



Debates

WEEKLY HANSARD

Legislative Assembly for the ACT

NINTH ASSEMBLY

31 OCTOBER 2018

www.hansard.act.gov.au

Wednesday, 31 October 2018

Independent Integrity Commission 2018—Select Committee	4497
Justice and Community Safety—Standing Committee.....	4500
Leave of absence.....	4502
Breastmilk bank	4502
Mental health	4520
Tharwa bridge	4537
Questions without notice:	
Taxation—commercial property rates	4542
Public housing—renewal program	4544
Housing—affordability.....	4546
Domestic and family violence—services	4546
Public housing—renewal program	4548
Ginninderry—environmental impact statement	4548
Ginninderry—environmental impact statement	4550
Roads—resurfacing	4550
ACT Health—public interest disclosure.....	4552
Mental health—occupational violence	4553
Taxis—licences	4554
Aboriginals and Torres Strait Islanders—police engagement.....	4555
Taxis—government assistance	4557
Transport—MyWay agents	4559
Gambling—harm minimisation measures	4559
Supplementary answer to question without notice:	
Ginninderry—environmental impact statement	4561
Single-use plastics.....	4562
Commercial property rates.....	4577
Recreational vehicle tourism.....	4586
Domestic Animals (Dangerous Dogs) Amendment Bill 2018	4593
Justice and Community Safety—Standing Committee.....	4596
Adjournment:	
Namadgi National Park	4596
Sport—Gungahlin Jets.....	4598
ACT Telangana Association.....	4599
Durga Puja	4599
International Day of the Girl Child.....	4601
National Children’s Week	4602
Hackett Community Association.....	4602
Belconnen showcase.....	4603

Wednesday, 31 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.

Independent Integrity Commission 2018—Select Committee Report

MR RATTENBURY (Kurrajong) (10.00): Pursuant to order of the Assembly of 6 June 2018, I present the following paper:

Independent Integrity Commission 2018—Select Committee—Report—*Inquiry into the establishment of an integrity commission for the ACT*, dated 30 October 2018, together with a copy of the relevant minutes of proceedings.

I move:

That the report be noted.

This committee was a reconstitution of the previous committee and it was formed to look at the two bills that had been presented. We had the bill that was tabled by Mr Coe and then the exposure draft circulated by Mr Barr on behalf of the government. The committee did constitute the same members as last time, with me as the chair, Ms Lee as the deputy chair, Mr Steel and Ms Cody, and then because of Mrs Jones being on leave Mrs Dunne took her place on the committee this time. The key question before the committee was having two bills with extensive text in them, and one of the key questions was what recommendation we should make.

I was very encouraged by the fact that in the hearings Mr Tony Harris, the former Auditor-General of New South Wales, told the committee that many features of both pieces of legislation are “state of the art” and that the ACT was on the verge of putting up the best integrity legislation in the country. I think it was very reassuring to the committee that someone who had been involved in the process previously and had some very strong views on these matters had looked at both bills and felt that they were both of such quality.

Ultimately, the committee did have to form a view. The committee noted that the bill and the exposure draft contain many similarities, with some provisions being identical and many others containing only minor differences. The committee understood that in both cases the drafting instructions largely try to give effect to the recommendations of the previous committee.

Where the bill and the exposure draft differed, the committee made comparisons. On some occasions the committee preferred the drafting in the bill; in others, the exposure draft. In some instances the committee decided that neither approach was ideal and recommended an alternative approach. With two worthy pieces of work

before it, the committee had to make a decision on what would be the most effective way for the Assembly to proceed. The committee was not attracted to a process where two pieces of legislation would be advanced simultaneously, as that would raise the potential for confusion and inadvertent effects from hurriedly drafted amendments.

In choosing which option to select, an important consideration for the committee was that the exposure draft is approximately 120 pages longer than the bill. This additional content largely reflects the results of internal consultation with various agencies of government that is not available in drafting a private member's bill. While the committee recommended some changes to that content, the committee believes that the bulk of the exposure draft's additional content has value and should be preserved. From a practical viewpoint, we believe it is easier to work from the exposure draft and make changes where necessary than it is to insert substantial amounts of additional content into the bill.

Accordingly, the committee did recommend that the Assembly should work with the exposure draft and not the bill, and that is covered in the first couple of recommendations. The committee then did consider the issues of process around this, given that there is considerable impetus and community expectation that the legislation be done this year. In recommendation 3 the committee has made some procedural recommendations which could enable a bill to be passed during the final sitting week of this year. That will require that the government circulate a draft before the sitting week that would be provided to the scrutiny of bills committee and also to all the parties in this place and that we have some degree of, I guess, pre-discussion or pre-negotiation so that we can bring a largely completed bill to the chamber to enable us to suspend standing orders and do the legislation in one week.

The committee did also note the other possibility of having an additional sitting day, should the Assembly prefer that. We lay those suggestions out as recommendations to the Assembly. Others may have other ideas.

In terms of key recommendations, overall the recommendations are largely what I might describe as technical or in the detail. The committee identified some areas where we have invited the government and the parliamentary drafters and their advisers to further consider matters that we felt were perhaps unclear or might warrant a little further examination, and largely have made recommendations in substance as we seek to compare the two pieces of legislation and also the New South Wales legislation, which was certainly the foundation that the original committee saw as being a key basis for ACT legislation.

I will touch on a couple of the other recommendations that may be of interest to members. When it comes to who would be eligible to be appointed the commissioner, the committee did form the view that the exposure draft was too narrow in only recommending that former judges be appointed and has recommended that we take a broader approach, where someone who is qualified as an Australian legal practitioner for at least 10 years would also be considered appropriate. The committee felt that that was a suitable length of experience, whilst opening the field up to a greater range of appointments.

A majority of the committee has recommended the definition of the public officials who can be covered by the integrity commission should also include the judiciary and judicial officers. This has been a point of some contention, considering issues around the separation of powers, but the committee was clear in its deliberations that this is not about breaching the separation of powers but that the integrity commission will have more powers than the judicial commission to make an investigation but ultimately not decide a finding of guilt nor the punishment, but simply be the investigatory body.

The committee also gave some consideration to the issue of confidentiality of complaints, whether, when somebody lodges a complaint with the integrity commission, the integrity commission will then conduct its investigation confidentially in the first instance before deciding whether to go to a public hearing. There was a question of whether we should require the complainant to in fact remain confidential. The committee ultimately resolved that this was impractical and that there was not a way one could do it but that we do pick up provisions from the New South Wales legislation which remove some of the protections available to complainants, should they decide to themselves publicly disclose that they have made a complaint. And that goes to issues such as defamation and the like.

The committee did spend some time considering the issue of the relationship between the ACT's various integrity agencies, and there was a very clear view in the committee that, whilst the integrity commission will have pre-eminent powers when it comes to investigating matters of corruption, other agencies play important roles; that there should be very clear relationships between those agencies; that we would expect that MOUs would be established; and that there should be a high degree of cooperation where matters are passed between agencies, depending on who is considered to be the most appropriate to investigate it. Whilst that seeks to not compromise the independence of agencies such as the Auditor-General and others—the Ombudsman—we think that that will be a way to ensure there are no gaps but also no duplication.

The issue of public hearings is one that has attracted considerable discussion, it would be fair to say. The committee ultimately formed the view that the balance in the current exposure draft is the right balance, where the test would be one of public interest and seeking to draw the balance between people's right to privacy and protection of reputation but at the same time recognising the clear public interest in having some degree of public scrutiny and visibility of the hearings process.

I will not speak any further to the report. I think it is largely self-explanatory. The report overall is a unanimous report. But I do note that there are, I think, four or five places where individual members of the committee have made some footnotes where there was not complete agreement in the committee. But overall the committee has formed a unanimous report.

I would like to simply conclude by thanking my colleagues on the committee. It has been a very constructive and thoughtful process. It is complex legislation. There is a lot of it, particularly having to compare two bills. But I think the committee worked in

a very collaborative way. I think members will find, when they read the report, that it is very focused on the policy content. I welcome the process which we went through.

Finally, I should thank our committee secretary, Hamish Finlay. In my earlier comments I said that this was a very complex piece of work to work through, and Hamish did an excellent job in supporting the committee to identify the areas that we needed to focus on and was very patient in redrafting and working with us as we sought to resolve matters that were quite detailed. With that, I commend the report to the Assembly.

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

Justice and Community Safety—Standing Committee Correction to record

MS LEE (Kurrajong) (10.12), by leave: I want to correct the record on something that I said yesterday. In speaking in my role as a committee member on the extension of the CTP inquiry, I said there were more than 60 submissions from organisations and more than 15 from individuals. I got the numbers confused; it should be more than 15 from organisations and 60 from individuals.

Report 3

MS LEE (Kurrajong) (10.12): I present the following report:

Justice and Community Safety—Standing Committee—Report 3—*Report on inquiry into the Crimes (Consent) Amendment Bill 2018*, dated 31 October 2018, together with a copy of the extracts of the relevant minutes of proceedings.

This is the first bill in this term referred by the scrutiny of bills committee to a standing committee for inquiry. I acknowledge Ms Le Couteur, who tabled this bill, and the Human Rights Commission, in the first instance, who raised some issues which formed a big part of the scrutiny of bills committee's comments on this bill. It became clear very early on that the referral for committee inquiry was the right way to proceed with debate on this bill.

The issue of consent is one that is currently very topical, with a lot of public debate around the world. And it is no different in the ACT. Given the topical and technical nature of the inquiry, the committee commenced with obtaining in-camera evidence from Ms Le Couteur and the ACT Bar Association to assist in formulating the terms of inquiry. I thank Ms Le Couteur and Mr Archer of the ACT Bar Association for assisting the committee with this task.

The committee received 28 submissions and held three public hearings at which 19 witnesses appeared. In terms of the evidence, the report broadly categorised them into the legal practitioner bodies and the community organisations. For ease of structure in the report, we did include the Human Rights Commission in the legal practitioner bodies, although, of course, we acknowledge that the Human Rights Commission is much more than that.

Many of the submissions made by the community organisations were clear that the ACT is the only jurisdiction currently not to have a positive definition of consent in our legislation and that this did not reflect the community accepted standard that yes means yes. It was submitted that a positive definition of consent should be based on a free and voluntary agreement to engage in sexual activity. The current legislation in the ACT defines consent by what negates it: that is, the factors that give rise to determining when consent did not exist.

Submissions and evidence from legal practitioner bodies clarified the position in the ACT that, whilst we do not have a positive definition of consent in our legislation, the reason for that is that consent by its very nature means free and voluntary and the absence of this means there is no consent. The committee also received evidence that the common law had developed greatly in the area of consent in the ACT and that, whilst the statutory definition may not have a positive definition, the current law does reflect the broad community standard of consent being a free and voluntary agreement to engage in sexual activity.

It became clear in the submissions and the subsequent evidence we received from the legal practitioner bodies that, whilst the intent of the bill was acknowledged, there were some flaws in the drafting, essentially conflating two distinct aspects of consent: first, that the victim actually consented; and second, whether the defendant knew or was reckless as to the victim's non-consent. This conflation raised a significant problem in the risk of essentially removing the common law defence of honest mistake and flipping the onus of proof to the high level of the defendant being satisfied on an objective standard that consent was given.

The committee carefully considered the evidence from all witnesses in balancing the need to ensure that our laws reflect our community standards, on the one hand, and that we are not inadvertently infringing on a fundamental right of innocence until proven guilty and a prosecution having the onus of proof beyond a reasonable doubt in criminal matters, on the other.

The committee also noted the current New South Wales Law Reform Commission inquiry into the issue of consent in response to the controversial case of Lazarus and that the commission is currently seeking submissions and is due to report next year. It was submitted by a number of witnesses, including Ms Le Couteur and the Attorney-General, that it would be prudent to await the findings of the New South Wales Law Reform Commission's inquiry. The committee supports this approach.

As members will note, however, the report does not stop at this one recommendation. The committee acknowledges the submissions received from the Canberra legal fraternity, the Canberra community sector and the ACT Human Rights Commission, and believes it is important that the report consider and make findings based on evidence we received from the Canberra community.

Accordingly, whilst we acknowledge that legislative reforms through this chamber should await the New South Wales Law Reform Commission findings, there are other core considerations and factors we have found which the committee hopes will be

useful in ongoing discussions as we proceed with debate on this important area of reform.

Another issue that was very clear in all submissions, and accepted and supported by the committee, is that a change in the law alone will not bring about broad cultural and attitudinal changes in the way society views consent. It is essential that there be support for education programs, especially targeted at young people, to ensure that there is broad community understanding of consent and what society deems to be acceptable behaviour in sexual relationships.

As chair, I acknowledge and thank all committee members in working together on this important inquiry. I thank Ms Lawder and Mr Steel, who were with us at the beginning, before the committee membership changed. I thank Mr Pettersson, who had the hard job of picking up halfway through some technical issues when he joined us. And I thank Ms Cody, who, like me, was able to see this inquiry through from beginning to end.

On behalf of the committee, I thank everyone who made submissions and appeared before the committee to give evidence. Given the technical nature of the issues that were raised, the committee was very grateful for the expertise and experience of everyone who contributed to our understanding of this important issue. I also thank our committee secretary, Andrew Snedden, and the secretarial staff for their dedication and hard work in combing through hundreds of pages of *Hansard* to prepare this report.

I commend the report to the Assembly.

I move:

That the report be noted.

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

Leave of absence

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

That leave of absence be granted to Mr Hanson for today's sitting for family reasons.

Breastmilk bank

MS CHEYNE (Ginninderra) (10.19): I move:

That this Assembly:

(1) notes that breastfeeding is the healthiest start for infants and that breast milk:

(a) has a nutritional value uniquely matched to the needs of babies;

- (b) contains nutrients essential for the development of children and their immunity; and
 - (c) is recommended by the National Health and Medical Research Council and the World Health Organisation as the exclusive nutrition source until an infant is six months of age;
- (2) acknowledges that the decision not to breastfeed is not always a choice given some women encounter problems with lactation and milk supply, including:
- (a) delayed lactation due to a premature birth;
 - (b) an insufficient supply of milk;
 - (c) a baby's inability to suckle; and
 - (d) separation from their newly-born child due to illness;
- (3) notes:
- (a) the value of mothers who have an additional supply of breast milk donating their milk to address the issues outlined at (2);
 - (i) the benefits to mothers who donate breast milk;
 - (b) that milk banks facilitate access to donor milk;
 - (c) the success of official milk banks in other jurisdictions in Australia and throughout the world; and
 - (d) that feedback as part of the consultation on the Australian National Breastfeeding Strategy (not yet finalised) stressed promoting increased access to breast milk and milk banks;
- (4) notes that the Centenary Hospital for Women and Children receives a supply of donor breast milk in situations limited to assisting mothers and their babies who are premature or unwell and there is not enough expressed milk, and that:
- (a) every effort is made to use the mother's milk in preference to donor milk;
 - (b) it is the baby's parent's decision/s alone in deciding whether the baby will receive donor milk;
 - (c) information is provided to assist parents in making decisions whether to consent to receiving donor milk;
 - (d) mothers who donate their milk are strictly screened; and
 - (e) milk is pasteurised to limit risk of infection;
- (5) also notes that:
- (a) milk banks can have a role beyond assisting in neo-natal settings;
 - (b) there is no official milk bank to supply milk or donate to in the ACT;
 - (c) the current supply of donor milk to the Centenary Hospital for Women and Children is from the Mothers' Milk Bank charity which operates from Tweed Heads, New South Wales; and
 - (d) informal milk banks exist in the ACT region where donors and their milk may not be screened; and

- (6) calls on the ACT Government to investigate the feasibility of establishing an official milk bank in the ACT and/or partnering with neighbouring jurisdictions:
- (a) to give ACT region women an opportunity to donate; and
 - (b) to supply breast milk to babies in and out of a hospital setting.

Madam Speaker, let me share Emma's story. More than a year ago Emma and her husband, Matt, were shocked to discover they were expecting triplets. Fast forward several months and their three youngest daughters—Aleisha, Eloise and Maddilyn—were delivered by emergency caesarean. Emma ended up in emergency surgery for 4½ hours and she lost 4½ litres of blood. Thankfully, Emma was okay, but after surgery when she tried expressing milk she could not.

For parents with premature or ill babies and not enough expressed milk available, the Centenary Hospital for Women and Children has available a supply of donor breastmilk received from interstate charity Mothers' Milk Bank. That milk is screened and it is the parents' choice and their choice alone as to whether they wish to receive a supply of donor milk for their child. They are given information and support.

As a mother of three other children and already very passionate about breastfeeding, being able to access the donor milk at the hospital was a huge weight off Emma's shoulders. As Emma says:

I just wanted the best start for them. Someone else was able to give that to my babies. I knew that milk was safe.

Initially Emma was grateful to feed all three girls with donor breastmilk, but the hospital's supply of breastmilk is very limited. As the supply was cut back, Emma had to prioritise her smallest baby, Maddilyn. Before long, the hospital was unable to provide Emma's daughters with any donor milk, but three babies still needed to be fed. With her own now limited supply, Emma was able to breastfeed Maddilyn. What was left over was given to her other two babies and had to be supplemented with formula.

Study upon study reinforces the benefits of breastmilk for babies. Breastmilk has a nutritional value uniquely matched to the needs of infants and contains nutrients essential for the development of children and their immunity. In fact, the National Health and Medical Research Council and the World Health Organisation recommend breastmilk as an infant's exclusive nutrition source until six months of age.

But, as is clear in stories like Emma's, the decision to breastfeed or not is not always a choice. Some women encounter problems with lactation and milk supply. This can include delayed lactation due to the premature birth of their child or an insufficient supply of milk, and it can include the separation of a mother from her newly born child due to illness. This can occur long after and out of a hospital setting. It can be scary, it can be hard and it can be heartbreaking for mothers, like Zoe, who face a low milk supply.

Zoe's baby was losing weight, so her milk needed to be supplemented with formula. She tried every supplement to increase her supply of milk, pumping every three hours for 12 months to get as much as she could. Zoe said she would have loved the option of donor milk in hospital.

While some parents face circumstances affecting lactation and supply, other parents produce more milk than they need for their infant. They want their breastmilk to be used to benefit another family. But at the moment, without a facility, some parents have difficulty doing so and the effects are not insignificant.

One mother is Jordanna. Jordanna's baby was rushed to the neonatal intensive care unit. Luckily, Jordanna had been storing her colostrum throughout her pregnancy and was able to feed her child throughout this period. When Jordanna found herself with more breastmilk than was necessary and wanted to donate the excess supply to other vulnerable babies at the hospital she was not able to, as there are no screening facilities in Canberra. Jordanna threw the leftover colostrum away. She described throwing away the leftover colostrum as devastating.

Another parent is Kat. Kat lost her firstborn son during childbirth. Kat wanted to donate her breastmilk because, as she explained:

I wanted to do something kind within our darkest hours.

Without a milk bank, she was not able to do this.

Amelia would also have liked to honour her beautiful child with a donation. As she said:

It would have been a positive way to acknowledge the existence of my daughter while also helping another baby and family in need.

But she did not get the chance.

Without a formal opportunity, a formal, physical location for donations and receipts to take place, parents across the ACT have been taking things into their own hands. Informal peer-to-peer sharing arrangements exist. Some of these are between friends, some between strangers. Some are facilitated by social media.

One parent shared with me that she was a surrogate for a couple in Sydney and that that couple chose to use formula exclusively to feed their baby. As a result, this surrogate mother had a baby's worth of milk but no baby, so she informally donated some of this milk to other families. Janelle, the mother of two premature babies, has relied on private donations like this. Janelle has described how scary it is not knowing when and where the next supply of milk is coming from.

Nina's daughter, Alex, spent four days in the neonatal intensive care unit as well as the special care unit at the Canberra Hospital. Nina expressed milk to feed Alex via tube but could not express enough to meet Alex's needs. Donor milk through the

hospital was not available. Feeling desperate, Nina's friends pumped with her at the hospital and Nina pretended the milk was hers. One friend even snuck in an esky full of expressed milk to the hospital and hid it in a fridge.

These peer-to-peer arrangements work well. I have had many parents express to me how grateful they have been to donate and to receive and for the relationships they have formed in Canberra as a result. But many have also acknowledged the issues with the approach as it currently stands—there is no central location; there is no screening of the donator or their milk, which would add that extra layer of comfort or peace of mind; there is no storage; there is no regulation; and tragically, like with just a few of the examples I mentioned earlier, some parents are not able to get in touch with others in time, whether it is to donate or to receive.

There is clearly a gap and there is clearly a solution. That solution is a milk bank—a physical location and organisation that collects, screens and dispenses donated breastmilk which is pasteurised to limit the risk of infection; a space which regulates the donation of milk from one family to another; a place where donors are not pressured into giving away breastmilk and nor are they paid for it.

You do not have to look far to see the success of milk banks elsewhere. Mothers' Milk Bank is one of five official milk banks operating across other jurisdictions in Australia. But when we turn our attention overseas, there is a significant jump in numbers. There are more than 200 milk banks across Europe: 36 in France, 30 in Italy, 27 in Sweden, and 17 in the United Kingdom. Another 13 milk banks are active in the Human Milk Banking Association of North America, which includes the US and Canada, and, there are a staggering 200-plus milk banks in Brazil alone.

Brazil has the largest network of breastmilk banks in the world. According to UNICEF, in 2012 Brazil reached millennium development goal 4—reducing the under-five mortality rate by two-thirds, three years ahead of the country's target. Milk banks were an important pillar in reaching this milestone. In my view, it is time the ACT added to the number of milk bank in the world.

I have been very deliberate in what I have called on the ACT government to do today. It is apparent to me that ACT parents wish to donate and to receive breastmilk, both in and out of the hospital setting, and I absolutely want to see that happen and in a more formal way. But I recognise that how that happens requires investigation. It may be appropriate for a milk bank to be in the ACT; it may be appropriate for us to partner with another jurisdiction instead. An appropriate model might take a form none of us has yet envisaged. Regardless, the feasibility must be investigated.

I urge members here to support this motion today for parents like Emma, like Zoe, like Jordanna, like Kat, like Amelia, like Janelle and like Nina. I commend the motion to the Assembly.

MRS JONES (Murrumbidgee) (10.29): It is great to be back in the chamber and it is great to be here to discuss one of my areas of strong interest: breastfeeding and giving kids the best start in life and mums the best start in motherhood that they can each have. I thank Ms Cheyne for bringing forward this motion—another part of the puzzle

of how we can best remove barriers to women having the families that they desire and are able to have, and government doing all that is within its power to make that experience as smooth as possible.

Experiences of the first few weeks and months after a baby is born are profound and life changing. In a nutshell, if things start off with difficulties it can be something which follows a mum around for the rest of her life. A feeling of responsibility to do the very best you can for your child can be overwhelming, and mums want to do the very best they can for their child.

The motion notes that breastfeeding, where possible, is the healthiest start for babies or that being fed on breastmilk is. But not all mums are able to breastfeed in the usual way. It notes the value of having a breastmilk bank for babies whose mums, for whatever reason—and there are many—are not able to provide it. Babies being fed on human milk do better and, in particular, their resistance to infection is much higher than in infants who are fed on formula milk.

Milk banks are a system of breastmilk storage and supply which are becoming increasingly popular. But it is not a new idea. According to the International Lactation Consultant Association, the first recorded donor milk bank began in Vienna in 1909, with the second opening in Boston and the third in Germany.

My great-great-grandmother had twins and no milk, and a lady down the street breastfed her babies. Unfortunately, they both died. It just goes to show how there is keenness from other mums to help each other out. But systems are good because if we can control the health of the children then that is even better.

This year, as you will be aware, I gave birth to my daughter Liliana. It is interesting how this discussion on milk banking reminds me of how, as a mum who has now been through six caesareans, I have learned a few things about the function of the breast and how and under what circumstances milk is produced. When, earlier this year, I was preparing for Liliana's birth—and I welcome her and my husband, Bernard, to the chamber today—and planning how I would approach my surgery for the various health conditions I have, as I was not very well, I realised I was likely to be in the intensive care unit after the operation to deliver her, and because so much else had to occur during that surgery.

It was weighing on my mind that it was a small but real possibility that I may not survive the operation at all. However, I did have a great team, and I had every faith in them. Nonetheless, I was thinking about the baby and how to best care for her while I was not able to be there for her. I remember being taught that you can express a little milk even before the baby is born, something that Ms Cheyne mentioned in her speech but that most people are unaware of. Even sometimes people who have had many babies are unaware that you can express colostrum.

I decided to express before the birth as much as I could. Over a several-week period I did that laborious work and froze it and took it to the hospital so that, while I was being looked after in the 24 or 48 hours after the birth, she could have the very best milk possible because she would also be born a few weeks premature.

Then, the day before the surgery, when I was admitted to the Centenary Hospital for Women and Children, I went upstairs to the nursery. I was able to have the milk put in the freezer for use by the baby after she was born. I am not saying it was something they had encountered very many times before, but they were very accommodating because I had been able to label it, freeze it and date it in the way that I had learned from previous births. But many mums would not know about that.

The nurses were quite impressed, I must say, that I had gone to so much effort and was able to follow current guidelines. My milk was then used to feed her while I was still in the operating theatre, which I was in for seven hours, and over the next couple of days. It did take a bit of negotiating and work with the hospital systems to get it to happen and it was good that I knew about how the systems worked because even frozen breastmilk does have a limited life. As you can see, it is not a very simple business, and there is more that can be done in the Centenary hospital to make such options more normalised.

To many people who have not fed a baby, the whole breastfeeding concept is a bit of a mystery, with no details. I know I was once asked why you cannot do more expressing at night time instead of during the day at work, not realising that if that was the case the supply may decrease or the breasts may become engorged, which can easily lead to blocked milk ducts and mastitis, both of which are very painful conditions—I am sure the mums in this place know—and only prevented by regular emptying of the breast.

As Ms Cheyne's motion notes, there are various reasons why some women have issues with establishing feeding, from delayed lactation, as in the milk does not come in for a long time, to insufficient milk supply. And some babies are really hard to feed, either due to disability like tongue-tie or simply because they are born with very, very small mouths. Some premature babies have not learnt to suck. They do not have the sucking instinct yet, or, as in my case, because I was separated from the baby for some time after the birth, while I was in the ICU.

In the same way that some women have an undersupply of milk, others are blessed with a lot of milk. I remember a friend of mine saying she had enough milk to feed a small nation. And for those women expressing for a milk bank, it may in fact be a relief because, as I mentioned before, there is a level of health danger as well as discomfort if the breast is not regularly drained of its milk.

I am sure there are some very great women in Canberra who would love to donate to a milk bank and I hope that, as the motion calls on government to investigate this possibility, it actually comes to fruition. It is a really good idea. Canberrans are community people. We like to give what we have for those in need, as has been proven many times in the history of this great city. Our giving is not ostentatious; it is quiet. But if there is a chance for women to donate their milk, I am sure there will be plenty of volunteers to such a scheme. It is also something I am sure many mums of premature babies or who do not have enough of a supply of milk would take advantage of. There would also be a hell of a lot of mums who would love to have access to human milk for babies even as they get a little older.

We have worked together in this place to improve the situation for babies, mums and dads. We have got facilities in this building now that we did not have a couple of years ago. We have change tables, we have breastfeeding spaces with a lock on the door, which has been a bit of a fight, but I really credit the government for taking that seriously. Already this morning Liliana has been changed on the change table just around the corner in the public area. We have used our recently installed facilities and I am sure mums here at functions into the future will be very glad to have that space.

I am aware that there is a breastfeeding strategy that the ACT government ticked off in 2010. I am aware that there is an updating process going on. I am not sure why we did not update it earlier, but I do hope that we have been working on this issue over the time in between. So let us get the important work done.

I commend Ms Cheyne for the motion. I acknowledge the very hard work of breastfeeding advocates in the ACT. Members of the Breastfeeding Association are present today in the gallery.

I also want to say that when I was a new mum living in Ngunnawal with my first baby and with practically no idea what to do, I went to a few ABA meetings in someone's house nearby and it really gave me the community that I needed to get started. I was not able to continue and be a long-term part of the daily organisation, but I certainly recommended the breastfeeding helpline to a few people to call because I think, to those who are uninitiated, breastfeeding is something that just happens. Any of us who have actually lived through it know that that is far from the case. It is a skill, it is a skill to be learned and for some people it is not even possible.

The ABA's work in Australia has really changed the landscape for breastfeeding here, and you only have to look at the UK and the low rates of particularly younger women breastfeeding to know that it is the ABA who has changed the culture in Australia, and for the better.

I commend Ms Cheyne for the motion. We were all babies once. We were all vulnerable and needing feeding. Also, given that these babies are our future, let us give them every chance to thrive. We will be supporting the motion.

MADAM SPEAKER: There is a lot of quiet clapping in the gallery, members, I can assure you.

