remain silent as workers' rights are curtailed. Indeed, the very federal Liberal government members who have engaged in the culture wars and undermined our multicultural community through attacks on section 18C of the Racial Discrimination Act on the basis of free speech are the ones that challenge the right of workers to engage in public debate.

When the Federal Court ruled that an immigration department employee was unlawfully sacked for her anonymous tweets, it was the federal Attorney-General, the Abbott-Turnbull-Morrison-Dutton Liberal A-G, Mr Porter, who intervened and appealed the decision to the High Court. There was no criticism from those opposite about this, no impassioned speeches about the defence of citizens to engage in public debate.

The Abbott-Turnbull-Morrison-Dutton-Seselja Liberals have form, of course. It is the Abbott-Turnbull-Morrison-Dutton government that has brought tougher restrictions on federal public servants who engage in the public debate. It is the Abbott-Turnbull-Morrison-Dutton government that has used public contracts and grants to stop non-government agencies engaging in the public debate as well. The corporate sector has followed this lead. We have seen a woman in Tasmania sacked because of a tweet about her rights. Despite these attacks, the warriors on freedom of speech have remained strangely silent. One has to wonder: is it because they have something against workers? Does freedom of speech only apply when convenient for their political needs?

Those opposite had an opportunity to defend workers, but they did not. They are not the friends of ACT workers. They cannot come in here and claim to represent ACT public servants when, time after time, they misrepresent those workers. The Canberra Liberals cannot claim to stand up for ACT workers when they spend so much time in this place attacking workers, attacking ACT public servants. As others have pointed out in this debate, it is the Labor movement, the unions, that have stood

up for workers' rights. The unions have delivered us annual leave, penalty rates, maternity leave, superannuation, equal pay for women, sick leave, redundancy pay, workers compensation, collective bargaining, and unfair dismissal protection. The union movement has also been at the heart of making Australia the country we love today.

I encourage all members to support workers and to support unions. I am proud of my efforts in the union movement and the work that I continue to do in this place as a Labor member to build a more inclusive, vibrant and better Canberra. I commend the MPI to the Assembly.

Discussion concluded.

Adjournment

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

That the Assembly do now adjourn.

Invictus Games Veterans ministers round table ACT Australian of the Year

MR RAMSAY (Ginninderra—Attorney-General, Minister for the Arts and Cultural Events, Minister for Building Quality Improvement, Minister for Business and Regulatory Services and Minister for Seniors and Veterans) (3.56): I rise to speak about my recent trip to the Invictus Games and to take part in the veterans ministers round table.

The Invictus Games is truly an inspiring event. I was fortunate enough to watch two events, in wheelchair basketball and athletics. The wheelchair basketball included fierce and skilful competition between the United Kingdom and the Netherlands, with a nailbiting finish as the UK made a strong comeback in the second half but was not quite able to beat the Dutch. Despite the competition, there was a heartwarming moment which showed the spirit of the games. A British player was knocked out of his wheelchair right under the hoop, and two Dutch players linked arms to protect him to make sure that he was not injured. The Dutch gave up possible advantage in the competition to help a fellow competitor, showing the true spirit of Invictus.

I was privileged to present medals to two Australians in the women's IT7 100 metres final at the athletics. Congratulations to Heidi Joosten on her gold and Alexia Vlahos on her bronze in the event. It was also a pleasure to attend the closing ceremony of the games, which was an amazing event. We celebrated the potential of those who may have been wounded, ill or injured, and their unconquerable spirit. The moving haka by the New Zealand team for George Nepata, the first tetraplegic competitor, on receipt of the exceptional performance award, was a sight to see and to hear. Just as emotional was the embrace by Paul Guest of Edwin Vermetten after Edwin's award of the "above and beyond" award for his meritable actions on the wheelchair tennis court.

All of the competitors showed that they are truly the masters of their feet and the captains of their soul.

The veterans ministers' round table also occurred that weekend, to time with the games. We discussed the need for support for those transitioning out of the defence force, including which groups may need a piece of extra assistance. The need for robust data to help guide decision making was discussed. As a group we endorsed the need for a census question to identify those who have served.

Importantly, the group committed to continue collaboration and to do further analysis to lead to the harmonisation of state-based concessions available to veterans, as a veteran serves their country, not their state or territory. We also committed to working on grants programs to make them more accessible to organisations supporting veterans, which are often staffed by volunteers.

The veterans ministers at both levels of government are working closely together, sharing ideas and programs to ensure that we are best supporting those who are serving or who have served in the ADF.