MS LE COUTEUR (Murrumbidgee) (10.39): I agree with basically everything that the two previous speakers have said. I think this is going to be one of the Assembly's rare love-in motions, particularly with the visitors in the public gallery, some of whom are particularly cute.

Members interjecting—

MS LE COUTEUR: I do not think I put that quite right. The mothers are very supportive and well-meaning but you have some competition, I am afraid. I will try to be a little more serious. As previous speakers have noted, there are reasons why

women may not be able to breastfeed. Of course, all mothers should be supported in that decision if that is the decision they need to make. I reflect on the fact that we are all descended from people who were able to breastfeed. Up until about the 1900s, basically there was no alternative available apart from breastfeeding human babies. Breastfeeding was not always possible. There was a hell of a lot of infant mortality too.

It is very important that breastfeeding is well supported and encouraged. But despite good support and encouragement, for some women it is not something that can happen. If you can breastfeed, it has been well demonstrated to reduce the incidence of postnatal depression, due partly to the hormones released in the bonding that comes with the experience. But people who have not been able to do it have noted their feeling of inadequacy arising from not being able to do what is largely a normal, natural and wonderful thing to do.

No matter what situation a mother and baby find themselves in, it is important to acknowledge the important and largely voluntary work of the Australian Breastfeeding Association, Post and Ante Natal Depression Support and Information—better known as PANDSI in the ACT—the Canberra and Region Multiple Birth Association and the other community associations that support parents, and in particular mothers, in their transition into parenthood not only with feeding but also with the other health and development issues, including social and emotional wellbeing. I also acknowledge the ACT government's wonderful health services, such as the maternal and child health nurses and, of course, the QEII Family Centre that quite a few years ago moved out to Woden, in my electorate.

Breastfeeding is strongly supported locally and internationally by the World Health Organisation and UNICEF. The benefits of breastfeeding and breastmilk are well established. They include improved immunity, better nutrition, better appetite regulation and protection from obesity, through to better social and cognitive development. Yet the Australian national breastfeeding strategy consultation draft released earlier this year reports that while the majority of Australian women intend to breastfeed their babies and that 96 per cent initiate breastfeeding after birth, which is great, only a small proportion—between 15 per cent and 25 per cent—continue with exclusive breastfeeding to around six months.

Clearly, there is an issue here and we need to do more to encourage and support women to breastfeed. The draft strategy also shows that there are lower rates of breastfeeding for women who are first-time mothers and women who deliver via caesarean section. I applaud Mrs Jones for her dedication in her circumstances. I also note what she said about the fact that it was not her first baby; so she actually knew how to prepare in advance. Most of us would not even think about those issues before giving birth. You obviously hope that all will go well and that you will be successfully breastfeeding a very short period of time after giving birth. Luckily, for most women that does happen.

However, we are talking about a significant minority of women and babies for whom that natural process does not just happen. That includes preterm births and babies with low birth weights. Lower than average breastfeeding success rates are also identified for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women and culturally and linguistically

diverse women, women who are younger and women who have a low socio-economic status. Some of these factors also correlate with evidence from the Australian Institute of Health and Welfare on increased rates of obesity. Among other things, those who are in the low socio-economic groups are more likely to be overweight and obese.

I do not know how much relationship there is with the lower breastfeeding rates correlating with the likelihood of obesity or being overweight when the baby grows up. I do not know how much linkage there is here between the lower rates of breastfeeding and our increasing rates of obesity and being overweight. There certainly would appear to be at least a statistical link. We do know that obesity and being overweight are having a major impact on our population's health and wellbeing. They also contribute to the rising costs of chronic non-communicable diseases in our health systems. This is another long-term reason why we need to look very carefully at anything we can do to increase the rate of breastfeeding for our babies. Even if it is not for a long period of their life, it is quite clear that even a short period helps the babies.

As I mentioned earlier, for millennia breastfeeding was the only option available to babies. It has only been since the mid-1900s that formula provided a viable alternative for babies. But it seems as though the influence of the efforts of the patriarchal medical profession and their commercial interests to push formula on to babies is still being felt in Australia as well as, unfortunately, in other parts of the world where babies are being fed inadequately made-up formula because their mothers either have no alternative or they mistakenly believe that this is a better alternative for their babies. We are all aware of the consumer boycotts of Nestle for this reason.

Some of the drift away from breastfeeding has been as a result of very positive changes which have given women more freedom and, in particular, the ability to return to work following having children. Initiatives such as the milk bank, more supportive employer practices such as breastfeeding breaks and providing places to feed or to express breastmilk are important. They ensure that women who need or want to return to work, or who just want a small amount of time away from their babies, can do so without this being at the expense of the mum's and baby's wellbeing.

I would also like to note that the difficulties women face with breastfeeding are not new. We have always talked about it taking a village to raise a child. I think that we need to look at that in terms of breastfeeding as well and be more positive about the informal arrangements that have existed over the millennia and, as Ms Cheyne touched on in her speech, still happen now.

We should not discount those in our push to have a formal, centralised arrangement. I think that both are good things. I strongly agree with Ms Cheyne that a formal, centralised arrangement would be an incredibly good thing, especially for those mothers who always thought they were going to breastfeed and who then find themselves in hospital with a baby and that is not an option for them. I strongly commend that, but I also think that we should support and encourage informal arrangements where appropriate.

I turn again to the draft strategy. It recommends accepting breastfeeding as “a social and family responsibility rather than an individual’s, and valued in economic and fiscal policy”. The strategy also recommends:

Fund a national marketing campaign on breastfeeding for breastfeeding to be accepted as normal and as a collective responsibility.

Of course, in the hospital setting it is very important to screen breastmilk donors. In the community it is less important, as you would generally know who the donor is and you may know them quite well. There should be no obligation to do this, but it should be seen as one of the most natural things in the world.

Overall, what we are talking about is not about dictating to women how they feed their babies but giving support to women and to babies at the crucial stages, particularly just at birth but also throughout the child’s infancy, when it may sometimes be that an otherwise successful breastfeeding situation has a small interruption and needs help.

It is important to recognise strongly the benefits of breastfeeding and to acknowledge that that stage of life has known risk factors for depression and anxiety which impact overall family health and wellbeing. We need to provide the options and information to enable women to make the best decisions for themselves and their children.

I support the motion. I also encourage mechanisms for the informal sharing of breastmilk. Clinical responses are absolutely needed in a hospital environment and can certainly benefit some women and babies. I commend Ms Cheyne for this motion.

MS CODY (Murrumbidgee) (10.51): I thank Ms Cheyne and everyone else who has spoken today on this very important motion. I was really lucky as a first time mum. As Mrs Jones has said, I had enough milk to feed a small country—probably a large country, actually. But as a new mum, that was really hard to deal with and hard to understand. Again, I was very lucky because the ACT health system has the maternity nurses that visit you in the home. They told me about a wet nurse and explained to me that not so long ago it would have been really natural for me as a woman not only to breastfeed my child but potentially to breastfeed many children. I would have been used to doing such a task. I am going back almost 21 years ago to my first child.

There were no possibilities of formal milk banks. As Ms Cheyne has suggested, some informal things occurred, but that was not something that I knew about or understood. So every morning, every lunchtime and every night, I would have to stand in an extremely hot shower to get rid of a whole bunch of milk that could have quite easily gone to babies in need.

As I read this motion today, I look back on those times and I thank Ms Cheyne for bringing this important matter to the forefront of the Assembly for discussion today. There are many women out there who would love to be able to breastfeed their children but unfortunately they are able to. It gives those women the opportunity to think about whether they would like to use breastmilk to feed their children. Some

women will always choose to use formula. That is their choice. But to be able to provide a milk bank and to provide an option to supply milk to mothers, or to fathers if the mother has unfortunately not made it through the birth, is an important part of a baby's start to life.

I note Ms Cheyne has talked about the importance of breastmilk in the early stages of life. I remember with my first child, and as Mrs Jones has mentioned, getting mastitis because of the oversupply of milk. I will not tell you what my father told me to do in those circumstances, but anyone that grew up on a farm and knows about cows can use their imagination. Luckily, in today's society, it is a much more pleasurable fix than what my father suggested. It is important for all women to understand and to know that there are options out there.

I hope that in talking about and developing strategies to introduce milk banking for the ACT there is an opportunity for mothers of infants today, and mothers of infants in the past, to have their say and to talk about some of the things that may have helped them when they had their babies.

I commend Ms Cheyne for bring forward this motion. I thank her, those who have spoken to the motion and those who are about to comment on this motion. It is wonderful to see, as Ms Le Couteur commented, a motion that brings us all together to stand up for our community and to talk about things that matter.

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) (10.55): I thank Ms Cheyne for bringing this motion to the Assembly today. With the historic numbers of women in this Assembly, I hope that many mothers and future parents will be able to enjoy the work we do in this place in achieving a breastfeeding milk bank for parents in the ACT to be able to utilise if they need to.

I want to touch on a couple of reasons why a mother might not be able to breastfeed their baby. One of them is domestic and family violence or sexual assault. This obviously is a very terrible issue, and if it were the case that a parent were unable to choose to breastfeed their child because they were exposed to or experienced domestic and family violence, that would be a terrible tragedy.

I wanted to touch on that because there is work happening in the ACT that was co-designed through the family safety hub on how we might be able to better support women and parents who might be at greater risk of experiencing violence. Research suggests that women can be at greater risk of experiencing violence from their partners during pregnancy and postpartum, especially when they separate. According to ANROWS, over half of women whose former partners used violence against them experienced it during pregnancy. One in five women whose current partners use violence against them experience violence during pregnancy. Most of these women, 60 per cent, experience violence for the first time during their pregnancy. Other research tells us that nearly a third of first-time mothers experience intimate partner violence before their children turn four.

So what the co-design, through the family safety hub came, up with was an idea for how we can understand the dynamics of domestic and family violence so that people feel more confident to ask for support: identify pregnant women and new parents at risk of domestic and family violence and intervene earlier; ensure that supported, trusted people who will engage with pregnant women can provide responses, particularly to women from diverse backgrounds; and look at how we equip women and men to cope with the stresses of new parenthood better so that the chance of violence is reduced.

The first challenge that comes about through this co-design, in providing information for pregnant women, is providing legal advice to women through places where pregnant women and new parents will more likely visit and will more likely have a trusted relationship with a health professional or a legal professional. We will be piloting a program which will be able to provide pregnant women with that extra support, should they need it, because we found that they would be more fearful of approaching police or someone like that because of it then it affecting their relationship in the long term. We are making sure that that support is there for women, particularly given what the research shows us and what we have heard from people with lived experience, through their pregnancy and following their pregnancy, of domestic and family violence.

The second matter that I want to touch on is postnatal depression. Postnatal depression is all too common. Many women go without support in diagnosing postnatal depression or antenatal depression. But there are lots of signs that somebody might be struggling with postnatal depression. Those can include having very low moods, feeling inadequate, having a sense of hopelessness, feeling exhausted, feeling guilty, feeling anxious or panicky, having trouble sleeping, worrying excessively about their baby and feeling scared of being alone or going out.

Fifteen years ago, when I gave birth to my first child, I was very much in the dark place of postnatal depression. It can be incredibly debilitating. It made me determined to be not just good or great; I wanted to be an excellent mother, which turned into a bit of an obsession for me through the postnatal depression. And of course breastfeeding was incredibly challenging, incredibly hard. Without going through the details that I am pretty sure every breastfeeding mother in this place will have experienced, I also had an excessive milk supply and could very easily have donated some of that milk to others. In fact, I reckon that if I had been able to do that it would have relieved some of my own anxiety—my inability to leave the house because of the excessive milk supply—in addition to helping other women who, for lots of different reasons, a couple of which I have touched on today, might not be able to breastfeed and choose to bottle feed or to use formula.

So I want to thank Ms Cheyne for bringing this motion to the Assembly today. I remember very clearly when I was breastfeeding. Why did we not have a breastmilk bank back then? I could very easily have donated to it and could have made a difference to many parents' lives, had they had the option of accessing breastmilk for their own babies. I am very pleased to see that this is something the ACT government will be able to investigate in establishing an official milk bank in the ACT. It will

absolutely make a difference for women to have that option, should they need it. I thank Ms Cheyne very much for giving us all the chance to share some of our stories in the Assembly today, without too much detail. I do not want to put future parents off what is a very beautiful experience once you work it out.

MS FITZHARRIS (Yerrabi—Minister for Health and Wellbeing, Minister for Higher Education, Minister for Medical and Health Research, Minister for Transport and Minister for Vocational Education and Skills) (11.02): I thank Ms Cheyne very much for bringing this motion to the Assembly today on an issue that is important every day and every night but often not discussed in this place. I will make some comments later about the power of this motion, how it came to be in the Assembly and the example that it sets for all of us in talking to our community about issues that really matter to women and their families right across the territory.

As Ms Cheyne has very simply put it, there is a gap and there is a solution. We are really pleased to support Ms Cheyne's motion today to see this work continue. As others have indicated, the benefits of breastfeeding are well documented. I would like to put on the record the work underway already in ACT Health so that the record can show the work that is already underway there.

As has been recognised, the supply of donor milk to the Centenary Hospital for Women and Children neonatal intensive care unit is from the Mothers' Milk Bank, which operates from Tweed Heads in northern New South Wales. This provision of donor milk at the Centenary hospital is, though, limited at the moment to situations where babies are born premature or are unwell or where there is not enough expressed milk when feeds are introduced. Of course every effort is made to use the mother's milk in preference to donor milk, but it is the parent's decision as to whether the baby will receive donor milk. As much information as possible is provided to assist parents in making decisions about this important issue.

As I mentioned, the government is very pleased to support Ms Cheyne's motion to investigate the feasibility of establishing an official milk bank in the ACT. As she has outlined, there may be proposals around today that we can look at but there also may be proposals we have not yet envisaged. We will not know unless we do this important work.

As has been mentioned, the Red Cross are developing milk banks across Australia. I am pleased to advise that the ACT will move to obtaining supply from the Red Cross milk bank in 2019, once they get up and running. Representatives from Canberra Health Services are on the New South Wales Health and New South Wales Red Cross working party, and negotiations are already underway. The Red Cross Blood Service has leveraged its wealth of experience and expertise in high quality donor management, therapeutic goods administration, goods manufacturing, practice regulations and donation disease-screening processes, in order to position itself nationally in this important role.

I have previously mentioned that very soon, after quite extensive stakeholder engagement, the government will be unveiling a consultation phase for a new framework for how maternity services are delivered here in the ACT. That community

consultation will begin very shortly. It will be focused on the journey of mums and their partners and their babies right from early pregnancy, through the pregnancy journey, through birthing and, really importantly, support in those early days, weeks and months of having a baby. Women and babies are at the heart of the new approach to the way maternity services are delivered. That includes, as I mentioned, pregnancy, birthing and ongoing support as new mums make this important journey. As has been noted, breastfeeding will be an integral part of that.

In terms of the ACT government's broad support for breastfeeding as an important public health issue, women—prior to giving birth in the public hospital system or through publicly delivered services, including the new home birth trial—are provided with information about breastfeeding through written materials, antenatal classes and access to a range of resources. ACT Health also provides funding to the Australian Breastfeeding Association to deliver education and information services. All ACT directorates and many local businesses are breastfeeding friendly workplace accredited. This accreditation demonstrates an organisation's commitment to breastfeeding mothers by giving them the time and space they need to breastfeed or express during working hours.

Mrs Jones mentioned the breastfeeding strategy. That is a national strategy and is in the process of being updated. There was recent community consultation around the country on that. I understand that the commonwealth will be looking to finalise that strategy in the near future. Once that national strategy is agreed, there will be a specific ACT implementation plan for that. This is happening under the auspices of the senior officials who support all state and territory and commonwealth health ministers through the COAG framework and being led by the Australian government. The national strategy seeks to create a society supportive of breastfeeding so that breastfeeding is the first option for all mums. It also recognises that this is not always possible and that all mums need support regardless of how they may feed their baby. The consultation closed in June. I understand that this will be provided to ministers in early 2019 for formalisation.

You never know what might get thrown up on private members' day. But this is not the first time Ms Cheyne has brought a private member's motion into this Assembly which reflects, in my view, the very best of what the Assembly does. The story of doorknocking; learning from members of the community about their experiences; talking to other members of the community about what their needs are, what is currently being met and how we could do more; working with many members of the community and with advocacy groups; learning about the issue; doing extensive research; and then bringing a very well-formed private member's motion to the Assembly is something we have seen Ms Cheyne do before and will see her do in the future. It is an outstanding reflection of how this place works best. It is also clearly supported by everybody in the chamber.

I know and acknowledge Mrs Jones's unceasing efforts to promote breastfeeding right across the community but particularly in this place. I think Mrs Jones mentioned that the first milk bank was established in 1909. In not many places in the world, in fact very few indeed, women actually had the opportunity to vote at that point, and therefore there were very few women in parliament—and to think that we could have

had a conversation like this in parliaments a hundred years ago, let alone 50 or even 10 years ago. There have been women, including Mrs Jones and Ms Gallagher in this place and members of parliaments right across the nation supporting breastfeeding in the community, in parliaments. And there is nothing like a parliament reflecting its community to really let people know that members of parliament do represent them, do hear what they are saying and do get on the floor of parliament and talk about issues which really do reflect the lived experiences of people in our community.

It has been great to understand a range of medical issues which people can confront when giving birth—some expected, some very unexpected. The power that comes from struggling, in some cases, to breastfeed and succeeding in that struggle can do a lot for women to support their journey of new motherhood. Ms Berry reflected on the contemporary issues we are grappling with in our community around family violence and the importance of providing breastfeeding support to women in those instances.

The complexity of learning to breastfeed is certainly something that has to be learned. My own experience of difficulty to start with and of frozen cabbage leaves and strange balms was something that no-one can quite prepare you for. But persevering through those things meant I was lucky enough to be able to breastfeed all my kids for 15 months each. I, too, called the breastfeeding hotline and received significant support.

There is community advocacy also that is incredibly powerful. There are stories, and I know these too, of friends meeting in homes, where advocacy takes place at the most basic grassroots level. It can influence daily lives, but it can also influence national strategy and major decisions and investments by governments. This motion has covered it all. It goes to the power of the Assembly. It goes to the power of the community. It goes to the power of a good member working with people right across the community to get something done. We are really pleased to support Ms Cheyne's motion today.

MR WALL (Brindabella) (11.11): I am going to be adventurous here and try and tell a little part of the other side of the story that has not been touched on today. We have heard from a large number of the female members of the Assembly, but as a two-time proud dad I think there is a role for dads to play in supporting the women in our lives when it comes to breastfeeding.

It has been touched on that it is often a process that seen as natural, that your body will take care of it and it will just happen. That is certainly not the experience for all mums. It is something that is learnt: mothers need to learn, but the babies need to learn as well. From a mother's perspective, particularly straight after birth, there is a lot of insecurity, especially after a first child. "Why isn't my body doing what it is supposed to? Why am I struggling with this? Why is it so difficult? Have I done something wrong? Am I a failure? Should I have done this? Should I have done something different?" I think there is a great role there for dads to step up and be that reassuring and supporting voice.

I remember an experience when my first daughter was born. Breastfeeding was a bit of a challenge for my wife, and that is a pretty normal experience. What sometimes

made it more difficult was the wonderful midwives—and I will say the wonderful midwives—at the hospital. It depended on what midwife was on shift as to what advice you were given, and often the advice was contradictory. There are a lot of theories; there are a lot of ideas around on best practice. That, too, for a new mother, can often be confusing and just adds to the anxiety. There is a big role for dads to step up and support mothers who are breastfeeding.

I would like to applaud the work done by the Breastfeeding Association not just for the support line that they offer but also for breaking down the barriers and stigmas with breastfeeding in public. I know that my wife, who is still breastfeeding our five-month-old, from time to time gets a funny look when she is out in public. She is a fairly strong woman and often very short on time. It is not unusual to see her running through the grocery store with our youngest having a feed while she pushes a trolley. She is quite a remarkable woman. It does sometimes seem to get an obscure gaze from other people while they are doing their grocery shopping.

The work the foundation does is sensational. The investigation into a milk bank in Canberra is a good initiative. It gives another choice, to mothers particularly but to new families, when things do not go necessarily to plan. That investigation should be applauded and, hopefully, we will see the establishment of a facility here in the ACT.

MS CHEYNE (Ginninderra) (11.14), in reply: I have a lot of people to thank. First, to my parliamentary colleagues who spoke in support of this motion today, thank you for your candidness, your honesty, in sharing your own stories in support of this motion. As you would be aware, Madam Assistant Speaker, occasionally when we have topics that are seen to be women's issues, some of the men do not speak. I am delighted that Mr Wall added his perspective today. This is not a women's issue; it is about parents and it is about children. We have all been a child, if not a parent. I am delighted that we have had so many perspectives shared today.

As was reflected across the chamber, we have a proud history of supporting breastfeeding initiatives and initiatives to support women in this place. I am very pleased to report that, in addition to the good work that has gone before us and that I hope will come out of today, the ACT Assembly, following a discussion in our admin and procedure committee, recently registered itself as a breastfeeding welcome zone, which Mr Wall and Mr Rattenbury were in full support of. So, Mrs Jones, we did continue your good work even in your absence. I understand that the Clerk is in the process of making available to all members "Breastfeeding welcome here" stickers to put on their doors. Some members already have them.

I especially want to thank Sally Eldridge, who spoke with my team when we were out doorknocking a few months back. She did not have any issues, but she wanted time with me to tell me more about breastfeeding. Quite literally, if she had not answered the door I would still not know what a milk bank was and I probably would not know a lot about breastfeeding either. I want to thank Krishna Shukla, who, when she recently took over my role for a day as part of Jasiri Australia's girls take over parliament program, put together the fantastic first draft of this motion.

I also want to make special mention of the support and guidance we have received from the Australian Breastfeeding Association, especially Jessica Armstrong. As we have heard today, they are powerful supporters and they are powerful advocates. They have been with me every step of the way in developing this motion. I am very grateful for your support.

I need to thank the government. The Minister for Health and Wellbeing and her staff have been supporters since I first wandered around to say, "Hey, I have an idea." The reality is that it is the government that has to make this happen. Knowing that we have had such a strong advocate in Minister Fitzharris from the get-go gives me extraordinary hope.

Most importantly, I want to thank the many, many parents who have reached out to me in the past few months to tell me that this is a great idea, in particular, the dozens and dozens of women in the past few days who have offered to share their stories to demonstrate why a milk bank is so necessary, through phone calls, comments and private messages.

I thank women like Alycia who, after a traumatic birth, began breastfeeding her baby at home only to find out four days later that her child had lost 15 per cent of its birth weight. She drove around to numerous houses across Canberra collecting informal donations of milk from other mothers. There are women like Kiera, who had trouble breastfeeding and reflects on the difference donor milk could have made to her stress levels as she bonded with her newborn. There are women like Leanne, who had excess breastmilk during her stay in hospital and would have happily donated it if the option had been available.

There are parents like Katie, who considered donating her extra milk to a facility interstate but found the option overwhelming, as her daughter was being cared for in the neonatal intensive care unit in Canberra. There are parents like Lindsay, who drove all the way to Sydney to deliver excess milk to a family in need. There are women like Elissa, who has donated 20 litres of milk to a milk bank in Queensland because a similar facility does not exist closer to home.

There are parents like Deanna, who sat in hospital with an oversupply of milk, feeling terrible because she could not help the women around her who were unable to produce their own. There are parents like Erica and Hannah, who felt a sense of joy and pride in informally donating breastmilk to other families. They felt part of that community spirit. There are parents like Kirsten, who donated her milk to a baby born via surrogate, while his mother was trying to induce lactation. There are parents like Jen, a foster carer who was charged with looking after a baby born eight weeks premature, a baby she would have loved to have fed breastmilk if the option had only been available. There are parents like Kate, who gratefully accepted colostrum and milk for her daughter, Ruby, who was born via a surrogate.

In particular, I thank all of those parents who have reached out to me who had a child who was stillborn. Many of those parents have been able to honour their child by donating, but to those parents who were not able to do so and really wanted to, I want

to take this moment to offer my apology that that was not available. We need to right this wrong.

And of course, I thank the many other women who have contacted me and expressed their support. I wish I could share all of their stories, but apparently there is other business. There are too many stories to share with you today, but I think that we will continue to hear more of these stories. The reaction in the community has been overwhelming, to say the least, and overwhelmingly positive. I encourage parents right across Canberra to continue to share those stories, to continue to underline why this is so necessary, and to keep an eye on what the government are doing and hold them to account.

As many of these stories illustrate, women are already donating and they are already accepting breastmilk that has been donated throughout Canberra. Many others want to participate. Parents want that choice, but it is not always easy to participate. It is time we step in and make this process easier for donors and recipients; that we make it available both in and outside the hospital setting; that we make a physical location a real thing; and that we get the kind of regulation that gives parents receiving donor milk increased peace of mind. The way to do it is through a breastmilk bank. I urge the government to investigate and determine how best to make it happen, and I congratulate them because they have said they will.

Question resolved in the affirmative.

Mental health

MRS DUNNE (Ginninderra) (11.22): I move:

That this Assembly:

(1) notes:

- (a) October is mental health month;
- (b) the efforts made, especially through community-based initiatives, to raise awareness of mental health in the community, reduce and eliminate the stigmas associated with mental health, and empower people suffering mental health problems to seek help through events such as the Mental Health Expo, "RUOK?" day, the Ice Bucket Challenge, and the "It's OK to Talk" campaign;
- (c) the difficulties many mental health clients have in navigating the ACT's mental health system;
- (d) the lack of a wrap-around service for mental health clients in the ACT;
- (e) the inadequate human resources available to treat mental health patients in the public system, including psychiatry specialists and other appropriately-trained health professionals;
- (f) assaults on mental health staff;
- (g) the long delays to develop and implement mental health policies, including the Office for Mental Health and Wellbeing, which, although established on 1 July 2018, still does not have a coordinator-general;

- (h) the mental health issues, including suicides and attempted suicides, emerging from a poor culture in ACT Health; and
 - (i) the recommendations of the Independent External Review of Mental Health Inpatient Services within ACT Health (the Review), of 22-23 May 2018; and
- (2) calls on the ACT Government to, by the last sitting day in 2018:
- (a) table in the Assembly the Government's response to the Review, outlining:
 - (i) which recommendations the Government accepts;
 - (ii) the Government's timetable for implementing the recommendations it accepts; and
 - (iii) which recommendations the Government does not accept, and why; and
 - (b) outline to the Assembly the:
 - (i) status of the Office for Mental Health and Wellbeing, including, but not limited to, an update on the activity of the Office since its establishment, together with the outcomes of that activity;
 - (ii) Government's plan to assist clients to navigate the ACT's mental health system;
 - (iii) Government's approach to providing a wrap-around service to mental health clients, as well as their families and carers;
 - (iv) Government's strategies to address staff training and resourcing across all relevant disciplines;
 - (v) Government's plans and timelines to relieve bed-block; and
 - (vi) Government's strategies to minimise the incidence and associated risks of assaults on mental health staff.

On 10 October the Minister for Mental Health issued a media release in which he noted the latest Australian Institute of Health and Welfare report, *Mental health services in Australia*. The minister highlighted the report's finding that more Canberrans are reaching out for support in addressing mental health concerns. Minister Rattenbury said in this release:

... Mental Health Month gives us all the chance to share the message that it's okay to get help for mental illness and it's a sign of strength, not weakness.

I agree with Mr Rattenbury's assessment of the importance of Mental Health Month. I, too, am pleased to see the community's acceptance of mental illness as a condition that, just like any other illness, needs treatment and support. And that treatment and support should be given in a safe and respectful environment, in both institutional care and in the general community.

Mr Rattenbury seems to want the government to take all the credit for the services that are available to people with mental illness, and I am not sure he is entitled to make that claim. I suspect that the range of community-based services play a major part as

well. It is community-based organisations like Lifeline and beyondblue that provide many front-line and early intervention services that ease the pressure on the public health system.

It is community-based organisations like “It’s OK to talk” or “RUOK” that help to raise public awareness of mental health and its associated morbidities. It is community-based organisations like the Mental Health Community Coalition that bring the community together to support not only people suffering from mental illness but also their families and friends. It was the Mental Health Community Coalition who organised the recent very successful, comprehensive and informative mental health expo in Civic.

What of the government’s mental health services? Mr Rattenbury in his media release talked about the office for mental health and wellbeing, which he officially opened in mid-June, but, according to its website, the office does not yet have a coordinator-general. The advertisement for this position was not even placed until Mr Rattenbury unlocked the doors back in June. Why wasn’t the coordinator-general there to turn on the lights when we opened the Office for mental health and wellbeing?

The office’s website talks about a new territory-wide vision and the convoluted processes it will go through to develop it, along with development of the initial work program. The website tells us that the initial work program will be the first cab off the rank in the coordinator-general’s first 100 days, but those 100 days have not started yet. If you do the maths, even if that person were to be appointed this very day, we are not going to see the initial work plan until February 2019. And it is only then that the rest of the work will start. So, at the very best, it will be 2½ years before some of the most vulnerable people in our community will see anything substantive coming out of the office for mental health and wellbeing.