Finally, on a different topic I want to pay tribute today to the Canberrans who were honoured in last night's ACT Australian of the Year awards. It is a wonderful recognition of all of those who are nominated, of the 16 finalists and, of course, of the four category winners.

Today I particularly want to acknowledge the winner of the ACT Senior Australian of the Year award, Dr Sue Packer. Like many Canberrans, I have had the privilege of working with Sue over a number of years in many ways. In my previous role I had the joy of seeing Sue's passion, compassion and insight firsthand as she served as the patron of Uniting Care Kippax's NEWPIN program, and also of the Uniting Care Kippax Christmas Care appeal. I was honoured to work alongside Sue as part of Anti-Poverty Week. Sue is tireless and fearless in her advocacy. She brings a depth of wisdom to all that she does. The award of ACT Senior Australian of the Year is a very fitting tribute to her ongoing dedication to making this city, and indeed this world, a better place.

ACT Boccia

MS J BURCH (Brindabella) (4.00): I rise tonight to speak on ACT Boccia. For those not familiar with the sport, boccia is a type of lawn bowls that has been adopted for people with a disability. It is a sport which is played at Paralympic level, and it is a sport which people with a disability here in the ACT have a proud and successful history of competing in.

That is why I am very pleased indeed to have been able to work with the ACT boccia team closely over the recent months to secure funding from the government to cover some of the costs of two of the players on the team to represent our territory at the boccia nationals this month. The ACT boccia team has been successful in New Zealand, with the team being awarded a silver medal after a very tough competition.

An ACT local young lad, Dylan Schwarz, was awarded a bronze medal in an individual class.

I have been pleased to meet with and support the team, and especially to work closely with the president of ACT Boccia, Ms Corena Harrison, in the lead-up to this competition. Corena herself achieved a gold medal at the 2016 national titles, and has been selected in the emerging Tokyo 2020 Paralympic team. Corena has received financial support from the Layne Beachley Aim for the Stars scholarships, reflecting her passion and her skill for playing boccia.

Joining Corena in New Zealand were Dylan Schwarz, a young man who attends Alfred Deakin High and has cerebral palsy; and Mohgamat Hendricks, who has a spinal injury as a result of a motor vehicle accident. It was Dylan's first time representing the ACT, and I would say that coming home with an individual bronze is an indication of his interest and his skill in the game. For Mohgamat, it was the second time he was able to represent our territory. We cannot forget Barry Yesberg, who travelled to New Zealand with the team as the coach. He has been the coach of ACT boccia for the past six years. I want to thank Barry for the efforts that he makes for his team.

Each time I have met with ACT Boccia, I have been inspired by their passion for and commitment to the sport. It is especially important to reflect on how this sport is opening up opportunities for social engagement and on the pride and dignity which comes from their success and their achievements. Boccia is a fantastic game which opens up many opportunities for people with a disability to share in the love of sport. It provides opportunities for social engagement. I am very pleased to have been able to assist this team and their successful tour of New Zealand.

All members of the ACT community should feel very proud of the success of ACT Boccia. On behalf of the ACT government and all in this place, I heartily congratulate Corena, Dylan, Mohgamat and Barry for their outstanding work.

Robogals

MS CHEYNE (Ginninderra) (4.04): Women are constantly advocating for social, political and economic equality without their gender becoming a barrier to success. One professional field still largely dominated by men is engineering and technology. Canberra's Morgan Marshall is on a mission to change that. In late September, I attended the Robogals Asia Pacific SINE 2018 awards and 10th anniversary celebration at the National Museum, on behalf of the minister for education. We celebrated the achievements of Robogals' Asia Pacific chapters and volunteers and 10 years of Robogals as an organisation.

It was exciting and heartening to see Robogals Canberra not only win chapter of the year and best initiative awards but that its chapter's outgoing president, Morgan Marshall, was named "legend of Robogals", the highest honour for Robogals volunteers. I would like to extend a big congratulations to the whole Robogals Canberra team on their hard work and dedication in inspiring and engaging young girls who are interested in engineering and technology.

Robogals was founded in 2008 and is solely run by students. The organisation's main goal is to inspire women to study engineering and technology through engaging in workshops. These workshops are mainly targeted at girls who lack confidence in STEM subjects—girls who do not think they will like these subjects or would be good at these subjects due to their gender. Thanks to Robogals, many young women now feel more comfortable and confident in speaking out, taking the lead and exploring STEM.