The barriers and the revolving door will continue for these people. That is what it will be like for people like the university student who approached me because they kept getting the run-around through and across an unnavigable system and ended up having to go to a private provider at their own expense, a cost that they could ill-afford.

Mr Rattenbury’s media statement also talks about a whole lot of bureaucratic activity, like developing new models of care. It talks about plans and frameworks, but it does not talk about outcomes. One very encouraging piece of information came from Mr Rattenbury in answer to a question on notice. He told me that, as of 1 July this year, there were 68 full-time equivalent nursing staff employed in the adult mental health unit. This staffing cohort covered all levels, from an assistant director of nursing to new graduates in placement. Mr Rattenbury said that all of these staff have training in mental health through the essential education requirement of ACT Health, including specific training during their orientation to the adult mental health unit. On top of that, all nursing staff in the unit are required to undergo 30 hours of professional development to maintain their registration with AHPRA, the Australian Health Practitioner Regulation Agency.

This bodes well for patients in the adult mental health unit, but is it enough? Unfortunately, we do not really know the answer to that question because ACT Health does not use staff-to-patient ratios in patient management. And does the unit have a full component of specialist psychiatrists? The last time I asked a question on notice about this, the answer was no. They have 4½ FTE psychiatrists, but they do not have the remaining four psychiatric registrars and the three resident medical officers required to make up what Mr Rattenbury describes as the medical staff establishment. I hope that today Mr Rattenbury can update us on the status of the psychiatric registrars and psychiatric resident medical officers, and that we will see a better picture than that which I last saw when I asked a question on notice.

There is an apparent shortage of medical staff, and this does not bode well for patient treatment services. It also does not bode well in a unit that suffers from bed block. Since July 2017 the adult mental health unit has been operating, as a minimum, at full capacity, and from time to time it has been operating at 105 per cent. All of this is aside from the chronic staff shortages in the adolescent mental health unit, where there is one psychiatrist, with locums filling the gap.

There is also the great delay that we are seeing in the establishment of a standalone adolescent mental health building, which will not commence until sometime next calendar year; therefore it will not be taking patients for some time into the future. All of this contributes to the stories I hear of staff under severe pressure. All of it contributes to the stories I hear of suicides and attempted suicides. It speaks to the stories I hear of patients being discharged early and being readmitted. It speaks to the stories I hear of staff being assaulted to the point that they are scared to go to work and they literally fear for their lives. It speaks to the stories I hear of patients having to go interstate for treatment.

Madam Assistant Speaker, in March the preliminary accreditation report for the Canberra Hospital concluded that two of the many unmet standards revealed in that report related to mental health. Both of them placed patients at extreme risk. Mr Rattenbury will tell you today, I am sure, that the ACT has addressed those issues, but we do know that they are in the process of being addressed rather than finally addressed. He will say that the Canberra Hospital has passed its second attempt at accreditation with flying colours, but there are still issues outstanding in relation to ligature points, and I have spoken to Mr Rattenbury in this place and elsewhere about my concerns about the time it has taken to address these issues. The fact remains that the procedures to manage the risks are so fundamental, so entrenched in the system, and they should never have become an issue for accreditation assessment in the first place.

There has been a real problem for Mr Rattenbury in the operation of the inpatient mental health system. I understand that in May this year he commissioned an independent external review of mental health inpatient services in ACT Health. I understand that that review has been received, and that Mr Rattenbury has received recommendations as a result of that review. But it is a long time since that review was undertaken, and some of this motion today calls for Mr Rattenbury to table that report and to respond to the recommendations in that report so that we have transparency about how our inpatient mental health system is working.

I understand that there are some quite substantial and important recommendations in that report, and I look forward to seeing the report and the government's response to it. I understand that the report goes to fundamental elements of providing a safe, well-managed, productive workplace, and a service with well-qualified and adequate staffing. I am glad that we have this report, and I note from Mr Rattenbury's revised amendment that we will, as a result of this motion today, see this report. But it is a little surprising that it took a bad accreditation process for Mr Rattenbury and ACT Health to embark on this assessment and to get the outcome that we need. This should be standard practice. We should constantly want to improve our service, and we should be looking at these things rather than waiting for an adverse accreditation report before we deal with them.

I could speak at length about the issues surrounding violence against staff in our mental health system. No motion in relation to mental health and Mental Health Month could go by without discussing these issues. We have seen many alarming recent reports about the number and frequency of violent attacks made on mental health staff. I was quite taken aback, actually, when I listened recently to Matthew Daniel, the branch secretary of the ANMF, on ABC radio, at his quiet fury that could not be disguised when he spoke about his disappointment with the minister, the government and the bureaucracy in dealing with these issues.

Mr Daniel and I do not necessarily agree on everything, but as an advocate for the safety of a workplace, he was doing a stellar job. He could not disguise his anger that his members were being beaten up and threatened in such a way on such a regular basis. The passion with which he spoke on ABC radio should have made the minister pause.

More recently than that, in the last week or so, we have seen a story on ABC Online, and it was also on the ABC Sunday news, where members of staff have spoken out for themselves. One nurse at Dhulwa warned that "somebody is going to die" unless staff conditions improved. Staff are scared to go to work, and feel management is ignoring their concerns. One staff member said, "You feel like you're on your own." Jane—and that is not her real name—said, "It is not the assaults themselves but the way they are managed and responded to that inflicts the most damage." She said, "It's minimising the assaults; coming in and saying, 'Let's forget about that. Let's move on'."

The day after the story broke, the executive director of mental health, justice health and alcohol and drug services sent a long, and I can only say bureaucratic, email to staff. The email said absolutely nothing about getting in front of the problem. It was all about reaction—letting the problem happen and then dealing with it later. It offered staff nothing that would provide them and their patients with a safer environment. One staff member said to the ABC, "We just want to be safe. We want our patients to be safe."

Then there is mental health in the emergency department as well. Only recently, we saw an extreme emergency situation in which a patient managed to access a police side-arm and discharge it multiple times inside the hospital. We have seen incidents in

which mental health patients presenting at the emergency department have been able to escape onto the roof, threatening to jump off. There have been many cautionary tales from around Australia which we should take to heart to ensure that we do not replicate those issues. We should not be in the situation that we have seen recently in Victoria and Western Australia; we should be learning from their experiences as well.

A couple of weeks ago, the Australasian College for Emergency Medicine hosted a summit in Melbourne looking at mental health in the emergency department. I was not able to attend that summit, but a member of my staff did attend the summit, and it was a fantastic learning experience both for him and for the rest of the office. The outcome of the summit was seven key principles for which the college will advocate. I encourage the Minister for Mental Health to look at what transpired at that summit, read the communique which outlines the principles and start a conversation with the Australasian College for Emergency Medicine about what needs to be done.

In many ways the Canberra Hospital is ahead of the game in how it manages mental health, with its standalone mental health facility inside accident and emergency, but there are still considerable problems with bed block and people being in that area.

Madam Assistant Speaker, could I seek leave to continue my remarks for a couple of minutes?

MADAM ASSISTANT SPEAKER (Ms Cody): Is leave granted?

Mr Rattenbury: Grudgingly.

MRS DUNNE: Sorry, I thought this was going to be a motion that was taken in good faith, but I apologise for my anticipation of that.

There is a lot of work to be done and there is a lot of direction that the government can take in this space, because no one person and no one organisation is the sole repository of knowledge. I do not want us to be in the situation that we have seen, as I have said before, in relation to Victoria and Western Australia in recent days, and I hope that we never see such appalling situations in the Canberra Hospital emergency department.

This motion carries a quite simple message. It is looking for more transparent government, a government that is willing to share information, both good and bad, so that we can work together to provide better mental health services for our citizens. It is looking for a government that has an open mind to achieving outcomes for the people of our community who need help and a closed mind to the dominance of bureaucratic processes and red tape. It calls for the government to get out in front of the challenges and not stand behind them. I commend the motion and anticipate a good outcome to this motion for the benefit of the people of the ACT.

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) (11.39): I am pleased to again have

an opportunity to speak in this place about the government's ongoing commitment to improving mental health services for the Canberra community.

As Mrs Dunne's motion notes, October is Mental Health Month, and this year's theme in the ACT has been identity and growth. The theme was suggested by the mental health student action group at Hawker College and means knowing who you are, accepting the past and growing into your future. The students wanted to share the message that mental illness should never define us. It is one small part of the person we are.

I want to thank all the volunteers and staff who were involved in organising the more than 20 mental health-related events that took place in Canberra over the past month, a number of which I was pleased to attend and participate in. This included the Mental Health Month official launch, the lived experience showcase, the Mental Health Month awards, Belconnen Community Gallery *Pieces of Mind* exhibition, Mind Blank's walk with Wardy fundraiser, Vinnies community inclusion program launch at Oaks Estate and the Mental Health and Wellbeing Expo. There were many others. Those were just the ones I was able to get to.

I did note—I was not quite clear about the point—that Mrs Dunne made an observation that in a press release I had failed to acknowledge the community organisations. I apologise for repeating some of what I just said, but I actually made similar remarks in an adjournment debate just last week.

I would note that in the ACT the government deeply values the role of community organisations. Around 23 per cent of ACT government expenditure in mental health goes to community organisations, and this is about double the national average. There is a very extensive engagement, a deep engagement, by community organisations in mental health service delivery in the ACT. Whilst I acknowledge that the one press release Mrs Dunne was referring to probably did not have that in it, there is no doubt that we acknowledge that. In fact, I meet with all those organisations pretty regularly. If there are particular concerns there I would be happy to hear them, but no-one should underestimate how much we value those community organisations.

We know that mental health issues are becoming increasingly common as we work to break down the stigma and encourage people to come forward and ask for help. Mental Health Month is a yearly reminder of the responsibility we all share to reach out and support those in the community who may be suffering in silence. While mental health is everyone's responsibility, the ACT government does play a significant role through the provision of public mental health services and funding for community organisations. I am committed to improving both the availability and the accessibility of mental health services for our community, and I believe the government's record of investment in mental health in recent budgets demonstrates that commitment is more than just lip-service.

Of course I accept that we have more work to do, but I do not accept Mrs Dunne's characterisation in her motion that mental health services in the ACT are lacking or inadequate. I also fundamentally reject Mrs Dunne's assertion that there have been long delays in the development of mental health policies, particularly the office for

mental health and wellbeing. We have debated this issue in this place before, and again Mrs Dunne is writing her own history on this issue.

Let me take this opportunity to again correct the assertion. The government committed to the establishment of the office for mental health and wellbeing by 1 July 2018, following a process of extensive consultation with the community and key mental health stakeholders. The office was launched on 12 June, with staff on the ground from day one to begin engaging with the community, establishing the cross-government stewardship group and developing a clear work plan. The recruitment process for the coordinator-general started shortly after the office was launched and has involved a national search for highly qualified candidates. I look forward to providing the community with an update on the coordinator-general position very shortly.

While I support Mrs Dunne's desire to know more about the extensive work that is happening in mental health, I do not accept the negative frame in which this motion is couched. For this reason I will be moving an amendment to the motion to better reflect the ACT government's extensive investments and commitments to improving mental health services. While my amendment gives an outline of the significant amount of work that is already underway, I am happy to report back to the Assembly on the issues that Mrs Dunne has asked for. I am perfectly happy to share that information and we will provide it to the Assembly by next sitting, as I am confident it can all be prepared in that time.

I do not shy away from some of the challenges that come with providing mental health services, particularly for more complex and acute consumers. As I have said before, I am committed to continuing to work with staff, consumers, carers and stakeholders to address these issues. But I do want to take this opportunity to recognise the work that our dedicated staff are already doing across our mental health system. The ACT government has made investing in mental health and suicide prevention a key priority. We are committed to an integrated approach to mental wellbeing and working closely with our community sector partners. With \$646 million over four years for the delivery of mental health services, the budget truly demonstrates the focus the government has on this important area of our healthcare system.

As just some examples, the ACT government has provided \$22.8 million for developing more supported accommodation for people with complex mental health issues and taking a different approach to that supported accommodation, in recognition of the evolving needs of the community; \$3.1 million to expand older persons mental health services; over \$1.5 million to establish a pilot of the Black Dog Institute's lifespan integrated suicide prevention framework; \$2.2 million to establish a recovery-focused community outreach program for young Canberrans; \$1.3 million to expand capacity at headspace; and almost \$900,000 to establish a mental health recovery college.

A number of these are new and innovative services that the government has funded in recent years. We are not standing still; we are bringing new services to the ACT, in recognition of the changing community needs and the increasing demand that is

coming towards us. Of course this is not just about throwing more money at the issue. The investments we are making are evidence based and informed by discussions with the community about what new services they want to see. The new adult community mental health model of care is a great example of this. The new model, which commenced in June this year and is being gradually rolled out throughout 2018, provides better access and integrated care for people using mental health services, to ensure that they receive the right response at the right time.

Whilst ACT Health has invested in a number of state-of-the-art facilities for mental health, the model of care focuses on changing the process for delivering services within the community. The model of care will provide more options for treating people within their homes and the community, as an alternative to hospitalisation. It will lead to improved access to services and reduce waiting times for appointments. I reject Mrs Dunne's assertion that we do not provide wraparound services for mental health clients. Under the new adult community model of care, the care delivered is based on an assessment of individual needs and the promotion of integrated care pathways. This will ensure people receive appropriate assistance from the service that best meets their needs and supports their recovery.

Other examples of integration across the service system include the Child and Adolescent Mental Health Services work with the Education Directorate to provide early intervention and treatment for children presenting with emerging mental health issues; and an older persons mental health team, providing intensive support to people with psycho-geriatric conditions living in residential care or transitioning from an acute inpatient unit. ACT mental health works closely with other agencies such as ACT Housing, NDIA, general practitioners, non-government organisations, Carers ACT, the Mental Health Consumer Network and other key stakeholder groups through referrals and linkages to provide wraparound supports for mental health consumers. I accept that we can always do more to improve this process, and the office for mental health and wellbeing will play a key role in providing this leadership and coordination to the mental health system, including cross-government linkages.

The other key player in system integration is the federal government, as a major funder of community mental health programs, largely through the Capital Health Network. ACT Health is working with the Capital Health Network to develop a regional mental health plan for the ACT. This regional plan will provide a territory-wide strategy which supports improved access to services through the development of an integrated system-wide approach. I was pleased to attend a consultation forum on this project in late August which brought together a diverse range of stakeholders to identify needs, priorities and practical strategies. A first draft of the ACT plan is expected to be available for consultation by the end of 2018.

There is so much work happening in our clinical services, at the policy level and across governments, to improve the coordination and integration of mental health services. The government is committed to continuing this work. While we have some way to go, I believe we are making progress.

I also want to speak briefly to the independent external review of inpatient mental health services that Mrs Dunne referred to in her motion and her remarks. This review

was an outcome of the ACT Health accreditation process and was a good opportunity for our service to benchmark itself against a high-performing interstate facility. I do note that the report of that is online, and that online space also notes that the government has agreed to all the recommendations.

The findings of the review were in fact very complimentary of our service, with the review considering the ACT's inpatient mental health services "to be safe and very competently managed by a skilled and experienced senior management team". The reviewers made 12 recommendations, all of which have been accepted. An independent advisory body has been established to oversee the implementation of those recommendations, and four items have already been completed. I am happy to report back to the Assembly with a further update on progress on this important piece of work.

On the matter of staff resourcing and workforce shortages, I recognise that this is an ongoing issue, but steps are being taken to ease the pressure on our staff. As I have said previously, specialty mental health services nationally, internationally and in the ACT continue to face shortages of clinical staff, while at the same time the growth in services and service demand has increased. In the ACT these workforce challenges are felt most keenly across the acute and community settings. This is an issue that I have previously raised with the COAG Health Council to seek some work on a national strategy to improve training and recruitment pathways for mental health clinicians.

While we cannot alone solve the broader national problem, at the local level we are taking action to attract more staff to the ACT. I can advise the Assembly that, as of 29 October, there are 13 medical officers working full time in the adult mental health unit. This includes five psychiatrists, three permanent employees and two locums. We also have four psychiatric registrars and four junior medical officers. I can also advise that a group attraction and retention incentive, better known as an ARIn, has recently been approved for consultant psychiatrists working in mental health. The ARIn brings the ACT into line with pay rates for mental health specialist medical officers in other jurisdictions.

Canberra Health Services has convened a workforce development committee to implement the recently developed action plan and provide a sustainable mental health workforce into the future. This includes training, development, recruitment, upskilling and retention of staff. This work is being undertaken in parallel with the ACT Health workforce strategy currently underway.

Finally, I want to address the issue of occupational violence in our mental health wards. As I have said previously, while working in acute mental health settings can be very rewarding, it can also be challenging and present risks, particularly in settings where individuals are especially unwell. However, let me be very clear that violence against our staff will not be tolerated. To respond to this issue, we are taking action to minimise the immediate risk to staff on the ground. We are also working with staff, unions and other key stakeholders to develop strategies that will amend policies and procedures to maximise staff safety into the future. Canberra Health Services has commenced development of an occupational violence strategy which will help to

define best practice in managing occupational violence both nationally and internationally. A working group chaired by the chief executive officer has been convened and will meet for the first time next week.

Additionally, ACT Health is very close to finalising a new nurse safety strategy. In recognition of the fact that mental health can be a challenging area of health service delivery, the new strategy will have a focus on high-risk areas like mental health and the unique risks faced by staff working in those environments. The nurse safety strategy is a key item under the parliamentary agreement and it is a priority for the government. We have been working with staff and unions such as the ANMF and other key stakeholders in the development of the strategy, which is expected to be released later this year. I understand that the mental health, justice health, alcohol and drug services division is also working on a divisional-specific action plan to sit underneath those strategic documents.

Of course no-one should feel unsafe in their workplace. While mental health staff do accept a level of risk as part of their jobs, the number of recent assaults is deeply concerning to me. I do not shy away from the challenge we have in addressing this issue, and I will continue to closely monitor progress on this work.

The government is committed to ensuring that all Canberrans can access the right mental health services at the right time, and that is why we have delivered record investments in mental health, with spending increasing each year over the past three years. It is encouraging to see more Canberrans feeling comfortable to reach out for support, and our services are responding to this increasing demand. At the same time, I recognise that we do have some areas to improve on and I look forward to coming back to the Assembly with more information about further work we are doing to address some of these issues. I now move the amendment circulated in my name:

Omit all text after (1) notes, substitute:

- “(a) October is mental health month;
- (b) the efforts made, especially through community-based initiatives, to raise awareness of mental health in the community, reduce and eliminate the stigmas associated with mental health, and empower people suffering mental health problems to seek help through events such as the Mental Health and Wellbeing Expo, ‘RUOK?’ day, the ‘It’s OK to Talk’ campaign, and many others;
- (c) each year, one in five Australians experience a mental health issue and approximately half of all people (45 percent) will experience issues with mental health in their lifetime; and
- (d) there were over 293 000 contacts with mental health clients across adult community, child and youth, mental health rehabilitation and speciality services in the ACT in 2017-18;

(2) further notes:

- (a) the ACT Government's ongoing commitment to investing in mental health services for the Canberra community, with the budget for mental health services increasing each year over the past three years, including a 15 percent increase in 2018-19;
 - (b) the following initiatives funded in the 2017-18 and 2018-19 ACT Budgets to improve access to services for people seeking mental health support:
 - (i) opening of additional beds in the rehabilitation wing at the Dhulwa Secure Mental Health Unit;
 - (ii) investment in the Black Dog Institute's Lifespan Suicide Prevention Program and Beyond Blue's Wayback Support Service;
 - (iii) expansion of the Child and Adolescent Mental Health Service (CAMHS) Consultation and Liaison Service to operate seven days a week, additional funding for headspace Canberra and establishment of a youth assertive outreach service;
 - (iv) trial of an ACT Mental Health Recovery College to support early intervention and help facilitate experience-based learning and peer support;
 - (v) building new mental health supported accommodation including community houses, a step-up step-down facility and refurbishing the Extended Care Unit at Brian Hennessey House; and
 - (vi) expanding the Older Persons Mental Health Intensive Treatment Service;
 - (c) that alongside the Government's record investments in mental health, there remains a need to improve the coordination of services across the system and across government to help people access the right service at the right time; and
 - (d) that while working in acute mental health settings can be challenging and present risks, the ACT Government is committed to listening to staff and improving processes so that the risk of occupational violence is minimised; and
- (3) calls on the ACT Government to, by the last sitting day in 2018:
- (a) table in the Assembly the Government's response to the Independent External Review of Mental Health Inpatient Services within ACT Health, outlining:
 - (i) which recommendations the Government has accepted;
 - (ii) the Government's timetable for implementing the recommendations it has accepted; and
 - (iii) which recommendations the Government does not accept, and why; and

- (b) provide an update to the Assembly on:
- (i) the work of the Office for Mental Health and Wellbeing since its establishment on 12 June 2018 and the outcomes of that work;
 - (ii) the Government's plans to assist clients to navigate the ACT's mental health system;
 - (iii) the Government's approach to providing a wrap-around service to mental health clients, as well as their families and carers;
 - (iv) the Government's strategies to address staff training and resourcing across all relevant disciplines;
 - (v) the Government's plans for improving timely access to inpatient services and supporting a stepped-care approach; and
 - (vi) the Government's strategies to minimise the incidence and associated risks of occupational violence on mental health staff."

Just quickly, in the last few seconds I have, I am aware the Australasian College for Emergency Medicine did host a conference this month. We sent staff from ACT Health, and Minister Fitzharris and I have also met with them to discuss the specific issues they are raising.

MS FITZHARRIS (Yerrabi—Minister for Health and Wellbeing, Minister for Higher Education, Minister for Medical and Health Research, Minister for Transport and Minister for Vocational Education and Skills) (11.54): I am pleased today to speak in support of Minister Rattenbury's revised amendment to the motion and to outline the progress the government has made and continues to make in regard to mental health services. Quite apart from the investment in front-line services, we are also willing to take the necessary decisions for the long-term sustainability of our healthcare system.

As the Minister for Health and Wellbeing, I work closely with Minister Rattenbury, and we are keenly aware that mental health plays a significant role in our overall health and wellbeing. A responsive mental health system and services is a crucial component of ensuring the wellbeing of Canberrans and how they engage with ACT Health, Canberra Health Services and other public health services in the ACT.

As Minister Rattenbury has said in this place a number of times, early intervention in mental health and suicide prevention are key priorities for the government. We are committed to an integrated approach to mental wellbeing and to working closely with community sector partners. The establishment of the new office for mental health and wellbeing will ensure there is a better whole-of-government focus on mental health. I also welcome the wider focus the office will bring in acknowledging the impact of socio-economic factors on people's lives and their mental health and wellbeing through focusing on matters such as housing and education.

While the coordination of mental health and health services for complex patients is not always straightforward, the government does not shy away from those challenges,

and it is indeed making significant progress on meeting them. Better integration and coordination through a territory-wide strategy for mental health and suicide prevention services is also fundamental to the government's vision for mental health and suicide prevention services. As Minister for Health and Wellbeing, I am progressing a truly territory-wide approach to service delivery which includes mental health services and coordinated care across different models of care that is person centred, culturally safe and integrated.

It is worth reminding members that around one-third of Canberrans will need mental health care at some stage in their lives. This means our local services and facilities need to expand as our population grows so that people can access the right care when and where they need it. This is why the government has invested significantly in recent years in mental health services and programs through budget investment. I am really pleased to see a number of ACT Labor's 2016 election commitments being met by the government through budget processes and the reforms Minister Rattenbury is leading.

With \$646 million over four years for the delivery of mental health services, the budget truly demonstrates the focus the government has on this important area of our healthcare system. To put that simply, our investment in mental health services for the Canberra community has grown to \$157 million, an increase in funding for this current year.

One of the key initiatives of this record investment is that funding has been committed to provide more supported accommodation for people with complex mental health needs to recover and live well in the community. As Minister Rattenbury has acknowledged, the complexities around mental health treatment and services are such that people have different levels and intensity of mental health issues and may well have physical health issues they are also dealing with at the same time. These are handled very well right across Canberra Health Services in the delivery of public health services in the ACT.

As our city grows, we will see more and more demands for mental health services, from early intervention and prevention measures through to emergency and intensive support. It is important that we focus on the full spectrum of those experiences and the important work in helping people to navigate these services.

This year's budget also invests in more specialist community-based mental health services, which are about not just reactive treatment but proactive treatment through prevention and innovative services that help towards recovery. I will highlight some of these investments: funding to expand the older persons mental health intensive treatment service; suicide prevention and very important after-care services to support people who may have attempted suicide; continued focus on providing more support to young people with mental health concerns; and funding programs for children, adolescents and young people, including the important work to establish Canberra's first inpatient adolescent mental health unit.

As Minister Rattenbury has indicated, the independent external review of mental health services was commissioned as part of the ACT government's response to the

draft accreditation report earlier this year. I am also pleased to advise that ACT Health and Canberra Health Services have been actively implementing contemporary best practice models of care for the emergency department in relation to mental health presentations.

As has been noted, the ACT leads the nation in its approach to having a mental health short-stay unit and the mental health assessment and consult liaison service located in the emergency department at the Canberra Hospital. These services support timely access for mental health treatment and also reduce the impact on access for non-mental health related emergency presentations. To further reduce ED demand in relation to mental health, a redesigned adult community mental health services model of care is being implemented. This will further increase access to timely mental health care in the community, to avoid conditions worsening to the extent that hospital-based care is the only option.

In addition, ACT Health funds important service partnerships with non-government organisations. As Mr Rattenbury noted, they are very important partners for the delivery of public health care in the ACT. These fund increased hospital diversion support through residential and non-residential step up, step down services. A significant impact will be seen in the community mental health policing initiative, where ACT Health fund mental health training for ACT Policing and Canberra Health Services mental health clinicians embedded in ACT Policing operations. These strategies enable first responders in ACT Policing to successfully manage mental health presentations away from the emergency department, where suitable.

As Mr Rattenbury noted, we had a very productive meeting with the College for Emergency Medicine recently, where the issue of presentations of mental health patients in the emergency department was a key topic. We really look forward to continuing that very productive conversation. As was also noted, ACT Health is currently developing a new strategy focused on the safety of nursing and midwifery staff in the workplace. As we know, mental health can be a challenging area of health services delivery, and that is why the new strategy will have a focus on areas where we need to improve, particularly in areas such as mental health.

We have been working with staff as well as industrial organisations—importantly, the ANMF—and other key stakeholders to develop the strategy. While we must ensure that staff are focused on caring for patients, it is also up to us to care for our staff. We expect the strategy to be released later this year. Further, we have been very pleased to have had discussions with the CEO of Canberra Health Services, in her first month, about developing an occupational violence strategy right across the organisation, which Minister Rattenbury referred to earlier in his statement.

As I have outlined, the government is implementing many leading initiatives in the area of mental health, and the government's recent investments are a testament to our commitment to delivering high quality public mental health services. I am proud of the progress the government is making in supporting the mental health and the physical health of Canberrans—very often interlinked. Minister Rattenbury and I look forward to working closely together and with our community partners and members right across the delivery of public healthcare services in the ACT to make sure the

ACT can continue to have a health system that meets the needs of our community now and into the future.

MRS DUNNE (Ginninderra) (12.02): I welcome the tenor of Mr Rattenbury's revised amendment, which calls on and substantially replicates the points I had made. That is the purpose of this motion and therefore I am happy to support the amendment.

Before I conclude, there are a few things that I do need to comment on. Mr Rattenbury spoke in his remarks about the negative characterisation that I had about the establishment of the office for mental health. I have to put on the record, as I have before, that I am sceptical as to whether the office for mental health is actually a significant policy improvement. That is really a matter of dispute between Mr Rattenbury and me. That is politics, and politics is filled with disputes of this sort. However, Mr Rattenbury talked a good talk about the establishment of the office for mental health and made quite substantial commitments which he eventually had to backtrack on.

Yes, he did make an announcement that the office for mental health would be established by July this year, but the original expectation in October-November 2016 was that it would have been established long before that. In fact, I was told in the first briefing that I received on mental health that the initial discussion paper on the structure of the office for mental health would be available by April 2017. It was not available in April 2017. I asked during estimates in June 2017, when the minister was absent, when we would see that. I was told the words, without verballing anyone, that as soon as the minister returned, that would be his first priority. I cannot remember the date offhand, but it was well into the August-September period before we did, in fact, actually see that discussion paper. That is when the date for establishment was set. It was much later than had been anticipated by the community, and it was certainly much later than was talked up to me and my staff when I first had a briefing on this.

So the negative characterisations about the establishment of the office for mental health that I make are entirely of Mr Rattenbury's creation, because he talked the good talk and then did not deliver for quite some time, to the disappointment of many in the community. Going to one of the other negative characterisations that Mr Rattenbury made in his speech, he said that I had been critical of wraparound services in the ACT. Mr Rattenbury needs to be a little more careful in reading prepared speeches. There was nothing that I said in my comments today about—I did not even mention—wraparound services. In the words I spoke today there is no mention of being critical of wraparound services.

No-one in this place should be in the position of saying that our wraparound services are fantastic or perfect. They are not. They will always need to be improved. We always need to be on guard to ensure that they are as effective as possible. To sit back and complacently say that we cannot do better, and to criticise someone for questioning whether we can do better, is not the way we improve services in the ACT. What this should be about, and it is the sort of thing that Mrs Jones did when she was the shadow minister for mental health, is trying to have a conversation about how you best serve the people of the ACT. You cannot sit back and say, "We have all

the answers and what we do in ACT Health is the bee's knees." As I have acknowledged here, there are places where we are ahead of the game, but there are other places where we are not.

Mr Rattenbury is quite right to say that there is a substantial contribution into community organisations, but the only published thing he said about Mental Health Week did not address community organisations. He is right to remind me, and I did overlook it, that he came into the chamber, I think during the adjournment debate last week, and spoke about Mental Health Month and acknowledged the community organisations at that point. But that was the first time that I had been aware of Mr Rattenbury saying anything about community organisations in the entirety of Mental Health Month.

It is one of the things that becomes formulaic with the government. Today Mr Rattenbury again used the term "not tolerated", in relation to occupational violence. It is easy to say that we will not tolerate occupational violence, but the clear facts of the matter are that occupational violence has reached extremely high levels in ACT mental health. The fact that the minister is responding to that—he has said that there is a new group coming together who are looking at this issue, and they are going to meet for the first time next week—may give you a long-term solution but it does not give you an immediate response to the subject. That is what the staff need.

At the same time, there are things which have been started which have been sidetracked, re-diverted or whatever. That has led to comments from the ANMF on radio recently. Matthew Daniel was almost speechless with rage at the things that have been started and diverted. Staff have approached me and said that they have asked for help and wanted to facilitate training within adult mental health facilities, both the mental health unit and Dhulwa, in relation to training for staff; that the money was not forthcoming; and that these issues had been sidelined. All the while, people are being beaten up.

I make no bones about the fact that this is a difficult issue. It is easy to say, "We won't tolerate it," but the people who are perpetrating these offences, by virtue of where they are, are not in their right mind. We cannot just negotiate with them in the same way we would in other circumstances. It is inherently dangerous. The people who are perpetrating these assaults need assistance probably more than anybody else in the system. We cannot turn our backs on them.

It is a very difficult issue. No-one disputes that. But I do not think that we have seen the openness that we would expect from a Greens minister on this issue. It was very unfortunate that in Mental Health Month, when this issue came up, the minister was not there to address the issues. Staff were sent out to address the issues and talk about these issues with the media, rather than the minister himself doing so. There may have been a good reason. He may have been out of town or whatever. But I could make myself available, and I thought it was unfortunate that the minister was not there to front the media and address these issues when they arose recently.

I welcome the amendment. I think that overall this motion will have a good outcome. I look forward to ongoing reporting on the implementation of the mental health

inpatient services report, and I look forward to a collaborative, collegiate response to addressing the needs of people with mental health issues in the ACT.

Amendment agreed to.

Original question, as amended, agreed to.

Tharwa bridge

MR PARTON (Brindabella) (12.12): I move:

That this Assembly:

(1) notes:

- (a) the enormous contribution Mr Val Jeffery made to the Tharwa community and Canberra itself;
- (b) Mr Jeffery's decisive actions during the catastrophic bushfires of 2003 that were considered instrumental in saving Tharwa community;
- (c) his passionate advocacy for the local bridge including retention of the existing structure and his campaign to have the bridge reopened; and
- (d) his significant contribution in preserving the character of Tharwa; and

(2) calls on the Government to:

- (a) provide a substantial tribute to Val Jeffery reflecting a cause that he was passionately committed to; and
- (b) ensure that such a tribute take the form of renaming the Tharwa Bridge as the Val Jeffery Bridge in recognition of his tireless effort in support of this iconic structure.

This motion seeks to provide a lasting testament to the memory of Val Jeffery and a significant tribute to the tireless contributions he made to our community. Time flies with frightening velocity, Madam Speaker; you and I both know that. Members will recall that it was little more than a year ago that we stood in this chamber to move a condolence motion to mourn the loss of Val Jeffery, a much-loved figure in this Assembly from his short time here but more so from his time as a strong community member and agitator and someone who lived life to the full. We reflected on his life, his achievements and his passionate commitment to community issues in Tharwa and to the ACT generally.

Val's sense of civic obligation created a prominent figure on our social and community landscape, and it is fair to say that the interests and needs of the community far outweighed his own personal interests in the way that he pursued them. When I look back on all the things that Val Jeffery achieved, I often wonder how on earth he fitted it in. He was the sort of bloke who could put just as much energy into his business and his family interests as he could into his community activities, of which there were many.

Val was never prepared to sit back and accept things the way they were. He could not do that, and he was prepared to stubbornly challenge the government and MLAs of all

persuasions to get action on the things he saw as important. Val's public spirit dominated his lifetime, and the community reaped much benefit from his efforts.

It is worth recalling the sheer expanse of Val's contribution to our community, not just for Tharwa but for the territory in general. At the territory level he was the chair of the ACT Bushfire Council for a decade and received the Australian Fire Service Medal for some 60 years' support to the Rural Fire Service, 38 of which were served as captain of the local fire brigade.

If that was Val's only civic contribution it would have been an impressive achievement in its own right, but with Val it did not stop there, not by a long shot. Val was the President of the Tharwa Show Society. He also served on a number of other community bodies, including the Tharwa progress association, the Tharwa community hall trust, the Tidbinbilla Pioneers Association, Junior Farmers in Tharwa and the Tharwa school board. He was a lifetime advocate for Tharwa and, among other things, he fought hard to keep the local primary school open.

In the disastrous bushfires of 2003 we all recall that Val Jeffery anticipated the risk to Tharwa and led the brigade in burning a firebreak around the western side of the village on the night of 17 January 2003. According to the *Canberra Times*, on the afternoon of 18 January in that year Val persuaded the police not to evacuate Tharwa because residents were well-prepared and needed to be on the ground to protect their homes. These actions were regarded as instrumental in saving the village.

Towards the end of a long and fruitful life, Valentine Jeffery became a member of this Assembly where he continued to advocate for the ideals and interests he saw as vital to his community's wellbeing. Of relevance to this motion, he also fought hard to have the Tharwa bridge restored and reopened. He lobbied hard against its closure.

The Tharwa bridge is an iconic structure within the territory. It reflects the architectural and engineering form of another age, and it certainly provides character to the local heritage. It also provides vital connectivity between the far south of the territory and the city of Canberra. Whenever the Murrumbidgee floods, the bridge ensures that residents living south and west of the river still have access to the city when Point Hut might be inaccessible.

Val Jeffery not only recognised the crucial function of the bridge but also its character and aesthetics, and he worked tirelessly to make sure that it was preserved. As a result, a major investment was dedicated to its refurbishment. Thanks to Val's efforts, we continue to enjoy this historic structure and the way it complements the character of the Tharwa village. We need to remember that parts of the bridge are resting with Val: they were buried with him as a symbol of his passion for this structure, and I am sure Val's spirit is with the bridge itself.

I have been in discussion with Mr Gentleman and his staff and I understand that Mr Gentleman will be moving some amendments which move this motion away somewhat from a focus on the Tharwa bridge for reasons that Mr Gentleman will soon explain. I acknowledge that, by and large, he and I have been on the same page on this matter for some time but, as Mr Gentleman will explain, the machinations and

the regulations around place names in the ACT and the advice from those in that space run contrary to the concept of renaming the bridge, so we will see how we go with that aspect of the debate.

Despite that advice I still hope that consideration could be given for the bridge itself to become the Val Jeffery Bridge, but I await to hear more from Mr Gentleman. The connections between Val and the bridge are compelling, enduring and emblematic, and there is no more fitting tribute we could pay Val and the memory of his community service than to name the Tharwa bridge in his honour and memory. I commend the motion to the Assembly.

MRS JONES (Murrumbidgee) (12.18): Mr Val Jeffery was an iconic part of our city, to use the words of Mr Barr. He bridged the gap between old Canberra—a country town—and modern Canberra. He was an MLA, a firefighter, a community advocate, a husband, a father and a grandfather.

We have had some discussion in the media, and no doubt will have in this place, about the importance of placenames. Placenames traditionally tell a story about a geographical area. There is no doubt that Mr Val Jeffery is part of the story of this place and, in particular, of the south of Canberra. His tireless lobbying played a part in dragging a sluggish government to repair the Tharwa bridge linking that village to the south of our city, which had been allowed to fall into very significant disrepair, not to mention his very long association with tackling bushfires, how and when to tackle them in and around the ACT, and, as Mr Parton has mentioned, his many committee works.

It would be appropriate for the bridge which he fought for to be named for him. His legacy is something which, upon his passing, was reflected on by all in this place. The Chief Minister said that he was a lifelong Canberran, an iconic part of our city, a man who stood up for what he believed was right. The Chief Minister also said he was Tharwa's unofficial mayor for decades and owned and operated the Tharwa general store, and that he had a passion and enthusiasm for the community and for rural life. The Chief Minister also said:

Over the decades he fought for his community, leading the campaign to reopen the Tharwa bridge, and he was instrumental in bringing the community together after the 2003 bushfire recovery effort.

Mr Rattenbury in this place said that although he was a short-time member of the Assembly he was well known to many of us not so much as a political candidate or MLA but as someone who had campaigned for his local community for many decades. Mr Rattenbury also said he was:

... a well-known Canberran who was passionate about Tharwa and regularly advocated successfully on behalf of the Tharwa community. He was always doing his best to make sure that the rural village was not forgotten, and I am certain that the Tharwa community will ensure that he is well commemorated ...

Mr Wall, when he came into this place after the passing of Mr Jeffery, said:

Val's contribution to the Canberra community spanned his whole lifetime. His commitment to reminding us of the significance of rural villages, particularly his beloved Tharwa, is unrivalled.

Mr Wall also said that Val fought long and hard alongside fellow Tharwa villagers to keep the Tharwa primary school open, and that the preservation and restoration of the bridge was high on the priority list for Val. These are all comments that have been made across all party lines in this place.

Even, as Mr Parton mentioned, Val's coffin itself had bolts from the original Tharwa bridge built into it by a local craftsman, the same craftsman who made the Assembly's mace. So it is my view that the suggestion of Mr Parton and the Canberra Liberals here is a good one. It is my view—as well as a consistent view, no doubt, across the chamber—that as a fighter and a community advocate he should be considered for the naming of the bridge which he fought for and for the community that he loved.

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) (12.22): I thank Mr Parton for his motion today about the importance of commemorating the significant contribution that the late Mr Val Jeffery OAM AFSM made to the Tharwa community and the Canberra community more broadly. Like my Assembly colleagues, and I suspect much of Tharwa and its surrounding community, I share the view that the remarkable impression left by Val should be appropriately acknowledged and celebrated.

The ACT Place Names Committee sits within my directorate and is responsible for advising me about opportunities to commemorate eminent Australians. While it is protocol to wait at least 12 months after the passing before the committee formally recommends a person for commemoration, a great deal of consideration has already taken place on how best to commemorate Val through the placenames process. In fact the current committee has discussed this topic at three separate meetings since Val's passing. During those meetings, the placenames committee discussed a number of ideas and the practicalities of implementing those ideas. Renaming the Tharwa bridge is certainly one option the committee seriously considered. They looked into it and found that there was unlikely to be any impact on the bridge's heritage significance, on community and social values or on historical continuity.

However, there are many considerations that factor in to place naming. The committee has found that the renaming of existing places or features is less likely to be picked up by the community, particularly if that feature is an established part of the environment. So while it could be renamed Val Jeffery Bridge, it may well still be called Tharwa bridge by most of the community.

Other ongoing investigations to honour Val include naming a new community space in Tharwa, with the idea that dedicating an unnamed place would be an appropriate way to pay respect to Val's legacy. I understand from the committee that they have identified a potential site within the Tharwa bridge reserve for a possible nature play

facility. The facility was outlined in the Tharwa village plan, which was developed in consultation with the local community, local businesses, and landholders. I was pleased to release the Tharwa village plan recently at the September Tharwa Bush Fair. Like the other ideas, the committee has investigated this option, including using recycled timbers from the Tharwa bridge to use within the nature play facility. But before any decisions are made, the committee will need to meet with Val's family and indeed the broader Tharwa community to discuss these ideas.

I am pleased to remind the Assembly that this will not be the first place-naming celebration of a Jeffery family member. In 2005, Clarrie Lane in Tharwa was formally named to commemorate Val's father, the late Clarence Charles Jeffery.

I have requested the committee secretariat located in the Office of the Surveyor-General and Land Information to further progress these investigations in consultation with the relevant agencies, including to determine the time frame required to establish the new nature play facility before liaising with the Jeffery family and the local community. I will be pleased to keep members informed about the progress towards suitably commemorating the important contribution made by Val Jeffery OAM AFSM by naming a public place in his honour.

By leave, I move amendments (1) and (2) circulated in my name together:

(1) Insert new paragraph (1)(e):

“(e) that the ACT Place Names Committee is currently investigating how to commemorate Mr Val Jeffery's contribution to the Tharwa community;”.

(2) Omit all text after (2), substitute:

“(2) calls on the ACT Place Names Committee to:

(a) consider a substantial tribute to Mr Val Jeffery which adequately reflects his passion and commitment to Tharwa; and

(b) consult with the Jeffery family, the Tharwa and wider Canberra community on the best way to commemorate the life and legacy of Mr Val Jeffery.”.

I commend my amendments to the Assembly.

MS LE COUTEUR (Murrumbidgee) (12.26): I support the ALP amendments and the comments from all the previous speakers about the contribution Val Jeffery made to the Canberra community. I will not bore people by repeating those. Suffice to say that his name was well known not just in his local community of Tharwa; everybody in Canberra knew Val Jeffery.

I take Mr Gentleman's point that even if the name of the Tharwa bridge were changed to Val Jeffery's bridge, we would probably still keep on calling it the Tharwa bridge. I very much support the amendment which suggests that the ACT Place Names Committee do what it appears they are already doing: look at a tribute to Val Jeffery, work out with the community and his family the most appropriate place to commemorate his name, and do it.

MR PARTON (Brindabella) (12.27): We will be supporting the amendments. Even though it changes the shape of this motion, I accept that the place-naming process is somewhat more complex than most of us believed it to be. I hope that Ms Cody will also come to that conclusion before the debate on her placenames motion, foreshadowed to be the next motion; but I digress.

I suggest that the vast difference between the two motions that I mention is the overwhelming public support for one of them. I have had overwhelming public support for the renaming of the bridge.

I do not necessarily absolutely accept the advice from the Place Names Committee that that option should be off the table. I hope that it will be reconsidered but I am most pleased that there is a process that is ongoing. I also trust that, if the decision is made to not go down this path, the Place Names Committee will arrive upon a substantial tribute to Val Jeffery.

It is always refreshing when we in this chamber can broadly agree on a matter that is up for debate. My thanks to the Place Names Committee, to the Jeffery family, to the Tharwa community and to the wider Tuggeranong community, who feel engaged in this matter. My thanks also to Mr Gentleman and his staff for their assistance on this matter.

Amendments agreed to.

Original question, as amended, resolved in the affirmative.

Sitting suspended from 12.29 to 2.30 pm.

Questions without notice

Taxation—commercial property rates

MR COE: My question is to the Treasurer. Treasurer, I refer to an opinion piece by David Rolfe, the dealer principal of Slaven Mazda, published in the *CityNews* of 11 October. The rates bill for that site on Melrose Drive in Phillip increased by \$100,000 in the 2017-18 financial year. This year it has increased by a further \$107,000. Why are car dealers in Phillip expected to absorb increases like this when they are constrained by manufacturers' pricing edicts and juggling increased costs in wages, rents, electricity and other factors?

MR BARR: There are obviously some factors in relation to the value of land in that particular precinct. Clearly there have been increases in the value of that land over time. It is not inconsistent with what we have seen in other parts of Canberra. As demand for particular pieces of land grows stronger, there are a range of alternative uses. For example, motor vehicle dealerships do find that the land they sit on has greater value over time as cities develop. That is not uncommon here in Canberra, as it is not uncommon in other parts of Australia or indeed around the world.

In relation to those specific blocks, I will seek some further advice from the Revenue Office as to whether there have been any specific factors that relate to those blocks,

any recent revaluations and the like. That would no doubt provide some further insight into those particular issues as they pertain to the examples the Leader of the Opposition has given.

MR COE: Treasurer, how are businesses in Phillip expected to cope with such high levels of rates and high increases in rates when they are competing with online businesses and also interstate businesses?

MR BARR: Online and interstate businesses also face business costs. Those would include, amongst other things, very high stamp duties and insurance taxes that would apply in other jurisdictions and that do not apply in the ACT.

MR WALL: Treasurer, how many businesses have to relocate or close down due to the high level of rates and charges imposed by your government? What impact will this have on consumers across Canberra, but particularly the Woden community, with respect to the dealerships?

MR BARR: There are now 27,500 businesses whose main place of operation is the ACT. That has grown by 2,000 in the past three years. What we are seeing is considerable growth in business activity in the ACT. I think the—

Opposition members interjecting—

MR BARR: outgoing CEO of the Canberra Business Chamber, Robyn Hendry, described Canberra's economic conditions as booming and as a boom time for businesses. There has been a very positive reaction to the abolition of—

Opposition members interjecting—

MADAM SPEAKER: Mr Coe and Mr Wall!

MR BARR: There has been a very positive reaction to the abolition of commercial stamp duty for small and medium-sized businesses on properties up to \$1.5 million. That is a particular benefit for those who are looking to establish business in the ACT—

Opposition members interjecting—

MADAM SPEAKER: Members!

MR BARR: and there has been quite a significant amount of interest in new investment in the ACT. We do, of course, have the fastest growing economy in Australia—

Ms Stephen-Smith: Point of order, Madam Speaker.

MADAM SPEAKER: Chief Minister, can you please resume your seat. There is a point of order.

Ms Stephen-Smith: I did have a point of order about the interruptions but—

MADAM SPEAKER: You heard silence; so you thought you would sit down. Chief Minister.

MR BARR: Thank you, Madam Speaker. As I was saying, we do have the fastest rate of economic growth in Australia. We have very low unemployment and we have a very significant flow of new investment into the territory. We have more businesses operating now than we did three years ago.

Public housing—renewal program

MS LE COUTEUR: My question is to the minister for housing and relates to the commitment to renew 1,000 homes. Minister, can you confirm that there will be the same sort of disposal of larger sites as has been done by the public housing renewal task force to date? If so, how will the government decide which properties it intends to sell and where the replacement properties will be located?

MS BERRY: No, it will not be exactly the same as the current renewal program, because the current renewal program is continuing, and it was designed, with the asset recycling initiative, to provide a funding boost to the ACT to deliver on its infrastructure project, specifically, light rail, which is coming along very well. The process for a future renewal program will be considered based on—

Ms Le Couteur: A point of order: could you please tell me something about the current program, which was the question?

MS BERRY: That was not the question.

Ms Le Couteur: No, the question was about—

MADAM SPEAKER: The point of order is about being relevant to the question.

MS BERRY: I did; I just said—

Members interjecting—

MS BERRY: On the point of order, Madam Speaker, the question was whether I could confirm this. I said no, I would not, because the current program was running in a particular way.

Ms Le Couteur: Madam Speaker—

MADAM SPEAKER: Resume your seat. A point of order? Stop the clock, thank you.

Ms Le Couteur: I said: how will the government decide which properties it intends to sell and where will the replacement properties be located? Could the minister please address the question?

MS BERRY: On the point of order, I answered the first part of the question. With regard to the second part of the question, those decisions will be considered by cabinet.

MS LE COUTEUR: What is the net cost expected to the government of this program, and what is the time frame for the renewal?

MS BERRY: The strategy is very clear. It announced a \$100 million commitment for 1,000 homes to be renewed and an additional 200 new properties to be delivered.

MRS JONES: Minister, with regard to a public housing program, will you meet with the Darwinia Park Action Group once more before soil is turned on that property development?

MS BERRY: Mrs Jones may not be aware, but the Darwinia Park group is still in ACAT—I do not think there is a decision yet.

Mrs Jones: No, it's finished.

MS BERRY: It is finished?

Mrs Jones: It's done. Finished. Will you meet with them one more time?

MS BERRY: I will get some advice about where that project is up to.

Mrs Jones: You don't know if you can meet with them?

MS BERRY: But I had not met with the Darwinia Park group for some time—

Mrs Jones: Well, will you meet with them?

MS BERRY: Giulia—

Mrs Jones: Sorry, it's very important to them.

MS BERRY: I know it is important to you and important to them; just give me a chance to answer. I will find out where it is up to and when the actual development will take place. Of course we will continue to work with the Darwinia Park group, the same way we have worked with Monash group and the Calder group—

Mrs Jones: But will you meet with them? It's actually a very important question.

MADAM SPEAKER: Members! If you have a point of order, you stand. Let the minister answer; it is not a conversation.

Mrs Jones: Well, this is an important question for the people whom we represent in this place, and I don't think it should become a joke.

MADAM SPEAKER: Mrs Jones! Quiet, please! Do you have anything further to add, minister?

MS BERRY: No.

Housing—affordability

MR PARTON: My question is to the Minister for Housing and Suburban Development. Minister, your ACT housing strategy says that you will “set an annual target to increase affordable home purchase opportunities”. What will the target for affordable home ownership opportunities be?

MS BERRY: Those targets are set during the indicative land release programs, which are available online. The 2018-19 program is available online. Older targets that were delivered under the affordable housing strategy were around 400. This target, by introducing the 15 per cent, will deliver approximately 630 social and affordable dwellings each year.

MR PARTON: Minister, when will those targets in the forward estimates years be announced?

MS BERRY: They will be announced the same way the indicative land release programs are announced each year.

MR COE: Minister, do you accept that the government’s land release policy has had a detrimental impact on housing affordability in Canberra?

MS BERRY: No, I do not accept that.

Domestic and family violence—services

MS CODY: My question is to the Deputy Chief Minister. Minister, can you please provide an update on funding support available for families who are escaping or impacted by domestic and family violence?

MS BERRY: I thank Ms Cody for her interest in family safety. I want to inform the Assembly that in 2016, when we launched our \$21.42 million package to fund our response to domestic and family violence, we also announced a new safer families grant assistance program to support people who had been impacted by family violence. The grants program was facilitated through the rental bond scheme. We have supported many women with funding assistance for such things as moving house, buying furniture and whitegoods and paying utilities and rent.

Over recent months, the program has been reviewed to make sure that it is working as well as it can and supporting the right people at the right time. Changes have been made to the program to allow easier access to grants of up to \$2,000, with a total of \$406,000 in funding committed over the next four years.

Under the new arrangements, a person no longer has to apply for a rental bond loan to be eligible. The range of assistance that a person can apply for includes legal costs, pet care, mortgage and rental payments and other costs associated with establishing or sustaining a family home. The revised program also expands the referral pathways to now include private, community, government and social, health and justice sector agencies that work with people to address the impact of family violence, as well as the Domestic Violence Crisis Service.

MS CODY: Minister, what else is the government doing to provide early support to families who may be impacted by family violence?

MS BERRY: I thank Ms Cody for the supplementary question. The insights gathered through the co-design for the family safety hub have prompted the government to think differently about the role of the hub in the ACT, which was officially launched on 11 May this year. The family safety hub is a network for collaboration and innovation for lasting change. It brings the right people together to work through a series of challenges, an exploration of what might be possible, each challenge aiming to see how we can provide better help earlier. The hub fosters sharing understanding, builds capability, delivers new or improved pathways and ensures system cohesion.

The family safety hub has now undertaken its first challenge around how we might prevent and intervene early in domestic and family violence for pregnant women and new parents. Nearly 60 ideas were developed by the community sector. The Coordinator-General for Family Safety and the family safety hub are actively exploring two of these ideas to see whether they have the potential to address the challenge. The best of these solutions will be piloted and improved. Effective pilots may be scaled up and embedded across the service system. I am happy to say that we are just weeks away from launching our first pilot, which will partner with a range of government and non-government organisations to assist new parents and pregnant women who may be facing violence and need help.

MS ORR: Minister, why is sustained, real investment by government in these types of services so important?

MS BERRY: I thank Ms Orr for her supplementary. We can see the benefits that the additional \$21 million is providing to our community. We have more front-line service provision, more new services and greater thinking around solutions.

Of course, the ACT cannot do this work alone. Earlier this year, a national consultation kicked off to develop the fourth action plan for reducing violence against women. The ACT government has been working in partnership with the commonwealth in facilitating local consultations with our sector over July and August.

In early October I led an ACT delegation of government, community service and persons with lived experience of violence to the COAG reducing violence against women summit in Adelaide. The summit provided the opportunity for all jurisdictions to come together to consider the approach and priorities for inclusion in the fourth action plan.

When I met with women's safety ministers at this event, it was clear that the critical issue facing all jurisdictions right now was the looming end to federal funding for vital services. In the ACT, members may recall that whilst we did not receive a great deal of funding from the commonwealth's third action plan, we did get money for the Women's Legal Centre to establish a domestic violence program to provide women with legal representation and holistic wraparound support. This service and this funding are crucial. It means that the centre has been able to extend their services to meet the growing needs of women who are experiencing domestic and family violence. Previously, this service was limited to just providing initial advice.

The service faces a funding cliff on 30 June. I am very hopeful that the federal government will see the importance of this matter and make an announcement about new funding for this program very soon, and many others like it across the country.

Public housing—renewal program

MS LAWDER: My question is to the Minister for Housing and Suburban Development. Minister, in your response to Ms Cheyne's question yesterday, you said that the government would provide \$100 million in additional funding for new public housing over the next five years. Minister, how much of this figure will be spent on replacement of current public housing dwellings in each year?

MS BERRY: The \$100 million announcement that was made during the strategy's launch on Monday is for 1,000 properties to be renewed over the next five years and 200 new public housing properties to be developed. Ongoing work as usual that occurs within Housing ACT will continue.

MS LAWDER: Minister, again in relation to the \$100 million, how much in each year will be spent on additional public housing and additional assistance to community housing providers?

MS BERRY: At the launch of the housing strategy on Monday I also announced that an additional 151 properties would go to community housing providers to assist in improving and increasing the amount of stock that those organisations have. That 151 is more than any of the community housing providers in the ACT can deliver in four years, and we are delivering them in one.

MR PARTON: Minister, how many actual additional residences will be built each year with this \$100 million?

MS BERRY: As I said at the launch of the housing strategy, at least 200 dwellings. It will depend on the makeup of those dwellings, but at least 200 dwellings have been committed to as part of the \$100 million.

Ginninderry—environmental impact statement

MS LEE: My question is to the Minister for Environment and Heritage. Minister, the *Canberra Times* today reports that you have exempted the Ginninderry development

from an EIS process despite objections from the Conservator of Flora and Fauna, the Commissioner for Sustainability and the Environment, local community groups and submissions made about protection of the little eagle nesting places, golden sun moths and the pink-tailed worm-lizard. The ACT government has a 50 per cent stake in the Ginninderry development. Minister, what actions have you taken to ensure that you did not have a conflict of interest in waiving the EIS for this project?

MR GENTLEMAN: I thank Ms Lee for the question. I will give some background first. On 9 March 2018 Riverview projects formally lodged an application for the environmental impact statement exemption under section 211 of the Planning and Development Act 2007 for the urban development of Ginninderry stage 2 and subsequent stages as well. In October I granted the EIS exemption—as Ms Lee noted was in the newspaper today—to the Ginninderry project as I am satisfied that the expected environmental impact of the proposal has been sufficiently addressed through recent studies. I did that after looking at recent studies and advice from EPSDD. I am the minister for planning and, therefore, had the opportunity under that title and under the act to provide that exemption.

But I will say that an EIS exemption is not an approval process. It is a recognition of the work that has already occurred. Of course members would be aware that we made changes due to the then recent studies in the area way back in 2016 about protection for the little eagle and for buffer zones there. There is no conflict of interest.

MS LEE: Minister, did any minister, including the Chief Minister and Treasurer or the Minister for Housing and Suburban Development, approach or write to you urging the waiver of the EIS?

MR GENTLEMAN: There is no waiver. This is in regard to an exemption for an EIS in recognition of the work that has already been done.

Opposition members interjecting—

MR GENTLEMAN: We are hearing from the shadow minister against the environment in this case. It is pretty interesting to see her on this side of the chamber talking about this particular aspect.

It is important, of course, that work is done when we see development applications come through to ensure that they stand by the conditions that are put forward in any EIS exemption. That would be the next process when a DA comes forward.