Morgan has been president of Robogals Canberra for two years, and her initiative, enthusiasm and passion have made it one of ANU's fastest growing clubs. Her meaningful contributions have allowed her to engage new volunteers, schools, teachers, industry stakeholders and community partners, and develop a volunteer empowerment program. Morgan's hard work with Robogals, ANU and in the Canberra community has also been acknowledged more broadly, with her being awarded runner-up Young Canberra Citizen of the Year in 2018.

Introducing STEM students like Morgan to girls at a young age ensures that young women pursuing these subjects have important female role models. We know an existing lack of female role models in these professional and academic fields has been linked to a low uptake of students from minorities, including women. You cannot be what you cannot see.

In Australia alone, women make up 28 per cent of the STEM workforce, and only 14 per cent of the engineering workforce. By closing the gender disparity gap, women will be able to generate a fairer income. Gender and racial diversity in the workforce foster increased problem solving, producing better business management. It is a win-win situation, as I am sure you will agree, Madam Assistant Speaker.

Morgan Marshall is just one woman paving the way for other young women in STEM across Australia. I ask the Assembly to join me in congratulating her on her impressive efforts, as well as the efforts of everyone involved with Canberra Robogals. This is an exceptional team of young women who have displayed excellence in their field, proving that women can succeed in any industry.

ACT Emergency Services Agency—open day

MR GENTLEMAN (Brindabella—Minister for the Environment and Heritage, Minister for Planning and Land Management, Minister for Police and Emergency Services and Minister assisting the Chief Minister on Advanced Technology and Space Industries) (4.07), in reply: I rise to pay tribute to our Emergency Services Agency, in particular for our most recent ESA open day, held out at Fairbairn on Sunday, and pay tribute to the hardworking staff and volunteers of the ESA for the work they continue to do, but particularly in the lead-up to the open day.

Last year's open day was a big success, with over 5,000 attendees, and, thanks to the hard work, this year's open day was even bigger and better. I understand we had 6,000 attendees at the open day. The crowd poured in, from an early start at 10 o'clock, to engage with our wonderful world of emergency services. Each of the

four services was there, along with ACT parks and conservation. ACT Policing and White Ribbon also had displays on site. In addition to learning about the work of our different emergency services, the day provided an opportunity to learn about bushfire preparedness for the 2018 bushfire season. The significant organisation and effort that went into the event shows the great strength and teamwork within the organisation. I am aware that hours went into the planning, which started around six months ago.

Of course, the ACT government recognises that this significant event could not be achieved without the volunteers and staff committing time, energy and passion to what they do every day. As Minister for Police and Emergency Services, I want to pay tribute and tell you how proud we all are of the work you do. The Canberra community could not be prouder of the work that you do as well. As we go into the bushfire season, it is more important than ever that we do all that we can to engage with our community and assist them to build resilience to bushfire, storm and flood. The open day is a valuable opportunity to showcase and celebrate the hard work that ESA personnel do in relation to preparing for the season.

On top of that, I refer to the volunteer work by staff and volunteers which started last week, to doorknock 5,000 Canberra homes to provide friendly advice about being prepared for bushfire and other emergencies. We started off in Campbell, which is only a couple of minutes from the city. It contains one of the hundreds of streets that are being doorknocked in this bushfire season. Properties in a bushfire-prone area, like homes in the Campbell area, are being targeted as they are at a higher risk of being impacted by bushfire due to their close proximity to the bush or grasslands.

Of course, Canberra is not new to bushfires, but we want people to be more aware of this tinder-dry condition in the ACT as we lead up to the season. It is as bad as it was in 2003, and the emergency services are more prepared than ever before. However, having the community prepared for bushfires is a shared responsibility as well. A very clear message will be delivered to residents during the doorknock: to give you and your property the best chance of survival, you need to seriously prepare and plan ahead. I encourage all Canberra residents to make a bushfire survival plan. There are only four simple steps that could save your life, or, indeed, the lives of your family and friends. Even if you are not in a bushfire-prone area, you are more likely to work or travel with or know someone who lives in a high-risk area.

I want to thank the emergency services volunteers and staff who participated in the doorknock. Your dedication to helping build resilience within our community is invaluable. For those wanting more information on bushfire-prone areas and getting ready for emergencies, please visit the emergency services website at www.esa.gov.au and download your bushfire preparedness plan.

Question resolved in the affirmative.

The Assembly adjourned at 4.12 pm.