Ms Lee: Madam Speaker, on a point of order, the minister did not answer the question. The question clearly was: did any minister, including the Chief Minister and Treasurer or the Minister for Housing and Suburban Development, approach him urging him on this process? He has failed to answer that question.

MADAM SPEAKER: Did you have anything further to add?

MR GENTLEMAN: I cannot recall any correspondence to me in regard to this matter, but I will take that on notice and have a look at the records.

MRS DUNNE: Minister, what advice have you sought or been given about potential conflicts of interest where an exemption to an EIS is sought for an ACT government project, or a project where the ACT government has a significant stake?

MR GENTLEMAN: Legal advice is provided to ministers on a regular basis about their decision-making. That is the advice that we receive.

Ginninderry—environmental impact statement

MRS KIKKERT: My question is to Mr Rattenbury as Minister for Climate Change and Sustainability. Minister, today's *Canberra Times* reports that the government has exempted the Ginninderry development from an EIS process, even though there were numerous objections from the Conservator of Flora and Fauna, local community groups and environmental experts that suggested that insufficient protections had been offered to the vulnerable little eagle for their nesting areas as well as concerns about the impact the development would have on the critically endangered golden sun moth and the vulnerable pink-tailed worm-lizard. As Minister for Climate Change and Sustainability, have you been consulted on this development?

MR RATTENBURY: No, not formally.

MRS KIKKERT: Minister, did you oppose or otherwise lodge objections to this development at any stage?

MR GENTLEMAN: Madam Speaker, this question is directly in relation to the environment. I am the minister for the environment. I will take the question. Of course we take all aspects of the environment very seriously, and all stakeholders in the environment groups very seriously as well, in relation to making decisions about future environmental issues. Indeed, we have to make sure that we are in line with the Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act, the commonwealth act. We have to ensure that we align with that as well.

MS LEE: Minister Rattenbury, have you made any representations from any environmental groups to the minister for the environment about their concerns in relation to the environmental sustainability of the development?

MR RATTENBURY: There is a whole range of issues when it comes to the sustainability of the development. I have certainly been involved in active discussions about the proposal to not provide gas in that area. That is certainly an area in which, because of my climate change responsibilities, I am particularly taking an interest. We have received representations that gas not have to be provided. As members may be aware, under the legislation at the moment it is mandatory to provide gas into these suburbs. That is certainly an issue that I have been involved in. I have had discussions with the Conservation Council about these issues, and I am aware of various other public comments by other groups.

Roads—resurfacing

MS ORR: My question is to the Minister for Roads: could you please provide an update to the Assembly on the ACT government's annual road resurfacing program?

MR STEEL: I thank Ms Orr for her question. Earlier this month I announced the start of the ACT government's annual road resurfacing program. Road resurfacing is an important part of the maintenance of Canberra's roads. It involves sealing small cracks and imperfections. This improves road safety and extends the overall life of the underlying road pavement in the ACT road network.

Our \$16 million road resurfacing program will see approximately 230 kilometres or one million square metres of roads resurfaced across the ACT road network. This represents a size comparable to 140 football fields. The road resurfacing will take place across the ACT, with more extensive works taking place in Garran, Kambah, Phillip, Red Hill, Campbell, Charnwood, Higgins, Holt, Latham, Macgregor, Melba, Page, Scullin and Turner.

In addition to road resurfacing, works will include 100,000 square metres of other resurfacing works, such as asphalt overlays and micro surfacing. This year's road resurfacing will trial an exciting new material, Plastiphalt, which uses recycled material and ensures that the equivalent of 800 plastic bags, 252 glass bottles and 18 used printer toner cartridges do not end up in our landfills. The Plastiphalt trial will take place on existing sections of Horse Park Drive and Gundaroo Drive. The road resurfacing program began in suburbs around Tuggeranong and will be completed by April 2019.

MS ORR: Minister, could you please explain this year's trial of Plastiphalt?

MR STEEL: I thank Ms Orr for her supplementary. In this year's annual road resurfacing program, I am very pleased that the ACT government is trialling the exciting innovation of Plastiphalt. Plastiphalt is a material composed of recycled glass and soft plastics. It is a cutting-edge technology that repurposes plastic into road material and reduces plastic pollution.

Every tonne of Plastiphalt, as I have mentioned, uses around 800 plastic bags and also glass from 252 glass bottles. For every tonne of Plastiphalt laid, this is material that will not go into landfill, which is an initiative that will reduce waste and promote the sustainable use of waste. Further to that, 300 kilograms of recycled asphalt is also used for every tonne of Plastiphalt.

The trial will take place on the existing sections of the roads that I mentioned. I look forward to seeing the outcome of the trial.

MR PETTERSSON: Minister, how will the work impact on commuters?

MR STEEL: I thank Mr Pettersson for his supplementary and for his interest in roads. The ACT government wants to ensure that there is minimal impact on Canberrans in their daily commutes to work or home. That is why works will be carried out during off-peak times and at night to reduce the impact on road users. You may have already seen some workers working on the road resurfacing at night time on your streets.

Signage will also be put up well in advance and affected residents and businesses will be advised by a letterbox drop at least two days in advance of road resurfacing in their street starting. Works are set to be completed by June 2019. Overall, these works will positively impact commuters by ensuring that investment in maintaining our roads is done in advance and in a systematic fashion, causing the least amount of disruption.

ACT Health—public interest disclosure

MRS DUNNE: My question is to the Minister for Health and Wellbeing. I refer to reports in the media today that ACT Health has taken disciplinary action against doctors in the Canberra Hospital radiology department who made public interest disclosures, and the contract of one doctor has been discontinued. You stated in a letter to me on 22 October that ACT health services are “aware of the provisions of the Public Interest Disclosure Act 2012, protecting those who make a public interest disclosure, and those protections are, and will continue to be respected”. Minister, what actions have you taken to ensure that Canberra Health Services or ACT Health have not breached the Public Interest Disclosure Act 2012, consistent with the sentiments you expressed in your letter of 22 October 2018?

MS FITZHARRIS: I thank Mrs Dunne for the question. I have sought and received assurances that ACT Health, and indeed the Chief Minister, Treasury and Economic Development Directorate, are handling public interest disclosure matters in strict accordance with the law. They are also making sure that any other issues that are raised in regard to workplace behaviour are being followed in accordance with policy, procedure and law.

MRS DUNNE: Minister, when did you first become aware that ACT Health or Canberra Health Services had taken disciplinary action against doctors who lodged public interest disclosures?

MS FITZHARRIS: I note that the matters relating to public interest disclosures and other matters raised by staff are the subject of some legal proceedings. I have been advised not to answer questions on this matter because a number of them are subject to legal proceedings, as Mrs Dunne is well aware.

MR COE: Minister, what actions have you taken or will you take to ensure that your directorate does not take disciplinary action against people who make submissions to the review of ACT Health culture?

MS FITZHARRIS: Certainly it is very clear in my statements on the conduct of the independent review, and as has been made patently clear by the independent panel members themselves, all members of the panel and all members of the secretariat supporting the panel are subject to very clear and longstanding legislation in the ACT which includes the health information act, the health records act, the Public Sector Management Act, the Privacy Act. And it has been made very clear by me to the panel and by the panel to anyone and everyone who wishes to make a submission to them that their highest order priority is to maintain confidentiality and also, of course, to abide by the law. I trust them very much to do that and know how seriously they take these matters.

Mental health—occupational violence

MRS JONES: My question is to the Minister for Mental Health and Minister for Corrections and Justice Health. I refer to an answer to Mrs Dunne's question on notice 1567 regarding assaults on staff. Minister, you advised that there were 129 assaults on staff in mental health, corrections health and alcohol and drug services between 1 January 2017 and 30 June 2018. What actions have you taken in order to reduce the high number of assaults on staff in your areas of ministerial responsibility?

MR RATTENBURY: As I have canvassed in response to previous questions on this matter, I had a conversation with the Chief Nurse who is developing the nurse safety strategy. As I have told this chamber before, I have emphasised to her my expectation that that strategy will address the needs of staff in the mental health space because, as we have discussed, they face particular risks due to the patients they are working with who can be prone to behavioural issues and potentially violent outbursts, as we have witnessed through a number of recent incidents. That has been the primary focus.

Obviously the senior executives are party to those discussions, and I have made it clear that I expect these matters to be dealt with. I am awaiting the final nurse safety strategy, which I believe is quite close to being finished.

MRS JONES: Minister, what response have you given to calls by the Australian Nursing and Midwifery Federation for better violence management training of staff working in these areas?

MR RATTENBURY: I have met a number of times recently with the ANMF and I have personally said to them that I agree with them that people should not be subject to violence in the workplace, as I discussed this morning. They have raised a number of ideas with me about how that can be addressed. There is now a situation set up whereby the CEO of Canberra Health Services has a fortnightly meeting with the head of the ANMF. Certainly, one of the key agenda items in those discussions is the issue of occupational violence. I have asked the CEO to take on board the suggestions from the ANMF and give me advice on how elements of that will be progressed.

MRS DUNNE: Minister, has security for staff working in high-risk areas such as Dhulwa been reduced in recent times and, if so, why?

MR RATTENBURY: I have had no reports to that effect. There has been a discussion about whether the number of security staff should be increased. I have, in a number of conversations with the nurses federation and with senior executives, canvassed this issue. The difficult question is to find the right number of security staff. These are meant to be therapeutic environments. We do not want an over-presence of security staff and a sense that it is more of a correctional facility. At the same time we need enough security staff that our health staff are adequately supported. That is the difficult discussion. In some of these incidents the security staff are present and available but they occur so quickly that the security staff are not able to intervene before injuries are inflicted. This is a challenging operational discussion that we need to continue to work through.

Taxis—licences

MR WALL: My question is to the Minister for Regulatory Services. Minister, in your statement of 18 September you said that holders of perpetual taxi plate licences continue to maintain their incomes from leasing those licences. Until recently, plate owners had been able to lease their plates for up to \$20,000 per annum. How can plate owners continue to maintain their income if the ACT government reduces the market rate by leasing plates at \$5,000 a year?

MR RAMSAY: I thank Mr Wall for the question. Certainly, as we continue with our ongoing evaluation and ongoing reforms in on-demand transport, we are looking at the impacts on the market. We have done that very carefully. What we will continue to do, as we continue to roll out the reforms, is ensure that there is appropriate support. We have provided the information quite publicly to people and we are very convinced that the reforms that we are doing have a clear focus on ensuring good consumer access to transport. We will continue with that.

MR WALL: Minister, what will be the financial impact on people who bought taxi plates to fund their retirement, as a result of the government's decision to reduce the market rate for leasing a plate to \$5,000 a year?

MR RAMSAY: In relation to the perpetual taxi licences, one of the things, again, that we have been doing is noting the impact and linking quite closely with the Taxi Plate Owners Association in relation to this. As part of that, we have been looking at the appropriate support for people who have had long-term investments, as they have, with these particular investments. The focus for this government is on ensuring that people who are seeking to have transport around Canberra are supported with that, with all of the options. As part of that—

Mr Wall interjecting—

MR RAMSAY: As part of that, what we have been doing is linking with the Taxi Plate Owners Association and have made it very clear to them that if there is—

Mr Wall interjecting—

Mr Gentleman: Point of order.

MADAM SPEAKER: Mr Wall, you asked the question. Allow the minister to answer.

MR RAMSAY: That we are providing the appropriate forms of counselling and financial advice in the area. We will continue to do that, provide that appropriate support. We do know that there has been—

Mr Wall interjecting—

MR RAMSAY: We do know—

MADAM SPEAKER: Mr Wall! Enough, Mr Wall.

Mr Gentleman: Point of order, Madam Speaker.

MADAM SPEAKER: Stop the clock, thanks.

Mr Gentleman: The opposition continue to interject even after your instruction. It is difficult to hear the minister answer. I would ask that you ask them to stop interjecting.

MADAM SPEAKER: Gentlemen on my left, Mr Wall in particular: can the minister answer in a level of silence. Thank you. Minister, please continue.

MR RAMSAY: Thank you, Madam Speaker. The government has learnt significantly in relation to the changes that have been taking place, and we have been connecting with the key taxi plate organisations as well. We can refer people—and we have—to the support that is available through Woden Community Service. If there are any inquiries they would like to make, I put on record that the phone number for them to contact is 6282 2644.

MISS C BURCH: Minister, what will be the financial impact of reducing the market rate for plate leasing to \$5,000 a year on people who have mortgaged their homes to buy perpetual taxi plate licences and who are relying on leasing income to make those mortgage payments?

MR RAMSAY: We have continued to link with the organisation. There has been a range of views expressed. What we will continue to do, as we roll out the reforms that we committed to in 2015, and that we have evaluated on the basis of very clear evidence, is to make sure that there is appropriate counselling support for people who are involved.

Mr Wall: How many lives?

Ms Berry: Madam Speaker, that interjection from Mr Wall was completely inappropriate, suggesting that Mr Ramsay has had any effect on people's lives with regard to—

Opposition members interjecting—

Ms Berry: The implication was there, Madam Speaker. It is unparliamentary.

MADAM SPEAKER: Members, can we go back to the principles of (1) not interjecting and (2) having a level of respect with regard to comments to other members.

Aboriginals and Torres Strait Islanders—police engagement

MR PETTERSSON: I have a question for the Minister for Police and Emergency Services. Minister, why is it so important for ACT Policing to engage and work with the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community?

MR GENTLEMAN: I thank the member for his question and his interest in our community—

Mr Parton: And roads.

MR GENTLEMAN: Yes, Madam Speaker. I thank the member for his interest in the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community as well. They are sometimes disproportionately represented in our criminal statistics and this can occur for a number of reasons. When incidents occur, too often some in our community believe that the solution is to lock people up and throw away the keys. This is often detrimental to the individual, their family and our broader community.

It is important that we understand the diversity in Canberra and engage with all the communities that make up our fantastic city. We must work with our Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community, and a good police force will develop relationships with this part of our Canberra community.

As police minister I have been pleased to see the efforts that our force has made regarding the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community. ACT Policing has a strong commitment to working with stakeholders and government agencies to protect vulnerable members of the community, including through diversion programs. This commitment was recently affirmed by the incoming Chief Police Officer, Ray Johnson.

In his first media appearance after being appointed, Assistant Commissioner Johnson publicly said he wanted to continue to focus on vulnerable communities, including the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community, who are over-represented as both victims and offenders in the justice system. My colleagues and I look forward to working with the new CPO in this important endeavour.

MR PETTERSSON: Can the minister provide an update on how ACT police have been engaging with the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community?

MR GENTLEMAN: One way ACT Policing engages is through the Chief Police Officer's Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Advisory Board. As part of her role on this board, Ngunnawal elder, Aunty Violet Sheridan, noticed that the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander flags were missing from ACT Policing's HQ, the Winchester station in Belconnen. This was promptly rectified and both flags now fly proudly outside Winchester.

Another sign of ACT Policing's commitment to building a stronger relationship with the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community was the launch of the two new patrol boats on Lake Burley Griffin, which I was proud to be part of. The names of the two boats comes from the Ngunnawal language and were chosen in consultation with elders. They are named Ngunnawal and *Yhuuramulun*. *Yhuuramulun* means "dreaming" and symbolises the vessel's connection to the local river system or the dreaming path.

ACT Policing also has about 20 Indigenous members. One of them, Matthew Saul, has a talent for Rugby. He was recently selected to play in the Indigenous Australian Invitational Rugby Team, a Rugby Union tour across Canada and the USA. This will enable Matthew to have a cultural exchange with other Indigenous communities.

As Matthew has said, this experience will allow him to bring back knowledge, leadership skills and lessons to his community, and help him to give back and to become a positive influence and role model for the next generation. I want to thank ACT Policing for their hard work.

MS CHEYNE: Minister, what role did Chief Police Officer Justine Saunders play in this range of engagement?

MR GENTLEMAN: I thank Ms Cheyne for her question and her considered support for the former Chief Police Officer. Assistant Commissioner Saunders led her troops from the front and is widely respected across the community and this Assembly. She helped make ACT Policing a better force and, I know, will be missed. I worked closely with Assistant Commissioner Saunders from her appointment. Her experience and knowledge during this time were an invaluable support to me. I personally thank her for her assistance.

Among her many achievements was her work with our Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community. Through her connected and concerted efforts at engagement, ACT Policing has developed a stronger and better relationship with our Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community. It is clear that the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community also appreciated Assistant Commissioner Saunders's efforts. At the launch of the new patrol boats, Aunty Agnes Shea spoke in a very endearing way of the assistant commissioner and of her commitment and passion, and thanked her for helping forge such a strong relationship with her community.

I am proud to have worked with someone as motivated and skilled as Assistant Commissioner Saunders. I thank her for her wonderful service as the Chief Police Officer of the ACT. The government and, I think, all members of this Assembly, and I of course, thank Assistant Commissioner Saunders and wish her all the very best for the future.

Taxis—government assistance

MISS C BURCH: My question is to the minister for regulatory services regarding the mental health of ACT taxi plate owners. Minister, in your statement of 18 September you said that the ACT government will ensure that personal counselling services are available for those in the on-demand industry who require additional support. Several owners have contacted the service in Woden, only to be told that the service knew nothing of this offer. Minister, how is this possible, and what steps have you taken to ensure that all relevant counselling services are fully equipped to provide this service to affected owners?

MR RAMSAY: I thank Miss Burch for her question. We have linked regularly with Woden Community Service. Woden Community Service are an outstanding community service organisation who have operated for many years, offering high quality counselling and high quality community services more broadly. They were chosen for this on the basis of their expertise and their long history in that regard. We have full confidence in the way that they are continuing to carry out those counselling services for people who may be affected.

MISS C BURCH: Minister, how will counselling services assist taxi plate owners who have had their financial livelihoods destroyed by the policy of your government?

MR RAMSAY: I reject the premise of the question. I note again that there has been a significant evaluation taking place in relation to this and that the evidence is quite clear that there have been a range of ways that people have been affected. The evaluation has indicated—and the government agrees with the evaluation that has been provided to it—that individuals who purchased their licences directly from the government in 1995 or earlier, and who held onto them, have received a full return on their investment.

We do note that there has been a good, sound return on that over a number of times where there has been the limited market and what we will be doing—

Members interjecting—

MADAM SPEAKER: Members! Please! Mr Wall, Mr Coe, Mr Barr, please! Minister Ramsay.

MR RAMSAY: Thank you, Madam Speaker. We are working to ensure that people who are seeking on-demand transport around Canberra so that they can move around this wonderful city can do so with a range of options, which have been very positively received. We have noted that there has been a sound return on investment for those who have had a very well-protected form of investment over time and at this stage we are also providing counselling support for those who might otherwise be affected.

MR WALL: Minister, is it not insulting to taxi plate owners for your government to be offering mental health counselling to address the unnecessary stress and anguish that you have caused as a result of your government's policies?

MR RAMSAY: No, it is not. It is supportive of those members.

Mr Wall interjecting—

MADAM SPEAKER: Mr Wall, enough.

Mr Wall interjecting—

MADAM SPEAKER: Mr Wall! You are warned.

Mr Wall interjecting—

MADAM SPEAKER: Mr Wall! You know you have been warned.

Transport—MyWay agents

MR MILLIGAN: My question is to the Minister for Transport. We have heard from local businesses that have applied to the government to become a MyWay recharge agent and have felt that they have been given the run-around. They have been told that it is too difficult or expensive to obtain the necessary equipment. Minister, why is the government telling businesses that it is too hard or too expensive to become a MyWay recharge agent?

MS FITZHARRIS: I am not aware that they are. I am not aware of the precise nature of those conversations. I will seek some further advice.

MR MILLIGAN: Minister, does the ACT government in any way limit the number of MyWay recharge agents and, if so, why?

MS FITZHARRIS: Certainly Transport Canberra has a very considered approach to the allocation of MyWay agents, and there are some issues around that. But certainly it is also the case that we are in the process of procuring a new ticketing system. What is exciting about that is that from funding in a recent budget we have now seen top-up machines being placed on platforms across the city. I expect they will be operational in just a few weeks.

I am pleased that they have now appeared on a number of the platforms at interchanges around the city. That will mean passengers will have a much easier way to top up their MyWay cards, which I know has been very frustrating for MyWay users for many years. We look forward to those starting and also to further updates on the integration of light rail and bus ticketing as well as the process of procuring a new ticketing system for the ACT.

MISS C BURCH: Minister, why is the ACT government imposing an arbitrary restriction on local businesses who would like to provide ACT government services?

MS FITZHARRIS: I do not believe that we are.

Gambling—harm minimisation measures

MS CHEYNE: My question is to the Attorney-General. Attorney, can you tell the Assembly about the outcomes of the most recent gambling harm minimisation round table?

MR RAMSAY: I thank Ms Cheyne for the question. I chaired the latest gambling harm minimisation round table on 29 September this year. I was very pleased with the level of engagement and the cooperation from all of the participants—industry, community advocates, unions and people with lived experience of gambling harm—who came together and worked together on concrete proposals for change.

Out of the round table we built a shared sense of commitment to new and stronger rules for identifying and responding to signs of gambling harm. We explored ways to help make our protections, like self-exclusion, stronger and more consistent across various clubs. We also explored the need for updated and more consistent training, particularly to ensure that club workers know their responsibilities and their rights and that they are supported in enforcing harm minimisation rules.

It is clear that there are leaders in our clubs industry who welcome engagement with the government and the community to develop stronger gambling harm protections and to enable clubs to serve their members even better. It is also clear that our community expects more and stronger harm minimisation regulations. This government is clearly of the view that we can have both stronger rules for gambling harm minimisation and a stronger and more diverse clubs sector. The round table was an example of everyone who was affected working together to achieve these goals.

MS CHEYNE: Attorney, how will these initiatives deliver stronger protections for individuals, families, and our whole community?

MR RAMSAY: I thank Ms Cheyne for the supplementary question. This government's policy on gaming machines is person-centred. It is mindful of the social value that our clubs offer and also the impacts beyond the individuals who are directly affected by gambling harm. That is how, in our discussion in relation to new regulations, we move those ahead to ensure that there is minimised harm. That is why we have a point of starting with the lived experience of individuals.

We heard at the round table about how a strong self-exclusion system can help people who are looking for support to stay safe and prevent gambling harm. We also heard about how relationships and interactions with staff at clubs are important not only for gambling harm prevention but also for building a sense of community at our local clubs. That is why we devoted part of the meeting to talking about how it is that we might craft the right training, and who it is that needs that training, to empower staff to take action.

Better rules to guide clubs to identify and respond to gambling harm by offering support and better training to make those rules effective will make individual club patrons, their families and their whole community safer from gambling harm. And our recognition of the importance of relationships in that work is why we also support clubs to be more sustainable, more diverse and more community focused.

MS ORR: Minister, can you tell us how gambling harm prevention sits within the government's work to support our local clubs?

MR RAMSAY: I thank Ms Orr for her supplementary question. The value of our clubs as, primarily, places for people to connect and not just places to gamble is a cornerstone of our government's policy on gaming machines. Reducing gambling harm is a goal that our clubs have clearly and openly expressed their support to achieve.

This government's view is that reliance on gaming machines as a primary source of revenue is not sustainable. Many clubs themselves recognise this—

Mr Coe interjecting—

MADAM SPEAKER: Mr Coe, that is enough.

MR RAMSAY: and are engaging with the government right now to take up incentives that will promote new business models and reduce gaming machine numbers at the same time.

Mr Coe interjecting—

MADAM SPEAKER: Mr Coe, not another word, thank you, or you will be warned too.

MR RAMSAY: Over the course of this term we have focused on supporting small and medium clubs. We recognise the cultural, sporting and social values that these clubs offer. And that is why additional incentives are in our pathway to 4,000 machines for small and medium clubs. That is also why we provided a 50 per cent tax rebate and a \$10,000 grant for these clubs beginning last financial year.

We can achieve a reduction in the number of our gaming machine authorisations as well as stronger harm minimisation and also a stronger club sector at the same time. And we will continue to work closely with the industry, with workers and with the community to deliver on our commitments.

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

Supplementary answer to question without notice Ginninderry—environmental impact statement

MR GENTLEMAN: For members' interest, I will give a short explanation of the EIS process after Ms Lee's question earlier on. I advise the Assembly that as the proposal involves areas and processes listed under schedule 4 of the Planning and Development Act 2007, an impact track development application, a DA, is required for the urban development of Ginninderry stage 2 and subsequent stages.

An impact track DA must be accompanied by either a completed EIS or an EIS exemption granted by the Minister for Planning and Land Management. A proponent may only apply for an EIS exemption if the expected environmental impacts of a development proposal have been addressed by relevant studies less than five years old.

The information submitted as part of the EIS exemption application is subject to the same regulatory scrutiny as a draft EIS, including a detailed environmental assessment, statutory public consultation and a referral to entities. The difference between an EIS exemption process and an EIS process is that if current and detailed

studies already exist about the impacts of a proposal, an EIS exemption process is appropriate to consider.

An EIS exemption can be granted conditionally, and any conditions attached to the EIS exemption are to be included in any subsequent development approvals. Once the environmental impact assessment is complete, a DA will be required to approve urban development and infrastructure works. This will include additional public notification periods.

Single-use plastics

MS ORR (Yerrabi) (3.27): I move:

That this Assembly:

(1) notes that:

- (a) this year the Association of Independent Festivals, representing more than 60 independent British festivals, pledged to go plastic free by 2021;
- (b) in Australia there are a growing number of events that are implementing strategies to reduce and avoid plastic waste;
- (c) world-wide, only nine percent of plastics are recycled;
- (d) since the 1950s the cumulative amount of solid plastic waste that has not been burned or recycled is 4.9 billion tonnes;
- (e) much of the world's plastic has ended up in the oceans which becomes virtually irretrievable, especially once it fragments into micro plastics;
- (f) avoidance is the surest way to ensure harm minimisation;
- (g) the need for finding alternatives to single-use, non-biodegradable plastic is imperative if we are to reduce their usage through avoidance;
- (h) plastic serves a useful purpose and in certain cases alternatives might be difficult to find or unviable;
- (i) it is incumbent upon each of us to take our own actions to reduce uses of single-use plastics where we can;
- (j) governments have a pivotal role to play in assisting the community with behavioural change; and
- (k) State, Territory and Commonwealth jurisdictions are currently developing a national waste policy to reduce total waste generated in Australia;

(2) also notes the ACT Government is a national leader in environmental sustainability policy including through:

- (a) banning single-use plastic shopping bags;
- (b) rolling out green bins to Canberra with bins already delivered in Weston Creek, Kambah, Tuggeranong and Belconnen;
- (c) a commitment that the ACT will be powered 100 percent by renewable electricity by 2020; and
- (d) setting a target for net zero greenhouse gas emissions by 2045; and

(3) calls on the ACT Government to:

- (a) deliver the first ACT Government run plastic free event before the end of the parliamentary term;
- (b) continue to find meaningful and significant ways to reduce single-use plastic usage in the ACT; and
- (c) work with other jurisdictions to phase out problematic and unnecessary plastics.

I bring this motion to the Assembly today as I believe that the ACT government needs to continue to lead the way in plastic reduction. I believe that this may only be done when we are continually identifying areas of improvement and taking action. One such area that has recently been identified is the significant amount of single-use plastic that gets used at events.

We all may recall images of the aftermath of music festivals and other large-scale events across the country. These images are often of wide open fields, once covered with healthy grass, covered in litter and plastic waste. The unfathomable amounts of rubbish left behind include everything from water bottles and cups to entire discarded tents. What is particularly disheartening is the lack of concern these images have warranted in the past.

However, this issue is no longer being ignored by those hosting such events. Globally, we have started to see events, and especially festivals, take on the responsibility for the waste they create. Whether it is plastic water bottles, disposable cups or serve ware, events are ditching the waste and going plastic free. As host to so many great community events such as Floriade and the Multicultural Festival, I believe the ACT government has the opportunity now to be adding to these admirable examples.

I would like to take this opportunity to draw attention to some such examples and highlight how so many others have managed to reduce, if not eliminate, their own plastic waste. This year the Association of Independent Festivals, which represents more than 60 independent British festivals, pledged to go plastic free by 2021. Their drastic on plastic initiative will see plastic drink bottles, plastic straws, glitter, plastic food trays, cable ties and toiletry bottles removed from festival sites. The Association of Independent Festivals is one of the largest organisations to make the commitment but they are far from the only one.

In Australia there have been a growing number of events aiming to reduce and avoid plastic waste. Wollongong's festival Yours and Owls went 100 per cent plastic free for the first time this year. The event saw plastic water bottles, straws and single-use cups excluded from the site and cutlery and takeaway food containers replaced with reusable or compostable materials.

Festival director Ballun Jones showed his commitment to the cause. He said:

... seeing rubbish in and about the coastline is a reminder that unless we are conscious of what we do with our waste, our waterways and ocean life will deteriorate ... We are lucky enough to have a festival right next to the beach and

want to do whatever we can to make sure we are contributing to making our town a better place for the future.

The change has been taken up by many others, including Tasmania's Dark Mofo, which has recently gone plastic free. Others are well on their way towards the plastic-free goal with the help of groups like Green Music Australia. This type of plastic reduction and avoidance is the surest way to ensure harm minimisation. Other events have made smaller steps towards the plastic-free goal by committing to milestones. Nonetheless, these are equally important commitments to reducing our overall plastic use.

For example, Caloundra Music Festival in Queensland has gone water bottle free. Caloundra Music Festival's BYO H2O campaign made it the first festival in Australia to be completely free from disposable plastic water bottles. By asking all festival goers, crew and artists to bring their own reusable water bottles and by providing several refill stations, they have been able to make a significant reduction to their plastic waste. In one year this saved at least 60,000 plastic containers from the landfill.

While many have gone as far as banning single-use plastic water bottles, others have taken things a couple of steps further. The Lost Lands Festival is one example that has taken some unique strides forward in eliminating all plastics from their event. Their move away from single-use plastic bags, water bottles, straws and plastic serve ware has extended even to those back stage. They will also be using 100 per cent biodegradable waste bags that are totally compostable along with 100 per cent biodegradable and compostable baby wipes in the parent's rooms. Even the material used for signage is recycled. The Lost Lands Festival has seemingly left no stone unturned.

While reduction and avoidance are the best avenues through which we may address our excessive plastic use, recycling is also a key area for improvement. The Wave Rock Weekender festival in Western Australia has taken the lead in encouraging recycling. The Wave Rock Weekender festival has been plastic free for almost 13 years now. But it is their waste system that best showcases their commitment to sustainability. Their bins are centralised and manned by at least one person to ensure that garbage ends up in the correct bin.

At regular music festivals, all waste will typically end up in landfill, but at festivals like Wave Rock Weekender, 75 per cent is diverted away. This is extremely significant because we know that festivals generate 43 per cent of greenhouse gas emissions for the entire music industry.

Similarly, our very own Multicultural Festival has been noted for its own recycling efforts. In 2018 the Multicultural Festival won the award for biggest recycler in the large event category in the Actsmart business sustainability awards. In 2018 an outstanding 8,829 kilograms were recycled at the festival.

These sorts of sustainability measures already taken by the ACT government are a great start, but it is time to take the next step and go completely plastic free. While the amounts of rubbish that we associate with the aftermath of large-scale events have

created a seemingly insurmountable problem in the past, we are beginning to see the possibilities of change.

Tasmania's Panama festival is a testament to the effectiveness of plastic-free events. In 2017, Panama counted and reported the amount of rubbish that had been left behind on the site. A biodegradable cup, a Bunnings receipt, part of a Pokemon card and a tiny spatter of nondescript rubbish is all that was left behind. That is four pieces of rubbish from 1,600 people over three days. Such an incredible result highlights just how much of an impact we can make when we put our focus into plastic-free initiatives.

There is an undeniable and exciting trend toward plastic-free events in this country, as well as internationally. From these examples we get to see means of plastic reduction tried and tested, and often successfully making a significant impact on the waste produced. The ACT government now has the opportunity to follow this lead and take an important step toward plastic reduction by hosting its first plastic-free event.

The responsibility to reduce our usage of single-use plastic is incumbent on all of us. In saying this, we must accept the greater incumbent responsibility of a government to assist the community in undertaking important behavioural changes. Reducing plastic waste from events is vitally important, especially in our bush capital. Here in the ACT, we are constantly surrounded by our natural environment and wildlife. When excessively used and not properly disposed of, this is often where our plastic ends up.

With some of our largest events located next to some of our most precious natural spaces, we need to make sure that we are being diligent. It is no secret that where there are people, there is plastic. It is important for us as leaders in sustainable practice to show that where there is plastic, there is a change to be made.

It is important to note that this motion, with the support of the government, will be another step forward for the ACT government to increase its commitment to environmental sustainability. I encourage all members to join me in taking this step and in continuing to find other meaningful ways to reduce plastic use in the ACT. It is vital that we continue to protect our natural environment here in Canberra and this motion seeks to do just that. I commend the motion to the Assembly.

MS LEE (Kurrajong) (3.36): I thank Ms Orr for bringing on this motion for debate. As Canberrans we pride ourselves on our environmental consciousness. We consider ourselves to be good recyclers, efficient conservators of water and big supporters of renewable energy.

Canberra banned plastic shopping bags in 2011, although we were not the first to do so. A town in Tasmania is recorded as starting a plastic bag ban in 2003 and South Australia went plastic bag free in 2009. The Northern Territory ban started in 2011 and a Tasmania-wide plastic bag ban came into effect in 2013. Queensland and Western Australia joined in the ban from 1 July this year, while Victoria is planning to introduce bans from 2020.

Of course, we can all smile in a somewhat superior manner when hearing the outcry from New South Wales consumers when Coles and Woolworths announced earlier this year that they would, then would not, and then would again, be phasing out plastic shopping bags. New South Wales, however, still does not have a state-wide ban.

Since 2011 Canberrans have adjusted to new shopping arrangements, although some are better than others, and supermarkets have been clever enough to realise that people will always forget to bring bags from home, so they do a roaring trade with the heavier plastic bags, as well as the other apparently more acceptable insulated plastic bags.

That dependence on heavier plastic bags started me thinking earlier last year about just how effective the plastic bag ban has been in the ACT. The ACT's plastic bag ban was reviewed in 2012 and 2014, including through community surveys. The 2014 survey reported that more than 70 per cent of people surveyed did not want the ban overturned; and about 60 per cent of Canberra grocery shoppers supported the ban for environmental reasons and agreed that it had a positive effect on the environment.

However, reports in the same year also suggested that the use of heavier "boutique" plastic bags had increased, and that while 26 million lightweight bags were distributed in 2011, by 2013 that had transferred to four million boutique bags. By weight the story was not so impressive. Before 2011 182 tonnes of single-use plastic was sent to landfill, and by October 2013 that had only dropped to 114 tonnes of the boutique plastic. At the time there were calls for only compostable plastic or reusable bags to be authorised for use because, it was urged, the thicker plastic bags remain as pollution for a much longer time.

I went looking for more recent data than the 2012-13 review, because I wanted to understand whether the ban had been a benefit or just a placebo to make us feel better about our environmental credentials. I asked questions in both annual reports and estimates hearings last year, and again in estimates this year. I also lodged questions on notice, but little information was forthcoming.

I was therefore pleased that the Commissioner for Sustainability and the Environment, Dr Kate Auty, finally released her review of the ACT plastic bag ban in September this year. While the news is not all good, we at least now know what the impact of the plastic bag ban has been and whether there is a community appetite to do more.

We know that the ban has reduced plastic bag use by over 55 million bags, and we have reduced plastic bag consumption by 60 per cent, or 1,131 tonnes. But the review also found that with a growing population comes increased consumption, and if we do not increase our efforts we are moving towards the same pre-ban levels of 2011 and could reach that in less than two years. I note that the commissioner has proposed a number of recommendations, and I presume that at some point in the future these recommendations will be considered and responded to by the government.

The ACT's approach to plastic could be described as somewhat compromised or conflicted. We have banned plastic bags, but go to any supermarket and you can put any number of fruit and vegetables into a plastic carrier bag which is of almost the same consistency and composition as the banned shopping bags. They are freely available and there is no limit on how many you can use. If we are really serious about plastic bag use in supermarkets, why do we continue to see trays and plastic boxes to package fruit and vegetables? Perhaps more effort and thought need to go into exploring other options, including packaging laws.

We might have slowed plastic going to landfill but the fact remains that Mugga Lane is a finite resource and cannot continue to grow exponentially. Efforts by proponents to engage the community in considering new ways of dealing with our waste, including waste to energy, over the past few years or so have not had the most positive outcomes so far.

Whilst it is important to acknowledge the concerns raised by the community about these proposals, I note that recent developments following the results of the ACT waste feasibility study confirmed that the ACT is unlikely to achieve a recovery rate of more than 80 per cent without some form of waste to energy process. It should be noted that waste to energy processing is not a new process in the ACT. Waste to energy is already in use, with methane gas captured at the Mugga Lane and west Belconnen landfill facilities being used to power around 3,000 homes.

A recently announced have your say consultation process has been started to gather community feedback and provide information on the different types of waste to energy that could be introduced into the ACT to manage waste. The government has also launched an information paper to outline the challenges and opportunities for the technology in the ACT context. I welcome these steps by the government to seek further consultation with the community on these proposals and hope that the ACT community will take an open and considered approach to how realistically and practically we will manage waste into the future.

The consultation process concludes at the end of November, and I would urge all Canberrans who have an interest in ensuring that the ACT has the most modern options available to manage waste into the future to take time to attend an information session and make sure their views are heard.

I have no way of knowing how feasible Ms Orr's call for a plastic-free event by October 2020 is. Subject to the proper and transparent accountability measures on cost and social impact being in place, I do not object to the idea per se. I support her calls for the ACT to continue to find meaningful and significant ways to reduce single-use plastic, and also to work with other jurisdictions to phase out problematic and unnecessary plastics.

I am mindful, however, that Ms Orr has spoken about this issue numerous times in the chamber, most recently in August, when she moved a motion that was not too dissimilar to this one today. Given that this is yet another time when she is raising the issue of plastics, and in particular single-use plastics, I am beginning to wonder

whether her pleas are falling on deaf ears or if she at least believes that she is not being heard by the relevant minister.

Canberrans are proud stewards of our environment, and I am confident that with ongoing community consultation and discussion we will develop appropriate, affordable and practical strategies to deal with the inevitable waste that comes from a modern society.

I have just noticed that an amendment has been circulated by Mr Rattenbury. To ensure that I do not have to speak again, I will say briefly that, whilst it is a good thing that we should all look at ways of reducing single-use plastic and other harmful disposable products, just as we would never assume to tell the Greens how to run their campaigns, I do think that campaigns need to be run by the parties, and it is up to each party to ensure that they take responsibility to ensure that no harmful waste goes into our environment.

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) (3.43): Madam Assistant Speaker Orr, the Greens support the motion that you have brought forward today. We appreciate the opportunity to talk about this.

I did enjoy listening to the series of examples you were able to describe of people who have made efforts to ensure that their events are plastic free. It is quite an inspiring list, and it shows what is possible when you really set your mind to it, think a little outside the square and seek to engage your patrons. It demonstrates that there is a real community appetite for people to be able to go to these events and not have to have single-use plastics, that people appreciate having an alternative. The examples that were described underline the fact that people can take up these measures quite well if they are given the opportunity to do so.

Plastic waste has been an issue that the Greens have campaigned on since our party formed. Members may know that the ACT's plastic bag ban came about because of an item in the Greens-Labor parliamentary agreement. So, too, did the street-level recycling bins in town centres to collect recyclable waste, the installation of drinking fountains to replace the use of plastic bottles, and the container deposit scheme that has recently gotten underway. All of these initiatives have come from our various parliamentary agreements, and I am glad that each has been able to be put in place. Sometimes it has taken a little while to get to them, but each of them is a step forward, each of them begins to redefine the paradigm and talk about a different future being possible, and each of them demonstrates what can be done.

Members will recall that just last month Ms Le Couteur introduced a matter of public importance on single-use plastics to the Assembly. In it, she called for a plastic-free ACT. I do not intend to repeat all of Ms Le Couteur's comments; I know she is about to speak herself. But she did say that the government should be setting phase-out dates for various plastic items so that in four or five years from now, we will not be using them anymore. It is important that we set these goals, that we give time for the

transition to take place, and that we think about where the supply chain is going to come from and how to find different products, these sorts of things.

We are very pleased to see that plastic pollution is rapidly becoming a point of mainstream public discussion. I think our community does understand this, and political parties and the general community have become more aware and more willing to take action.

I agree that the ACT government should be running plastic-free events. We can do this for sure. I am looking forward to hearing about Events ACT's efforts in this space. There are already non-government events in Canberra that have been going plastic free. I particularly reflect on the living green fair that is held annually in Albert Hall as one good example. The folk festival is another event that has made some significant efforts in this space—not to be plastic free; I do not think that has been quite their objective—for the elimination of a lot of single-use plastics and a very strong recycling program.

I think we are all aware of the fact that despite the convenience they bring to our lives, plastics are notoriously bad for the environment. They are resource intensive to create in that they rely on fossil fuels. They have an ongoing, almost infinite, damaging effect in our environment, as they do not break down in any kind of reasonable time scale. Single-use disposable plastics are the worst kind as they are not recycled and are the most likely to escape into the environment. They are an eyesore in the regular environment and are a particular danger in the marine environment, where they kill and injure wildlife, can release chemical contaminants, and are potentially damaging to human health. Members may have seen recent news reports that microplastics have been discovered for the first time in humans, probably ingested through eating seafood. Scientists are concerned about the health impacts that this could have.

On this note, let me turn to the amendment that I have circulated. The amendment notes that we should all be engaging our own political parties when it comes to reducing plastic waste and other disposable items that damage marine and other environments. It is great that we are making more and more efforts to get rid of plastics in the government and in the broader community. But political campaigning is an area which can be very problematic for single-use items. I am sure we have all seen the stalls of political parties covered in helium balloons or plastic corflutes. It is not unusual to see ACT political parties handing out helium balloons at their stalls.

Balloons are sometimes plastic, but sometimes made of latex. Unfortunately, although it degrades faster than plastic, latex from balloons is also problematic in that it enters marine environments, where it harms wildlife. This was discussed in 2016 in an Australian parliamentary committee inquiry on the threat of marine plastic pollution in Australia. Expert witnesses to the committee explained that typically balloons are made from two kinds of plastic polymers: latex-type polymers or foil-type polymers. Latex-type polymers typically degrade much more quickly than other kinds of plastic; however, immersion in water has been found to slow this process. Foil-type polymers are essentially the same material as traditional, lightweight plastic bags, and degrade at similar rates.

The committee reported that even small numbers of helium balloons can travel significant distances from far inland and enter the marine environment. As an example, the report noted that balloons have been discovered in the ocean at Bermagui that had been released from Albury the previous afternoon. They had travelled more than 300 kilometres. It is clear that it is easy for helium balloons from the ACT to pollute coastal marine environments.

Unfortunately, balloons often end up in the intestines of marine fauna. Balloons are attractive to both seabirds and turtles because they look similar to squid and jellyfish. Interestingly, according to marine experts, red balloons are the worst: they are particularly appealing to marine fauna, as they have colours similar to those of traditional prey species.

My suggestion in the amendment I will move is that members ask their own parties to take steps to reduce plastics and other harmful disposable materials. It is clear that balloons are an item that political parties should endeavour to eliminate.

Corflutes are another interesting plastic campaign item. You cannot have been in Canberra in the lead-up to the 2016 election without noticing that thousands of corflutes blanketed the landscape like a carpet of disembodied heads. Some of these corflutes still remain scattered in the landscape. I still hear reports from residents who are occasionally startled by a giant politician's head peering at them from some long grass.

As we approach the next election, there is a discussion to be had about whether corflutes might be banned or possibly limited. That is an interesting topic, with a few other dimensions in addition to the environmental dimension. For example, how does it relate to freedom of political communication? I know many candidates, particularly candidates who might be independents or from smaller parties, who see them as an essential way to get their face out there. It is a tricky conversation, but the community sentiment after the last election saw some in favour of action.

In the meantime, I can tell the Assembly that there are many interesting ways to reuse and recycle corflutes. The Greens have been trying to implement some of these. The first step is to try to ensure that the corflute message is reusable. For example, instead of saying, "Vote Caroline Le Couteur 2016," it can just say "Vote Caroline Le Couteur" or "Vote Greens". Secondly, printers will reprint new election artwork on the blank side of corflutes, so they immediately can be used at least twice. Old corflutes can, of course, be made into self-standing A-frames. They can also be used as tree guards in revegetation projects. Community gardens often have uses for strong plastic sheets and stakes, for example for compost pile containment. Schools, disability groups and other community groups have uses for corflute material, for example for their own signs. Some other examples of things that we have managed to implement include recycling corflutes as house insulation, using them for insulation in chook sheds, and using them as new campaign signs or even just for art projects.

To conclude, the Greens are happy to support Ms Orr's motion. We look forward to further action in this space to eliminate plastics and to mitigate the extensive damage

that we are doing to the environment every day through their continued use. I look forward to attending more plastic-free events here in the ACT. That would be a great outcome from this motion.

I move:

Add:

“(4) calls on Members to request that their political parties do all they can to eliminate single-use plastics and other harmful disposable products—such as balloons—from their campaign activities.”.

I commend my amendment to members.

Ms Lee noted my amendment. While we all have a strong connection to our parties, I do not think Ms Lee’s characterisation of my amendment is right. I am not trying to tell other political parties what to do. But we are all supportive of and recognise the need to reduce plastics. My amendment simply says that we request our political parties to do all they can to eliminate single-use plastics and other harmful disposable products such as balloons from campaign activities.

If that is dictating to other parties, well, that is Ms Lee’s interpretation of it. But frankly, we need to be having this conversation and try to reflect on it. As the Greens, we used corflutes in the last election. As we become more aware of these issues, it is incumbent upon us to reflect on these matters and think what we can do to do things differently.

If you go back 20 years, you will see that the discussion was about making sure we were all using recyclable paper. I think we all do now. I suspect that every party prints their fliers noting that they are printed on recyclable paper. This is the next challenge ahead of us, and it is incumbent upon each of us to have a think about it. I am simply asking that members might reflect on it and engage with their parties in that conversation. If Ms Lee chooses to continue to use as many single-use plastics as she can, that is her prerogative. But I hope that she might reflect on whether her party can make a difference. Certainly, as the Greens, we will be doing our best.

MS LE COUTEUR (Murrumbidgee) (3.54): I am going to make a few comments on the general subject of single-use plastics. Madam Assistant Speaker, I am seeking your indulgence, as you are in the chair, because I have a prop. This is a collapsible coffee cup, a keep mug, and it is brilliant for people like me who are not frequent drinkers of coffee. It is small enough that it can just live in my handbag and then I can take it out when I need it. I strongly suggest that it is possible to be organised enough to use keep cups for your coffee. Probably one of the Assembly’s biggest daily uses of single-use plastic would be the many cups of coffee that I see coming into this Assembly. Thank you, Madam Assistant Speaker.

I want to also make some brief reflections upon festivals that do not have plastics. The first one I want to mention is the Aquarius festival in Nimbin in 1973. I went to that, and it was one of the pivotal events in my life. There were 10,000 of us, and there was no plastic. Partly that was because there was not much single-use plastic around in

those days. But seriously, there was no plastic. We were not the sort of people who would allow that.

I would like to now talk about the living green festivals in Canberra, which Mr Rattenbury referred to. They started in 2010. They have been held every year since then in the Albert Hall. They have always had a very strong environmental focus. They do not allow single-use plastics. In most years, they have had people from Orana school, and possibly in one year people from Actsmart, helping patrons to put their rubbish in the right bin. The food has generally been served in compostable containers with compostable eating utensils. They go straight into a bin of organics to be composted.

That brings me to the missing link—well, there are many missing links, but this is a particular missing link—in terms of plastic-free festivals in Canberra. Of course, I want to see this. If we go to the step of using compostable utensils and eating containers, we have to have a way that these are actually composted. In our current waste system in the ACT, unfortunately, except for festivals like the Living Green Festival and the folk festival, which has been doing it for a very long time, there is not such a system. These compostable materials are sent to landfill with everything else. They produce methane, which, as we all know, is a virulent greenhouse gas. Some of that methane is used to create electricity, but I would like to say that we need the ACT government to take on board the push the Greens have had for years.

In the Seventh Assembly I was talking about the need to collect and compost the organic waste in this town; not just the green waste from our gardens, which is a good step forward, but the organic waste that all of us produce every day, every week in our houses. And the waste that every festival produces.

Madam Assistant Speaker Orr, I commend you for your motion. I hope that you get a chance to get out of the chair and speak to close debate on it. I hope to see the ACT government catch up to community organisations in Canberra, have a plastic-free festival and make it easier for all organisations by providing a service to collect organic waste.

MR STEEL (Murrumbidgee—Minister for City Services, Minister for Community Services and Facilities, Minister for Multicultural Affairs and Minister for Roads) (3.58): I thank Ms Orr for bringing this motion before us. I start by noting that I have used my keep cup today, as we all should in this place. Our government is committed to a healthier environment, and part of that means working towards a more sustainable Canberra.

We know the ACT is a leader when it comes to sustainable environment policies. As a jurisdiction, we have implemented a ban on single-use plastic bags, we have introduced a container deposit scheme, green bins are being rolled out throughout the city, we are working towards a 100 per cent renewable energy target by 2020, and there is more our government is looking to do to make our city even more sustainable.

Our target of 90 per cent waste diversion from landfill means that we have to continue to innovate and look at new ways to create a better environment. Part of this means

finding ways to reduce the prevalence of single-use plastics in Canberra. The ACT government will continue to explore ways to reduce, reuse and recycle all types of waste in the ACT, including plastic.

Our waste management strategy is clearly focused on less waste generation and full resource recovery. The strategy outlines our target of achieving 90 per cent of waste being diverted from landfill by 2025 and supports a carbon neutral waste sector by 2020. Like many things we do here in the ACT, we have set some of the most ambitious targets in the country, but of course we still have more to do.

Each year around 250,000 tonnes of waste is sent to landfill. This contains only a small amount of plastic by weight. However, as we know, plastic can take hundreds of years to break down: longer than a tin can, longer than a pair of leather shoes and longer than a woollen jumper, some of the most common items found on Clean Up Australia Day. Of course, most plastics are made from oil or gas, non-renewable resources that, once depleted, cannot be replaced. This makes it critically important to avoid plastic wherever we possibly can.

The ACT government is leading the way on reducing the use of plastic and promoting re-use of plastics through our comprehensive community and business programs and campaigns. We deliver school and community education about reducing, re-using and recycling resources at our Recycling Discovery Hub in Hume. I recently had the opportunity to visit the hub and it is truly an immersive experience that gives visitors a behind-the-scenes look at how Canberra manages recycling. Over 3,300 people have taken a tour since its relaunch in April.

Of course, the container deposit scheme launched in July this year encourages and facilitates better plastic recycling behaviours. As at the end of October, we have collected 4.4 million containers through the scheme. These are just some of the examples of how the ACT government is working with community and business to minimise the use of plastic and responsibly recycle it. But we must continue to reduce our reliance on single-use plastic.

In November 2011, when our plastic bag ban came into effect it was a relatively novel approach, despite it being in place in South Australia for many years. The ACT was the third jurisdiction in Australia to implement the ban on single-use lightweight plastic shopping bags behind SA and the NT. Today, with the exception of New South Wales all jurisdictions have committed to some kind of plastic bag ban. In the ACT our ban has resulted in a reduction in the consumption of plastic bags by around 55 million bags in 2017-18 alone. We should not stop there and we will continue to explore what else we can do to address the issue.

The ACT government is also looking at what we can do internally. For example, the Transport Canberra and City Services Directorate has formed an internal working group to explore how it can support plastic recycling within its own operations. It may be that the directorate can influence its procurement policies to build demand for recycled plastic products, including bollards, benches and even use in asphalt, which I mentioned today in question time.

While we have made significant progress in the ACT, reducing the use of plastic is a national issue that requires a national response. First, though, I want to acknowledge that in some cases plastic has a useful and necessary purpose. For example, it helps to protect food and avoid food waste and keeps medical equipment free from germs. Plastic is not necessarily the enemy, and that is recognised nationally, but we need to use it responsibly and judiciously. That is why the ACT government is working with other jurisdictions to phase out problematic and unnecessary plastics.

We have supported the development of an update to the 2009 national waste policy, which was recently open for public review and discussion. The ACT government will continue to work with all jurisdictions, including the commonwealth, to help design the implementation of the policy.

We are also mindful of what is occurring in the European Union where the European Parliament has endorsed a proposal to ban ten single-use plastic products, including drinking straws, cutlery, fishing gear, cotton buds, plates, drink stirrers, and sticks for balloons.

I also acknowledge the work being done by the business sector through the Australian Packaging Covenant Organisation, or APCO. Businesses have committed to national packaging targets, including ensuring that 70 per cent of Australia's plastic packaging will be recycled or composted by 2025.

Addressing single-use plastic supports the UN 2030 sustainable development agenda, particularly the sustainable development goals. I note that just last week more than 275 brands, retailers, recyclers, governments and NGOs announced a shared vision to close the loop on plastic pollution by signing the new plastics economy global commitment.

These signatories are collectively responsible for producing 20 per cent of all plastic packaging globally and have pledged to eradicate plastic waste and pollution. This commitment builds on a growing momentum internationally to tackle plastics. Moving forward, it would be exciting to see greater Australian participation in these global commitments.

I make a final point on the importance of reliable data: knowledge about what is happening with waste is critical to the development of appropriate and robust policies, processes and strategies to reduce waste in the first place. The new waste management regulatory framework being implemented through the Waste Management and Resource Recovery Act 2016 aims to collect data on waste so we have a clear understanding of what happens to our waste. This helps put us in a strong position to deal appropriately with materials such as single-use plastic.

I welcome today's opportunity to speak on reducing the use of plastic and to outline the actions the ACT government has put in place and what is on the horizon as we continue to reduce the use of plastics. The government, business and the community have made enviable progress, but there is further work to do to look at ways to reduce unnecessary use of plastics in the ACT. I am certainly supportive of the steps

proposed in the motion, including a plastic-free festival. I look forward to seeing that take place.

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) (4.06): I support Ms Orr's motion regarding the use of single-use plastics. Single-use plastic comes at a high cost to the community and the environment, and there are viable alternatives that provide better outcomes. The ACT government is focused on the re-use and reduction of plastics through varied programs and campaigns available for the community and businesses.

Over 1,000 businesses across the ACT and Queanbeyan participate in the Actsmart business recycling program which provides free advice, education and signage to assist with reducing waste and increase recycling. With dedicated support from the Actsmart team, accredited businesses have all achieved reductions in waste to landfill, some of over 90 per cent. The program also encourages businesses to look at additional initiatives they can undertake to reduce their waste, including single-use plastics.

With this in mind we introduced the Actsmart straws suck campaign in June this year. The campaign encourages Canberra businesses and patrons to rethink their use of single-use plastic straws and reduce the ACT's contribution to the estimated 10 million plastic straws used in Australia every day. Currently 33 businesses have signed up to the campaign, and community members can sign up to this pledge as part of the Actsmart online carbon challenge. We understand that straws make up a small percentage of the plastic waste problem. However, this campaign opens the opportunity for a conversation about all single-use plastic waste with community members and local businesses.

This year the Association of Independent Festivals representing more than 60 independent British festivals launched the drastic on plastic campaign. Each participating event has committed to a three-year plan to eliminate all single-use plastic on site by 2021.

I thank Ms Orr for bringing this initiative to the attention of the Assembly, and for your efforts to help us reduce plastics in the community. Reducing waste in our community is not a choice between the environment and the economy; on the contrary, diverting waste from landfill helps create jobs while building a more sustainable economy.

Companies have already taken up the sustainability challenge, and I understand this is good for both business and the environment. To this end, I hope event organisers and businesses who take part in such events can join in helping reduce plastic at events and improve environmental outcomes. The ACT government has a highly successful public event program that assists event organisers to implement recycling facilities within an event. The Actsmart public event program works with vendors to support them in making greener choices with the packaging they provide to visitors to their event.

The program has also been extended to include advice and support on energy, water and transport opportunities available to event holders. Waste is an important topic for events with many events looking to reduce their footprint. Event holders in the ACT are already trialling waste-free events, and some are taking the next step, such as the Living Green Festival and Vegan Markets, which encourages their traders to be completely plastic-free.

The government is also working with the ACT community, including residents and industry, through our behaviour change program H2OK, keeping our waterways healthy to ensure that the message of only rain down the stormwater drain is being noticed.

As part of our summer seasonal media campaign we are targeting the disposal of single-use plastics that pose a threat to our native flora and fauna as well as the water bodies themselves. The government has also recently released a draft revised water-sensitive urban design code and related guidelines that include a new code requirement that all new developments must prevent a minimum of 90 per cent of gross pollutants, including plastics, leaving sites. This brings the ACT into line with national best practice.

The ACT government is continually looking for ways to reduce the use of plastics in our environment, including banning single-use plastic shopping bags and participating in the container deposit scheme. We have learned many lessons from other states and territories and will continue to share information and knowledge on these initiatives. It is critical that we act now to reduce plastic waste, for both the health of the world's oceans and waterways and to care for our environment in the ACT.

I am proud of the work the ACT government is doing to reduce plastic waste and I am committed to continuing to improve our work in this area for the sake of our community and future generations.

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) (4.11): I am very pleased to speak in support of Ms Orr's motion this afternoon and to advise the Assembly that we have committed to funding a new festival for Canberra in the winter of 2020 that will focus on promoting Canberra's strengths in innovation, design, culture, coding and gaming. The festival was funded in this year's budget and will showcase Canberra as a vibrant city and a leader in innovation by bringing together leading creative thinkers, technologists, futurists, artists and designers.

The new festival will provide a platform for diverse thoughts and engagements to imagine tomorrow's future and generate new ideas to inspire delegates and attendees. Our early concept planning for the festival is underway exploring the future of technology, culture, democracy, society and humanity. Some ideas for the new festival include a future summit to gather industry and international leaders, high profile keynote events, fairs and expos.

I am pleased to be able to announce this afternoon that the ACT government will use this festival to deliver a plastic-free event. Achieving this outcome will involve working closely with stakeholders, suppliers and service providers. In the meantime we will continue to find meaningful and significant ways to reduce single-use plastic in the territory. Starting at the 2019 Enlighten events, ACT will work with suppliers and service providers to explore more ways to further reduce single-use plastic at ACT government events.

I thank Ms Orr very much for bringing this motion forward today. I am very pleased to be able to make this commitment for ACT government events this afternoon.

Amendment agreed to.

Original question, as amended, resolved in the affirmative.

Commercial property rates

MR COE (Yerrabi—Leader of the Opposition) (4.13): I move:

That this Assembly:

(1) notes:

- (a) the ACT Government is driving businesses out of Canberra due to excessive rates, taxes, fees and charges;
- (b) the ACT Government is bringing in record levels of revenue from commercial rates;
- (c) since 2015-16, total commercial rates revenue has increased by more than 30 percent;
- (d) some individual properties have seen rates double in the same period; and
- (e) the ACT Government has substantially increased the unimproved land values of many properties;

(2) further notes that given commercial property values are linked to yield, whilst rates have increased, many properties decreased in value; and

(3) calls on the Government to table by the last sitting day in November:

- (a) all modelling undertaken by the ACT Government in the last two years regarding the impact of rises in commercial rates; and
- (b) the Revenue Office's methodology and schedule for revaluing commercial land.

Thank you very much to my colleagues here in the Assembly for indulging my tardiness in being here on time.

I firmly believe that the business owners and property owners of Canberra deserve a better deal than what they are getting from this ACT Labor-Greens government. Quite frankly, I think there are many people in Canberra who do not feel that the government is on the same team as they are. This is a government that seems to

squeeze businesses at every single opportunity. And this is particularly evident with regard to the rates that businesses are paying in Canberra.

There is no shortage of examples that we have seen right across the ACT. What I think is particularly telling is the disparity between the rates that property owners pay here in the ACT and the rates that are paid over the border in Queanbeyan. That is even when you consider that properties are probably going to be cheaper in Queanbeyan. But even if you compare like with like, even if you compare properties that have the same unimproved value, why is it that rates in Queanbeyan are so much cheaper than rates here in the ACT? For many properties, like for like, rates will be half over in Queanbeyan than what they are here.

We have competitive federalism in action. We have a jurisdiction just five or so kilometres to our east that is competing. And they are competing very well. Under the leadership of Tim Overall and John Barilaro, Queanbeyan is moving ahead quite quickly. But unfortunately a lot of that is actually coming at the expense of the ACT because Queanbeyan and the New South Wales government are putting up a far better product and service for small businesses than here in the ACT.

I am sure that the Chief Minister is going to say that we have got tens of thousands of businesses and there is a new business opening up every two hours in the ACT et cetera, et cetera. And I am sure that is all true. But the majority of these are home-based businesses. That is the first thing to note.

Secondly, whilst it is all very well to measure things by ABNs, active ABNs are of course more relevant here. But how many of these businesses have also closed or downsized? If you are going to talk about one end of the spectrum you have also got to talk about the other end of the spectrum to actually get the net impact on businesses here in the ACT.

There are a lot of businesses that are making investments here. There are a lot of businesses that employ staff here and do great things here. And we want to see more of them. We would love for the ACT to actually win back the businesses that have gone over the border into New South Wales. They exist. And whilst some people might be in denial, there really are businesses that are choosing to set up in New South Wales rather than in the ACT because of the rates regime here. If you have a property that is worth \$540,000 here in the ACT you will pay about \$28,000 in rates, including the fire and emergency services levy. Over in Queanbeyan you will pay \$14,000. Why should it be half the cost to set up five kilometres that way?

This has a two-fold impact. Not only does it actually change the outgoings, not only does it actually affect the yield, but it also affects the value of the property as well, because commercial properties are largely going to be determined on the yield. What sort of net revenue can that property achieve?

For example, say a property was going to bring in \$50,000 net. It might bring in \$75,000 worth of rent, there is \$25,000 worth of rates; therefore you have got \$50,000 net revenue there. On the basis of that net revenue you might determine that the value of the property is \$500,000 at a ratio of 10:1. But if the rates increase by

another \$5,000 or another \$10,000 and it turns that net return into \$45,000 or \$40,000, that significantly affects the value of that property because at that same ratio of 10:1 that property is now worth only \$450,000 or perhaps \$400,000. So you are worse off on two counts. You are worse off because you are paying more annually and you are also worse off because your capital asset has gone down in value as well. This has a real impact on the property owners and business owners of Canberra.

There are many long-term tenants in the ACT who have signed up to pay all the outgoings associated with a property. If you signed up to a 10-year lease and you said, "I'll wear all the rates for the next 10 years," and you did so five years ago, you had no idea that rates were going to double and are well on the way to tripling, especially for commercial properties in the ACT. This is not just something for rich landlords, as I am sure the Labor Party would like to pretend. This has a real impact on tenants as well, on commercial tenants, on struggling businesses in Canberra.

If this government is serious about diversifying the economy, they should be trying to support small business. They should be trying to support the property sector but instead they are doing the absolute opposite. They are strangling the small business sector and they are driving businesses interstate. It should not be this way. This government has done this as a simple cash grab. They have done it simply because they want more recurrent revenue for their own grandiose schemes.

I think it is about time that the government actually paid some consideration to the impact of their decision, and that is why the motion that I moved today simply calls on the government to tell us what modelling they have done, tell us what factors they have considered, tell us what impact their policies are having on Canberra businesses.

In 3(a) we call on the government to table by the last sitting day in November all modelling undertaken by the ACT government in the past two years regarding the impact of rises in commercial rates. That is not unreasonable, and they should very easily be able to present that information.

Secondly, we call on the government to table by the last sitting day in November this year the revenue office's methodology and schedule for revaluing commercial land. At the moment the revenue office is moving around Canberra, according to a schedule that nobody knows about, revaluing commercial properties and in some instances commercial properties are being revalued to double their previous value. We are seeing values go from \$1 million to \$2 million, in some instances even more. Whilst we have a three-year rolling average, this means that there are significant impacts not only in that first year but also in the second and third years as well.

How is it that the revenue office determines where and how they revalue certain properties? It seems to be a bit of a dark art, this valuation process, this unimproved land valuation process, and only the valuation office seems to know all the tools, seems to know all the factors. It puts property owners and business owners at a distinct disadvantage when it comes to arguing or objecting to what the valuation office puts up. We simply want to know: what is the revenue office's methodology and what is their schedule for revaluing commercial land around Canberra?

We certainly know that there are many properties in Phillip that have been revalued. I think the same thing has happened in parts of Fyshwick and Braddon. Are we also going to see another wave go through in Mitchell or in Hume, or in Belconnen, or in any other commercial or light industrial area? If so, that could have a dramatic impact on the property values in those particular suburbs or locations.

What we are calling for today, we think, is very reasonable and it is something that the treasury should have. We believe that businesses in Canberra deserve a fair go. We should be backing these businesses to take risks, to make investments, to employ staff and to deliver products and services that people want. We should be backing these businesses in, not driving them over the border. I urge members to support the motion.

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) (4.27): I move the amendment circulated in my name:

Omit all text after (1), substitute:

“(1) notes:

- (a) there are about 2000 more businesses operating in Canberra than there were three years ago;
 - (b) the ACT Government is transitioning the Territory’s revenue base to make it fairer and more sustainable by phasing out inefficient taxes like stamp duty and replacing this with revenue through the commercial and residential rates system;
 - (c) as a result of this tax reform program, the ACT Government has fully abolished stamp duty for all commercial property transactions under \$1.5 million;
 - (d) commercial rates are growing by an average of six percent a year across Canberra from 2017-18 to 2021-22, giving certainty to the commercial property sector;
 - (e) since 2015-16 total commercial rates revenue has increased by around 30 per cent as a combined result of tax reform, growth in the net number of properties and rising property values; and
 - (f) there have been material changes to the unimproved land values of some commercial properties which have flowed through to calculated rates charges; and
- (2) further notes that the Government will provide through Annual Report hearings:
- (a) details of changes to commercial rates both across the Territory and in individual precincts where significant changes have taken place, including original data and working analysis;
 - (b) information on the Revenue Office’s methodology and schedules for valuing commercial land; and
 - (c) clarification on the number of property owners affected by changes in assessed commercial rates as a result of material changes in unimproved land values.”.

The amendment I have moved notes that there are now more than 2,000 additional businesses operating in Canberra than there were three years ago, and I understand that around 27½ thousand businesses have the territory as their main state of operation.

This has been a period of very significant growth in small to medium business in the territory. I do note that small and medium businesses in the ACT are, according to the latest Sensis business index, the most confident in Australia. This is because, according to Sensis, the ACT “leads the nation for sales and profitability, as well as prices”. Moreover, the ACT economy, our population and employment base continue to grow at above the national average which, combined, provides a supportive environment for local businesses. Economic growth, for example, is expected to come in as high as 4½ per cent for the last financial year. At 3.6 per cent, the ACT’s unemployment rate is the lowest in the country, and our through-the-year population growth was 2.1 per cent.

Members would be aware that the ACT government is transitioning the territory’s revenue base to make it fairer and more sustainable by phasing out inefficient taxes like stamp duty and insurance taxes and replacing this with revenue through the rates system. As a result of this tax reform program, the government has fully abolished stamp duty for all commercial property transactions under \$1.5 million.

The very narrow set of examples that the Leader of the Opposition referred to in his remarks neglects the totality of state and territory taxes. The businesses that he referred to that would pay less in rates in New South Wales would pay more payroll tax, would pay insurance taxes and would pay large stamp duties on the acquisition of their commercial properties, which would have greater impacts on depressing property values, for example, and returns on investment than the ACT’s broad-based land tax system. Why? Because those taxes are more economically inefficient—those that are applied in New South Wales.

What is the evidence for this, aside from hundreds of years of tax theory and hundreds of years of economics? Just this week the Grattan Institute gave their report on the efficiency of state and territory tax systems. The ACT has the most efficient, in that we raise our revenue in ways that have the least impact on economic activity. And the state that raises their revenues in a way that has the most impact on economic activity is New South Wales. The New South Wales state government is responsible for levying the most inefficient taxes in the nation, and their impact on economic activity in their state is very significant compared to the ACT.

Mr Coe: The New South Wales government doesn’t do rates.

MR BARR: All the other taxes that you excluded from your analysis, Mr Coe.

Mr Coe: That’s my comparison.

MR BARR: My comparison is around all taxes paid by business, not just one form.

Mr Coe: For convenience.

MR BARR: Your analysis is very convenient because it excludes all of the real costs.

Mr Coe: If you're a business that only pays rates then that's the only one that's relevant, isn't it?

MADAM ASSISTANT SPEAKER (Ms Orr): Mr Coe.

MR BARR: No, but businesses in New South Wales will pay stamp duty, will pay insurance taxes and will pay payroll tax.

Mr Coe: If they don't own the building, they don't pay the stamp duty.

MR BARR: And will pay all of those taxes that are not levied in the ACT. Any like-for-like comparison shows that the ACT system is both economically more efficient and fairer, and ensures that the tax burden to fund the grandiose schemes that Mr Coe referred to is shared. Health care, public health care, public education, community services, public housing, public transport, and all of those things that Mr Coe hates and does not believe that government has a role in providing; that is what fundamentally is at play here.

Mr Coe wants smaller government. He is a redneck conservative. He is the only political leader in this country to oppose marriage equality, the only political leader in this country who is seriously advocating for a return to higher stamp duties, to put taxes back on insurance products, because he cannot come to terms with a more efficient, fairer and progressive taxation system, which is what we are moving towards.

We have been progressively implementing this over the past six years. Our tax reforms have been endorsed by every serious economist and every serious review of the Australian tax system, including, again this week, by the Grattan Institute. His own former leader, Malcolm Turnbull, is on the public record on more than one occasion indicating that this was the right policy direction. The current Prime Minister and former Treasurer has also made similar public statements. So he is out of step with prevailing public policy development and economic opinion in relation to the best way to raise revenue.

This is not the first time, nor will it be the last time, that this Assembly has debated tax reform. In fact it has been a constant theme over the past seven years. Nevertheless, in spite of motions like this seeking to stall, stymie and reverse important economic reforms, we have continued this important reform process for our economy, for our city's future and for revenue certainty, in order to be able to provide the services that this growing community needs.

This is the choice, in the end, Madam Assistant Speaker, as it was in 2012 and 2016, and undoubtedly will be again in 2020: do you support the simplest, fairest and most efficient form of tax revenue collection for the territory or do you not? Do you believe that government should provide essential health, education, community, municipal and emergency services, and public transport provision? Do you believe

that government has a role in that service provision? If you do not believe that, if you want the world of trickle-down economics, of privatisation, of small government, of Trump-style policies and politics, there is your man. There is your alternative Chief Minister. If that is what Canberrans want, they will vote for that vision, Madam Assistant Speaker, which was put forward to them in 2012 by Mr Seselja and again in 2016 by Mr Hanson, and undoubtedly it will again be put in 2020 if Mr Coe leads his party to the election in October of that year.

That is what we will see from the Canberra Liberals. It would not surprise anyone that that is their fundamental, philosophical view: small government, less involvement in the provision of health and education services and trickle-down economics at its worst. That is what they prescribe for our city.

We have an alternative view: that we should seek to raise revenue in the most economically efficient, progressive and fairest way. That is what we will continue to pursue through our tax reform agenda. We want to remove stamp duties, and we have done so for 70 per cent of commercial property transactions in this city, with a heavy favour for small and medium-sized transactions and small and medium-sized businesses.

Mr Wall: As opposed to an annualised slug.

MR BARR: As Mr Wall's interjection identifies, those large up-front costs are an inhibitor to people investing in our economy. That has been removed and is therefore not required to be met in any business loans associated with borrowing to acquire commercial property, and remove a significant distortion from investing in our economy.

We also have the first \$2 million of a business's payroll tax free in this jurisdiction, which, compared to New South Wales, is a very generous threshold. The total mix of taxation in our system ensures that, of the three factors of production—land, labour and capital—we tax capital the least, we have a very generous threshold for small and medium-sized enterprises when it comes to labour taxation, and that we focus our tax efforts on the most efficient form of taxation available to our level of government.

That is what we are doing. That is good economic policy, it is very good taxation policy and it also has the benefit of providing consistency and reliability in revenue collection, which allows for the efficient planning and provision of government services, services highly valued government by our community.

The evidence is there to see in terms of business growth, economic growth, low unemployment and record levels of population growth, sustained over an extended period now. People are voting with their feet. More people want to live, work, study and invest in Canberra. That is exactly what we are endeavouring to do in this term of government. We will continue this approach. The amendment I have moved today highlights those policy objectives and policy settings while also providing the information that Mr Coe is seeking earlier than he is seeking it.

We are very clear that our agenda—to continue to reform the territory’s taxation system, to achieve greater levels of economic efficiency, to encourage more new investment into the territory—remains our focus and will continue to be the case through this parliamentary term and beyond, I commend the amendment to the Assembly.

MS LE COUTEUR (Brindabella) (4.38): The Greens totally support the intent of Mr Coe’s motion, which is nothing more or less than a call for information. It has a bunch of notes at the beginning that you may or may not find are the things you want to note most about rates. Nonetheless, when you get down to the calls, he is calling for information. The Greens have always supported transparency; so of course we support the intent of Mr Coe’s motion.

We have a record of supporting Mr Coe and the Liberal Party on transparency, for example, the Dickson Tradies land swap documents in 2017 and Icon Water documents this year. Hopefully, we will be able to get something that actually works tomorrow as far as land acquisition goes. My office is working studiously with Mr Coe’s office and Mr Gentleman’s office on that as I speak.

We will, in fact, be supporting the ALP’s amendment because we think that it actually has more chance of resulting in transparency. I can see from Mr Coe’s motion that he is an optimist, because he used the word “modelling”. I know from past sad experience that the government’s definition of modelling does not line up with what anyone else thinks of as modelling. I believe that the government actually does modelling on rates, but my experience of this is that if you ask for modelling, the government will say, “No, what we did was not modelling,” and, therefore, they will not provide any documents.

We have been through this on a number of issues. This is why the Chief Minister’s office has promised that the words “original data and working analysis” are the magic words we want in this instance to actually provide the information that we are all looking for.

The other thing the ALP amendment does is bring forward delivery of the documents for the annual reports hearings. I understand that the government is of the belief that this will manage their workload in November. If that is the case, I cannot see how anyone would object to getting the information earlier rather than later.

They are basically the major differences between the two in terms of the actual guts, the calls. Both parties have some different notes in the beginning. Interestingly, note (e) in Mr Barr’s amendment is a rewrite of note (c) in Mr Coe’s motion. It just provides some more information. I guess the point that has been revealed by listening to both gentlemen speak on this is that, like so many things, you can have one set of facts. Depending on how you look at it and what other facts you bring to mind, you might think something is good or something is bad.

Mr Barr’s note (e), as I understand it, simply brings into this amendment more relevant facts. So the Greens support Mr Coe’s intention, which is to provide more

information about commercial rates, how they are calculated, and in the broadest terms what analysis the government has done in working out what is an appropriate rate for commercial rates. But we are supporting Mr Barr's amendment because we think it is more likely to actually produce the information that Mr Coe wants.

MR COE (Yerrabi—Leader of the Opposition) (4.43): I will wrap up. I appreciate Ms Le Couteur's comments that she knows what I really want, as opposed to my saying what I actually want. But I know that the Greens' world view is that they know best and that I should not challenge them because that is just how they roll. And they are used to getting their way in this place; so I think there is clearly going to be a majority of support for this amendment. The only thing I would ask from the Chief Minister is that when you provide this in annual reports hearings, you do so in writing preferably, rather than just a commitment to give answers verbally. This is so we have actually got something that constituents can rely upon.

Obviously, I disagree with much of what the Chief Minister has said. It is all very well to talk about the tax mix in its entirety. That might well be relevant for a treasurer or for a government, but for a small business whose main tax at a state or territory level is rates, that is what really matters to them.

Many businesses, even in New South Wales where you have got a much lower threshold, are still not paying payroll tax. They are not paying much by insurance duties. They may not be paying any money in stamp duty. Rates are really their main outgoing when it comes to government taxes, fees and charges. So to try to group everything for some typical business that has \$10 million worth of payroll, owns their building and seems to buy a lot of insurance, I do not think that this is really applicable to the small businesses that we are talking about.

With regard to Phillip in particular, some of these revaluations are just extraordinary: revaluations, one year \$150,000; the next year, \$450,000. This is just massive. These are massive changes in the amount of money that these businesses are paying. In one year their rates go up from \$159,000 to \$450,000—in one year! That is phenomenal to have \$300,000 of additional outgoings in one year. It is the same for so many others.

Mr Barr: The value of their property has gone up.

MR COE: Unfortunately, what the Chief Minister is saying is that the value of the property has gone up. I hate to break it to you, but when your outgoings go from \$150,000 to \$450,000 the value of your property has just gone down. What you can actually sell that for, the yield you are getting, has just gone down significantly. The yield has gone down significantly. If you reckon that a \$300,000 hit to your bottom line is not having an impact on the value of that property, then you are not fit to sit where you are. That has a massive impact. It is all very well for the Chief Minister to try to talk about—

Members interjecting—

MADAM DEPUTY SPEAKER: Order! Order, Mr Barr! Mr Wall!

MR COE: this artificial unimproved land value, but the reality is—

MADAM DEPUTY SPEAKER: Sit down, Mr Coe. Mr Barr, Mr Wall, as you know, I have a fair degree of latitude in relation to interjections, but that is plain, ordinary old shouting, and it will stop. The question is that Mr Barr's amendment be agreed to. Mr Coe.

MR COE: The impact on valuations and the actual outgoings is very significant. To have a valuation go from \$159,000 to \$450,000 in one year is extraordinary. The impact that has on rates means that they go up by tens of thousands of dollars. That has to impact the yield and therefore the property value.

It is all very well for the Chief Minister to say that it is fairer or that it is more efficient, but for these small businesses it is having a huge impact on whether they make an additional investment, whether they hire that additional person, whether they put more technology into their business or, worse still, whether they continue to operate here in the ACT.

We think that the modelling is very important, because I would love to see modelling or advice from the government that says that this is not going to hurt the ACT economy, that it is not going to hurt businesses, and that they can all wear it. I would love to see that, because that would give me a lot more confidence about the future of the territory's businesses. But I do not think it exists. It certainly does not marry up with the stories that we have heard from dozens of small businesses in Canberra that are struggling as a result of your rates policy.

I am pleased that we will at least be getting some information from the government, and it is a shame that this is not published just as a matter of course. But hopefully in the coming week or two we will actually get something meaningful that will be of at least some comfort or some utility to the business owners of Canberra when they are tackling these re-valuations from the valuation office.

Amendment agreed to.

Original question, as amended, resolved in the affirmative.

Recreational vehicle tourism

MR WALL (Brindabella) (4.50): I move:

That this Assembly:

(1) notes:

- (a) recreational vehicle (RV) tourism provides significant benefits to the Australian economy;
- (b) the road tourism market is valued at approximately \$19 billion;
- (c) there are an estimated 650 000 registered RVs in Australia;

- (d) the lack of RV infrastructure in the ACT, including the lack of public black and grey water dumping points and insufficient places to stay;
 - (e) there are no free overnight parking for self-contained RVs in the ACT; and
 - (f) the ACT is often bypassed by RV tourists due to a lack of infrastructure; and
- (2) calls on:
- (a) the ACT Government to work with the Campervan Motorhome Club of Australia to become recognised as an “RV friendly town”; and
 - (b) the ACT Government to develop a strategy for attracting RV tourism to the ACT.

I am pleased to bring this motion to the Assembly today. It raises an issue in the tourism space right under our noses that has been largely ignored. They are a familiar sight on Australian roads and make up a huge proportion of the tourism market. I am referring to the recreational vehicle fraternity, or RV tourism as it is colloquially termed.

Currently in Australia it is valued at about \$19 billion in economic terms and brings with it significant benefits. There are approximately 650,000 recreational vehicles registered in Australia. Research shows that an estimated \$770 per week is spent by travellers whilst they are on the road. A large part of this fraternity is made up of those who are deemed—and take no offence at this, Madam Deputy Speaker—grey nomads.

From the ACT’s perspective, getting travellers to stay an extra night in Canberra, let alone a week, would be a great step towards boosting our tourism numbers, supporting local business and growing our economy.

The Campervan & Motorhome Club of Australia is the largest RV club in the southern hemisphere and has over 70,000 members. Many of us would have enjoyed caravanning or camping, either on holidays that we take ourselves on currently or as younger people growing up, or we most definitely would know someone who does. Whether it is a state-of-the-art motorhome or a retro pop-top, we have all in some way or another experienced what it is like to hit the road and enjoy a holiday. It is a community. Whether it is the so-called grey nomads, overseas tourists who choose this mode of travel, or families, just like all communities, this one is diverse in its makeup and likewise in its needs.

Just like the demographic of the travelling community, recreational vehicles have changed a great deal over the years. The latest technology has changed. The expectations of the RV market have changed, as have their requirements. Motorhomes and top-end caravans are often self-contained, obviously with on-board sleeping but also now with showers, toilets, water storage, blackwater storage, solar generation for their own electricity and the ability to go essentially off the grid for days on end.

As the vehicles have changed so too have travellers' needs, their destinations, their desires and the places that they would like to see and experience. No longer are travellers at the mercy of the traditional caravan park or campsite, with more self-sufficient caravans and motorhomes on the roads now than there ever have been and the price of these dramatically decreasing over the years, making them more accessible as a holiday option.

Our Chief Minister has made it clear that he has little regard for people over the age of 45. The tourism strategy that he has been responsible for seems to match this profile too. Currently, there is no marketing campaign aimed at the over-45 domestic market, particularly those in the caravan or motorhome fraternity. Because of this and, more importantly, a lack of currently suitable infrastructure in Canberra, the capital is often bypassed by the grey nomad tourist market, who might otherwise be interested to choose Canberra as a stopover destination. More often than not, if they are passing through this region, they tend to camp down across the border. This is a missed opportunity for the ACT. This situation should be rectified.

Currently in the ACT there are no free designated camping sites for self-contained motorhomes or caravans. There is certainly a need or an opportunity for somewhere close to the city and the parliamentary triangle to be designated as such an area. All the infrastructure that is needed is a carpark that is disused overnight. There is also a lack of dump points for greywater and blackwater in the ACT, and a general lack of waste disposal options for self-contained caravans and motorhomes. This presents an issue for travellers coming into or through the ACT. Currently the only dumping point that exists for blackwater or greywater is at Exhibition Park, at EPIC, and the government charges people to use that facility. From my knowledge and the knowledge of the Campervan & Motorhome Club of Australia, the ACT is the only jurisdiction to charge for access to a dumping point for wastewater, which is otherwise provided in all other jurisdictions as a free facility.

This can be easily fixed. A no-frills, low-cost-to-government option exists. There is a simple answer to that part of the tourism problem. The caravan camping and motorhome association provides to local governments the pits required for blackwater dumping. It is a responsibility of local government to install and maintain them, but they will supply the infrastructure free of charge. To service the ACT appropriately, ultimately you would need three locations. The commonsense places to put them would be on the Federal Highway, the Barton Highway and the Monaro Highway: the three major access points into or across the ACT, servicing this area of the tourism segment effectively.

In response to a growing need across the country, the caravan and motorhome association have designed an RV-friendly designation program aimed at assisting RV travellers. I am sure many of us, as we have had the opportunity to travel around the country, would have headed into rural towns, in particular, that have these signs on display at the city limit. An RV-friendly town is a town that has met a set of guidelines that ensures that they provide a certain number of amenities and a certain level of services for RV travellers. When an RV traveller enters a town that displays the RV-friendly sign, they know that they are welcome and they know that adequate

facilities will be available. That just might keep them there for an extra day or an extra night, supporting local businesses and supporting the local economy.

This initiative is well thought-out and well supported by this organisation and the RV community as a whole, as well as many towns and cities across Australia. The CMCA provides benefits to towns that sign up and do the heavy lifting on the initiative, but its success does depend on the willingness of governments to get on board. I am informed that there has been an indication by the Labor-Greens government to the CMCA that they either have embarked upon or are considering an internal study on the requirements to expand RV tourism. However, to their dissatisfaction, there has been little progress.

In my view there is nothing to lose in at least investigating the possibilities of developing a tourism strategy and capturing a part of the market that has currently been wanting. Again, the CMCA have done all the hard work and are best placed to work with the ACT on developing our share of the RV tourism market. This offer is on the table for the government. All they need to do is give it a go.

I urge members of the Assembly today to support my motion, to ensure that the ACT is well equipped to capture a portion of the tourism market that currently we are missing out on.

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) (4.58): I thank Mr Wall for this motion and his interest in tourism across the ACT. I have circulated an amendment which updates the motion and gives it some currency with the work being done by the government, and I move that amendment now:

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

“(1) notes:

- (a) recreational vehicle (RV) tourism provides significant benefits to the economy;
- (b) the road tourism market is valued at approximately \$19 billion; and
- (c) the Campervan and Motorhome Club of Australia reports there are an estimated 620 000 registered RVs in Australia;

(2) notes VisitCanberra:

- (a) focuses its marketing efforts on targeting segments of the market that provide the greatest economic return to the ACT economy;
- (b) pursues marketing strategies that deliver broad appeal and the most efficient use of resources when executing campaigns;
- (c) provides a framework, through the 2020 Tourism Strategy, to inform activities to grow the value of overnight visitor expenditure to \$2.5 billion by 2020;

- (d) acknowledges the 2020 Tourism Strategy enables Canberra's strength as a drive market destination to be leveraged—with 66 percent of our overnight domestic market using self-drive vehicles to access our destination; and
 - (e) has consulted with the Campervan Motorhome Club of Australia on the requirements to be accredited by the association as an RV friendly town; and
- (3) further notes the ACT Government is engaging with member bodies representing the RV sector to initiate practical solutions to better support the needs of the RV market, which include:
- (a) the provision of appropriate RV parking close to town centres and fresh produce shopping;
 - (b) the provision of short term, low cost overnight parking for RVs;
 - (c) access to potable water; and
 - (d) access to free dump points at appropriate locations.”.

The ACT is experiencing record tourism figures. For the year ending June 2018 the ACT welcomed 2.7 million domestic overnight visitors who spent a total of \$1.61 billion in Canberra. The results reflect a commitment to capitalise on Canberra's status as a city that offers a diverse range of experiences. This includes catering for more than 160,000 schoolchildren who travel here each year and those travelling to engage with major cultural exhibitions, participate in events or visit friends and relatives.

As our city becomes a major international hub we are not overlooking the importance of the domestic drive market. Access to our city has never been better with significant investment in new roads complementing the better public transport network in the ACT.

The ACT government is engaging with member bodies representing the RV sector, such as the Campervan & Motorhome Club of Australia to initiate practical solutions to better support the needs of the RV market. Through VisitCanberra the Campervan & Motorhome Club of Australia has been consulted on the commitments required to be accredited by the association as an RV-friendly town.

There is a range of campground options in and around the ACT and the Canberra region, including EPIC, which attracts around 25,000 visitors each year. The newly refurbished Canberra and Regional Visitors Centre offers parking and a range of information services for the market while options for dump points within the ACT border are being investigated.

It is important to note that we are going above and beyond what other capital cities are able to do for motorhome drivers. Adelaide, Melbourne, Hobart, Sydney and Brisbane are not accredited as RV-friendly towns. The ACT government is working with the industry to support the needs of the market as much as possible. In doing so, the government will appropriately consider potential infrastructure initiatives that support

the industry. This includes the ability of and the costs associated with managing overnight and temporary parking and greywater dumping points.

As one of the world's best cities to visit, the quality of the visitor experience we provide to diverse audiences is recognised and making a difference. The government's approach to driving demand and visitation from a diverse range of audiences is also working. I thank Mr Wall for the motion.

MR RATTENBURY (Kurrajong) (5.01): The ACT Greens recognise the benefits of a strong, diverse and sustainable tourism sector for our economy and our community. Tourism provides opportunities for employment, enhances Canberra's reputation and contributes around \$1.65 billion to the ACT economy, as Minister Gentleman just noted.

The ACT's 2020 tourism strategy has been informed by a robust market assessment, including a consumer demand research project to assess areas of demand and untapped potential. We know that the ACT is increasingly becoming a more popular tourist destination—Minister Gentleman has just given figures—the ACT welcomed 2.69 million domestic visitors in the past year, a growth of around eight per cent, according to the national visitor survey for the year ending March 2018.

We recognise the work that the government has already done to make it easier to travel to Canberra, but there may be opportunities for further growth by looking at specific markets like RV tourism. I also note that given that the ACT government has set itself a goal of growing the overnight visitor expenditure to \$2.5 billion by 2020 any potential untapped markets could help contribute to meeting this goal.

From a Greens perspective it is great that people are getting outdoors and exploring our beautiful natural places of which the ACT has no shortage. And while for many people they may do that through camping or by visiting and then staying in hotels, clearly some people prefer using an RV, a caravan or campervan for their travel. This is particularly the case for many older Australians who have time to travel and can do so more economically using their own RV.

That is why we called for the development of a grey nomad tourism strategy to bolster the ACT's performance in this sector through the 2012 parliamentary agreement. It would be fair to say that we got the idea from various stakeholders who had flagged a gap here. Unfortunately, we do not have a specific strategy resulting from that, but the government has included consideration of the needs of niche cohorts such as grey nomads in the 2020 tourism strategy.

We know that the grey nomad phenomenon is only continuing to grow, and this presents an opportunity for the ACT to enhance its reputation and visitor numbers. Canberra is certainly a place of great attraction for grey nomads. Of course, there are many national institutions and there are many people moving here from other places for their jobs and often grandparents are keen to come and visit. There are all sorts of angles you can imagine on this. But certainly something like the War Memorial would be a particular interest to this cohort of travellers.

It is good to see that the government has engaged with the Campervan & Motorhome Club of Australia to discuss how Canberra can be made more accessible for RVs. It appears from the minister's amendment that there is a range of practical measures, such as improving access to parking, water supply and dump points, that are under active consideration. Given that these actions are already in train, I do not believe that there is a need for a new dedicated strategy, but I would like to see the government report back to the Assembly on the outcomes of this work.

Colleagues, my apologies that it came a little late, but you will have seen I have circulated an amendment. I believe members were previously aware of it. This amendment is an amendment to Mr Gentleman's amendment, and I now move my amendment:

Add:

“(4) calls on the ACT Government to report back to the Assembly by the last sitting day in April 2019 on implementation of practical solutions to better support the needs of the RV market, including the activities listed in section (3).”.

This seeks to acknowledge that the government has indicated that it is undertaking some work but, given the motion that Mr Wall has brought today—and we certainly share his interest in this topic—it would be great to get an update in April next year. By the time next April comes around we should be able to have a decent update on exactly what is going on and we can be assured that the work outlined in Mr Gentleman's amendment is actually moving forward. The points raised in Mr Wall's motion are the right ones. I am encouraged by the fact that Mr Gentleman's amendment suggests that they are in progress, and it would be great to hear the outcome of that work next year.

I also briefly want to touch on the issue of greenhouse gas emissions which needs to be a consideration in our thinking for all sectors, particularly transport. The RVs, being big vehicles, produce significant emissions. I am reliably told by relatives who have hired them that they are not very fuel efficient; one can imagine that from both the shape of them and the size of them. Of course, many forms of tourism are challenging when it comes to the issue of greenhouse gas emissions, particularly flying.

Some quick research reveals that the Winnebago has recently launched an all-electric RV for the green-minded grey nomad as an article suggested. With the ACT recently taking out the cities power partnership sustainable transport achievement award for its progressive action plan to transition government vehicles to zero emissions and other measures in that strategy this is an area that we should probably be considering as part of our commitments.

We are already looking at ways to make Canberra a great place for electric vehicles by making charging points more accessible, and perhaps there are opportunities to consider electric charging points at our powered campsites and RV parking sites as well. We may need to wait for the technology to advance a little further, but it is great

to see that the RV industry is also looking into ways to decrease emissions in very practical ways.

I conclude by thanking Mr Wall for bringing this motion today and recognise the work that the government is already doing in this space. We are pleased to support efforts to encourage different tourism demographics in the territory and encourage people of all ages to get out and experience all the natural wonders that the ACT has to offer. I commend my amendment to the Assembly.

MR WALL (Brindabella) (5.07): I begin by touching on what I think is becoming quite an appalling practice by those opposite on Wednesdays, that is, the circulation of amendments whilst the mover of a motion is actually on their feet. It is a practice of government ministers to whack out an amendment whilst the mover of a motion is speaking to their motion. It is an inconsiderate way of conducting debate in this place, particularly when there is usually an element of collegiality when it comes to amendments in other areas, particularly with amendment to legislation where there is a required notification period.

We will not be opposing the amendments put forward by Mr Gentleman or Mr Rattenbury, having had the last minute or so to read them both. There is great opportunity to improve the tourism statistics, particularly those of the grey nomad tourist market. A lot of work is being done in the ACT to attract international flights here and international visitation numbers to boost aviation travel into the ACT, and those actions need to be applauded. But there are also some small incremental changes that can be made to grow our share of other parts of the tourism market.

I look forward to seeing the work that comes forward from the government in this space over the coming months and will continue to keep a keen eye on it. I believe significant opportunities exist for the ACT to benefit from increased tourism. The traditional method of booking a hotel night at your destination is not accessible to everyone. Caravans and motorhomes provide a much more affordable form of accommodation and transport for a certain segment of the tourism market, and we should be as accommodating and welcoming to them as we are to our international visitors or those who fly in through the local airport.

I conclude the remarks and keenly wait to see what further action the government takes in this space.

Mr Rattenbury's amendment to **Mr Gentleman's** amendment agreed to.

Mr Gentleman's amendment, as amended, agreed to.

Original question, as amended, resolved in the affirmative.

Domestic Animals (Dangerous Dogs) Amendment Bill 2018 Exposure draft

MS LAWDER (Brindabella) (5.10), by leave: I present the following paper:

Domestic Animals (Dangerous Dogs) Amendment Bill 2018—Exposure draft.

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

Leave granted.

MS LAWDER: Once again the efforts of the Canberra Liberals are going towards making Canberra a safe place for people to walk the streets: on their own, with their families or with their dogs on a leash. The amendment bill that I am bringing to this place today by way of an exposure draft is designed to address those issues of responsible dog management in the ACT.

For some years now the Canberra Liberals have led in this space. We have been consulting widely; in fact we have been using the government's own reports, which they do not appear to have been in any hurry to implement themselves.

The Maxwell review, which the government received in April this year, was released publicly on 17 September, over five months later. The Maxwell review has 33 recommendations. Some of the amendments that I am putting forward today in this exposure draft cover at least two of the specific Maxwell review recommendations. For example, in the Maxwell review recommendation 11(3) was "fees reduced for training". The government's response to this one was that it was "noted". Recommendation 28 was "remove barriers to relinquish dogs". The government's response to that recommendation was that it "agrees" with the recommendation.

Our bill encourages good behaviour, and good and responsible dog ownership and dog management in the ACT. It has three main parts. It includes encouraging responsible dog ownership through the training of dogs. It proposes that there will be no dog registration fee payable if the owner has successfully completed approved dog training with the dog. We will also encourage people to deal humanely with unwanted dogs by making it easy to relinquish a dog, and we will discourage people from keeping dangerous dogs by doubling the fee for dangerous dog licences.

We are as determined as ever to encourage responsible dog ownership in the ACT but what we are focusing on here is not a broad-brush approach that puts onerous restrictions and regulations on every single dog owner in the ACT, because the vast majority of dog owners in the ACT are doing the right thing. They are responsible dog owners. A very small proportion of people are irresponsible, and they are the people that we need to focus on—not by having a broad approach.

We have already heard over and over in this place about the 30 per cent, on average, increase in dog attacks over the past five years. This is a major public health crisis and a major animal welfare crisis. Dogs and cats are being injured, and they are suffering horrific injuries because of people who are irresponsible dog owners.

This government clearly needs to do more to carry out their basic duty of keeping Canberrans safe. They do not seem to care about the physical injuries to Canberrans. They do not appear to care about the emotional injury to Canberrans who have been subjected to dog attacks and who will potentially have mental scars as a result. They may become scared of dogs. They may not wish to walk around in the public spaces near their home anymore.

The government does not seem to care about the suffering of pets that have been literally torn apart, often in front of their owners. It is about the suffering of the animal and, once again, the emotional anguish of the owner who has witnessed these terrible attacks.

This government has appeared to look the other way as reported dog attack numbers have skyrocketed. Back in 2014 my colleague Mr Coe supported the Domestic Animals Amendment Bill. He said at the time:

... like all pieces of legislation this bill will need to be enforced properly.

In March 2017 Mr Doszpot brought forward a series of recommendations to improve dog management. In 2017 Mr Coe again took up the campaign on behalf of the Canberra Liberals, and again the Greens-Labor government changed those proposals to what we believe was a watered-down implementation.

Clearly, the proposed changes, as put forward by the government, have not been successful because, once again, we have seen a big increase in dog attacks in the year following those proposals. Today we have a second tranche, a second round of reforms: the exposure draft to the Domestic Animals (Dangerous Dogs) Amendment Bill.

Every day, it seems, or at least every second day—and that is according to some of the government's own figures—we hear about dog attacks in Canberra. Just recently I quoted a warning from a Facebook page:

Beware at Gordon adventure playground ... my 2 small dogs (on leads) have just been attacked by a strong, vicious dog NOT on a lead.

The dog owner went on to discuss the fact that the playground had been full of small children at the time and expressed dismay at what could have happened if it had been a child who was attacked. That is a comment that I hear over and over again.

The person posting in that instance was upset about the attack on their dog and felt it should be a warning to others that we need to encourage responsible dog ownership. There were many comments made on that post, again referencing other attacks that people had been a victim of or had witnessed themselves.

I commend the work of domestic animal services. It is a difficult job. You are dealing with upset people, angry people and injured people. You are dealing with dangerous dogs, injured dogs and upset dogs. It is not an easy job in any regard. It is a job that most of us would not want to do, and they must be supported to do their job to the best of their ability.

Canberrans love their dogs. They want other people to enjoy their dogs as well. But we have to be responsible dog owners, and we have to be respectful of other people, whether they are a pet owner or another member of the public who does not want our dog to come up to them off a leash.

We will continue to consult widely, and that is why we have brought forward this exposure draft today. If we were not serious about consulting, we would not bring it forward as an exposure draft; we would present it as a bill. But we do want to see the best possible responsible dog management that the ACT can have. I can assure you, Madam Speaker, that we have more ideas about what can be implemented in this space. While the government appears reluctant to implement better control and management of dogs, we are happy to take the lead and bring forward these proposed changes.

Today I commend the exposure draft of the Domestic Animals (Dangerous Dogs) Amendment Bill 2018 to the Assembly. I would like to encourage wide public debate and public submissions, with a view to making Canberra a safer city for all of its residents and our beloved pets. I encourage members of the community, especially those interested in animal welfare, to make comment on this exposure draft, because we absolutely welcome their input to make Canberra a better and safer place for people and pets.

Justice and Community Safety—Standing Committee Report 3—corrigendum

MS LEE (Kurrajong) (5.19), by leave: I present the following paper:

Justice and Community Safety—Standing Committee—Report 3—*Report on inquiry into the Crimes (Consent) Amendment Bill 2018*—Corrigendum, dated 31 October 2018.

Adjournment

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

That the Assembly do now adjourn.

Namadgi National Park

MS LEE (Kurrajong) (5.20): Earlier this month, Team Elizabeth Lee had an exceptional day at Namadgi National Park. We took part in a field trip looking at Namadgi National Park, the Cotter catchment, and how factors like animal life and the 2003 bushfire affect Namadgi and the surrounding area.

We made a pretty eclectic, yet large, group of about 20, including Minister Rattenbury and his staff, and staff from Minister Gentleman's office and Ms Cheyne's office. I had three staff members in tow myself. We were joined by members of the ACT Parks and Conservation Service, the conservation council, the National Parks Association, the Commissioner for Sustainability and the Environment and her staff, and representatives from Icon Water.

Our first destination on our field trip was the Bulls Head picnic ground, which straddles the border between the ACT and New South Wales. Many thanks to the

National Parks Association members who kindly provided cakes and hot drinks on what proved to be a surprisingly cold and wet morning. It was pretty hard to drag ourselves away from the roaring fire and the many jokes about how the toilets were built on the New South Wales side of the border on purpose.

I particularly enjoyed seeing the various stone border markers—called “lock spits”, as I learnt that day—that indicate the border between the ACT and New South Wales. It is incredible to think about the people who surveyed such rugged terrain so long ago to help draw up the borders of the Australian Capital Territory, and the fact that those stone markers are still evident today is pretty special.

The rangers and representatives from the Australian Alps National Parks spoke to us about the very current issue of wild horses and the importance of preserving our water supply.

We then travelled to Ginini Flats and took a relatively short but, I must say, pretty treacherous walk down to the sphagnum alpine bog. The Ginini Flats wetlands is a Ramsar-listed site, meaning it is one of nearly 2,000 important wetlands around the world. The sphagnum bog is an important supply of natural water for lower altitude storage. The bog traps sediment and other liquid, removes nutrients, and eventually releases high quality water to rivers and streams.

Our guide for the day, Brett McNamara, manager of ACT parks and conservation, showed us the immense storage capacity of the sphagnum moss. He took a clump of it in his hand and squeezed it, producing water seemingly about half the volume of the moss itself. It is incredible to think that the water stored in that moss, over one kilometre above sea level, will slowly filter its way through the flats down into nearby creeks and rivers and help nourish the citizens of Canberra in a decade. Daniel Iglesias from ACT parks and conservation, who also joined us, said that he likes to think of the bog like a bank which is saving up water for our future generations.

I am very grateful to the staff from ACT parks and conservation for their guidance and wisdom on the day. Brett and Daniel were excellent guides to Namadgi and the surrounding areas.

Finally, we enjoyed lunch at the Mount Franklin shelter. The modern shelter was erected after the 2003 fire, at the site of an old ski chalet, in fact, the first ski lodge in mainland Australia, built by the Canberra Alpine Club in 1938. We may think of Thredbo or Perisher when talking about skiing in Australia, but the Canberra Alpine Club was, for a couple of decades, the place to ski for Canberrans.

It was sad to see the mangled remains of the original chalet’s tank stand. The intense heat of the 2003 bushfire left the stand looking like a giant seat and is pictorially recorded in a beautiful book on the impact of the 2003 fires on Namadgi by Dianne Thompson from the National Parks Association.

The modern shelter came over in pieces from South Australia and was left in a pile at the bottom of the mountain. It took rangers and volunteers many months to ferry the

pieces up to the original site and put all the pieces back together. Today, it is a great little spot for lunch and home to a huntsman or two.

It is important to think back to the immense destruction of that 2003 fire, because the Namadgi National Park is so rich and varied in its plant and animal life. There are over 700 species of plants and at least 35 native mammals such as gliders, possums, platypus and echidnas, and grazers like kangaroos, wallaroos, wallabies, and wombats. We must make sure that our national parks are not disrupted through bushfires or other external factors, because they are important not just to animal life but also important to us through our water supply.

Thank you to Di Thompson from the National Parks Association for being the driving force behind this special day and for helping to bring together all the people who participated in the field trip. Thank you also to Minister Rattenbury for providing the park rangers for the day so as to ensure that the trip was as efficient as possible, and for helping me over some of the taller branches on our hike down to the bog.

It was an incredible opportunity to explore Namadgi National Park with such an eclectic group. My team once again mentioned how trips like this are one of the best things about me having the environment portfolio. I encourage all members of the Assembly to dedicate, at the very least, a Saturday or a Sunday to exploring the magnificent Namadgi National Park. We really are blessed to have such an exquisite natural environment so close to our city.

Sport—Gungahlin Jets

MS ORR (Yerrabi) (5.25): I would like to take the opportunity to congratulate the Gungahlin Jets Australian Football Club on what has been a truly significant 12 months. On Saturday, 22 September, I attended the 2018 presentation night. The night celebrated a season where records and streaks were broken as the Jets proved themselves as an emerging force in AFL Canberra.

In the lead-up to the 2018 season, there was a growing expectation around the place, and the men's first grade showed why when they broke a nearly two-year losing streak in round 1. In round 6 the Jets had a record win, beating the Hawks by 98 points, only to break it again in round 11, with a 134 point win. Later in the season, the men's reserves broke a losing streak that stretched back as far as 2015, with a one point win.

The year 2018 marked a rebuild for the Jets women's team, who had played in the last two grand finals, winning in 2016. The women again led the way, only missing out on the finals with a seven point loss in the final round of the season. Perhaps most encouraging for the Jets was that this season featured a weekend where all four senior sides, the first and second grade men's sides, the women's first grade side and rising stars won on the same day.

In netball, the Jets played their first preliminary final. The netball grew from two teams in 2017 to four, and the club welcomed many new faces.

But it is not just on the field where the Jets have been successful. The club is growing its social culture as well. The trivia night marked the first time netball organised a whole-of-club event, symbolising the growing culture of one club, one family. Earlier in the year the Jets held a women in sports event that discussed the challenges women face in organised sports. The Jets have long been a leader in women's sports, and initiatives like these only serve to improve their standing in the future.

The Jets are a Gungahlin institution and can only be so because of the hard work and dedication of its volunteers, committees and board. It is because of the commitment of its volunteers that the Jets can offer sports to so many people across the region.

I want to take the chance to congratulate the Jets board, including Matt Porter, who stepped down as chair in September. I also want to say a huge thankyou to the Hambletons on behalf of everyone at the club. The contribution of Louise, Tony and their sons to the club has been and is extraordinary. I hope they are all enjoying a well-earned break before training starts up again.

The club does a great deal for our community. It provides the opportunity for over 400 junior footballers to get involved in local sport. It has taken long strides in opening the football and netball to women and girls. And this year, it has worked with the AFL to offer the opportunity for a vision-impaired child to play footy. This move on its own has empowered not just Callan Veal, but also his family and teammates.

Earlier this year the Jets obtained a Chief Minister's grant to install new benches at the front of their clubrooms at Amaroo. This initiative will benefit not only the club but anyone using the playing fields. I am glad I was able to assist the club in applying for the grant.

The Jets continue to grow as their community becomes stronger. Right now there are 26 teams training on two ovals and housed in the hangar at Amaroo playing fields. The Jets' philosophy is that they want to ensure that anyone who wants to play the game can access it. I want to continue to work with the Jets to ensure that that can happen into the future.

In line with this philosophy, the Jets believe that netball dresses may be an impediment to women playing and enjoying netball. Last week the Canberra Netball Association held their annual general meeting where rule changes were made that meant clubs could begin wearing shorts. This was a rule change led by the Jets and their affiliate junior club East Gungahlin. The Jets will now consider options for how they can transition to being the first netball club in Canberra to offer shorts as their uniform, creating a more equal playing field for all players.

I would like to congratulate everyone at the Gungahlin Jets for their efforts this year, and I look forward to seeing the club continue to grow in 2019.

**ACT Telangana Association
Durga Puja**

MRS KIKKERT (Ginninderra) (5.29): October in Canberra is characterised by an abundance of colourful flowers. In Telangana State, which is located on southern

India's high Deccan Plateau, October marks the end of the monsoon and the transition to winter. Similar to Canberra however, it is a time when flowers bloom in a riot of colours across the uncultivated and barren plains of the region. This is also the time of year when Bathukamma, an important symbol of Telangana culture and identity, is celebrated.

Two weeks ago the ACT Telangana Association hosted this floral festival in the Belconnen Arts Centre in my electorate and yours, Madam Deputy Speaker, of Ginninderra. I rise today to publicly thank Mr Shanti Reddy, president of the ACT Telangana Association, for generously inviting me to attend.

Bathukamma is specifically observed by Telangana women. The centrepiece of the event quite literally is a large arrangement of seasonal flowers placed on a large plate in seven concentric circles, similar in appearance to the towers that mark the entrances to Hindu temples in southern India. Arranging these flowers is a folk art that is passed down from older to younger women. Females of all ages then form a circle around the floral arrangement, dancing and singing folk songs. In the Telugu language, Bathukamma means mother goddess come alive, and the songs and dances bring honour to Maha Gauri Devi, the patron goddess of womanhood.

The colours, the songs and the rhythmic movement all blended together into a beautiful whole. It was joyful to watch, and far too joyful not to join in. I wanted deeply to share the joy with these strong, lovely women and girls. So I joined the circle and danced with them, and what a pleasure it was.

I congratulate Mr Reddy and his team for this successful event and I also want to thank the entire association for allowing me to spend a few moments in their world of colour and beauty and confident womanhood.

Further north in Bangladesh the end of the monsoon marks the advent of another festival, the Durga Puja. Durga is a protective mother goddess who, like many mothers whom we might know, is willing to aggressively protect her vulnerable children from anything that might harm them. The worship of Durga commemorates the victory of good over evil. It also serves, in part, as a harvest festival celebrating and elevating the role of woman as the power behind life and creation.

This year Canberra's Bangladesh Australia Association observed Durga Puja at Duffy Primary School on 13 October, and the Bangladeshi Hindu community held their celebration one week later at the beautiful Hindu temple and cultural centre in Florey.

I likewise rise today to publicly thank Mr Prasonjit Dastidar, secretary of the Bangladesh Australia Puja Association of Canberra, and association president, Dr Ashis Dey, as well as Avijit Sircar, convenor of the Canberra Sanatani Sangha, for honouring me with invitations to these two sacred events.

I took my daughter and her friend with me to the first one, and the three of us greatly enjoyed the cultural performances and the delicious food that was provided to us. In both cases I found the experience deeply spiritual and my life has been made richer by participating. I especially enjoyed simply spending time with my Bangladeshi

neighbours as they shared with me their beliefs and practices, including their reverence for motherhood.

I am deeply grateful for the wonderful diversity that exists here in the ACT and I offer my very best wishes to all Canberrans whose cultural heritage comes from the subcontinent, as they celebrate important festivals during this joyful time of the year.

International Day of the Girl Child

MS J BURCH (Brindabella) (5.33): Just recently, on Thursday, 11 October, we marked here in the Assembly the International Day of the Girl Child and I was very pleased to mark the day by welcoming to my office an ANU student, Ms Mimi d'Orsonya. Throughout the day Mimi saw firsthand how the Assembly operated, and I really did enjoy discussing a number of issues with her. I learnt a lot from Mimi and her insights as a young, politically engaged person. Mimi chose to participate in the program because she believes that a young woman's perspectives are vital in matters of governance and in leading their communities to create meaningful change.

During Mimi's day in my office we discussed opportunities for young women and the important role of classrooms, particularly at tertiary education institutions. Mimi discussed with me the role that respectful relationships in the classroom could play for the next generation of Australian policymakers, engineers, support workers, nurses and teachers. A respectful classroom fosters robust discussion and allows students, one and all alike, to explore academically rigorous topics to increase their knowledge and learning.

University classrooms should not be a place for targeting individuals, making sexist remarks or shutting down their students' and classmates' opinions because they may differ from others. Yet, as Mimi and I discussed, sadly some university classrooms can reflect the latter rather than the former, and Mimi and I share a belief that creating a baseline for respectful interactions in a classroom is one way that healthy and academically grounded discussions and mutual respect can be achieved.

When I asked Mimi what was the issue she would like to see in public discourse she raised with me the importance of tackling university classroom culture and that, regardless of the academic discipline, a program to outline respectful relationships in the university classroom would not go astray. Indeed, it would create widespread expectations of acceptable behaviour and create awareness of what gendered behaviour looks like.

Our primary and secondary schools lead the nation in encouraging safe and supporting school environments with programs such as the respectful relationships education program, and that program highlights that creating a dialogue and modelling positive relationships has long-lasting benefits for our society. Such steps are to be commended and will improve the culture in our tertiary institutions as well.

In Mimi's words, university classrooms possess an unrivalled ability to empower students, change gendered norms and demonstrate appropriate behaviours for students, with long-term effects. She went on to say, "Most importantly, creating and

supporting respectful relationships concerns treating people as people, offering equitable opportunities and dislodging gendered norms for the next generation of students.”

With that sentiment I could not agree more, and I want to thank Mimi for spending the day with me on the International Day of the Girl Child. Indeed, I think the parliament almost did get taken over by young women during that week. I want to thank Mimi for sharing her insights with me, and I will continue to advocate on her behalf. I want to thank the organisers of the girls take over parliament day. It was a fantastic program, and I look forward to participating in future years.

National Children’s Week Hackett Community Association

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) (5.37): I would like to take this opportunity to let the Assembly know about some recent opportunities I have had to engage with children and families in my electorate of Kurrajong. As members would be aware, 19 October marked the start of this year’s national Children’s Week. Children’s Week is an occasion for our community to recognise the vibrancy, energy, and joy that children contribute to our lives.

In celebration of Children’s Week this year, I held two Kids of Kurrajong barbecues, one in O’Connor’s Finn Street Park in the inner north, and one in Telopea Park in the inner south. The goal of these events was to bring children and families together for a fun day of craft, Kurrajong-themed colouring-in and, of course, the obligatory sausage sizzle. The goal was to build connections between children and families in our community.

Unfortunately the weather was not favourable to us at the Finn Street Park event. Almost immediately after we fired up the barbecue, the skies opened. My volunteers diligently continued as it rained down on us, but when the ESA issued a severe thunderstorm warning I figured we should probably call it quits for the day. We did manage to give out a few sausages before we packed up, and I had a wonderful conversation about the ACT’s container deposit scheme with a young girl named Lily who is a passionate recycler and environmentalist.

The following day we were lucky to have clear skies for our Telopea Park event. It was wonderful to see kids enjoying the sunshine and having fun in the park, and thankfully their parents ate through most of the surplus sausages from the day before. The children who attended seemed to be especially interested in our pasta art table. Unfortunately, I forgot to bring with me the fashionable pasta bracelet which was skilfully designed and crafted by a little girl who attended the Telopea Park event, but it takes pride of place in my office. We also set up a box city play area, and it was great to see kids using their creativity and their engineering skills to bring the cities of their imagination to life. I am looking forward to hosting similar events during Children’s Week next year.

I was also pleased to again be invited to the Hackett Community Association's annual flagship event, the Party at the Shops, which took place over this past weekend. This is one of my favourite community events of the year. There is always a huge turnout for the amazing food and cakes, the performances by local school bands and dance groups, and the awesome activities for the kids, including face painting and jumping castles. Unfortunately this year I was scheduled to be out of Canberra at the time of the event, but my wonderful volunteers attended on my behalf. Armed with our art and craft supply, my team sought input from young Canberrans on the future planning of our city, which Mr Gentleman would be pleased to hear, and were able to talk to other community members in order to pass any issues back to me.

I am told that the Party at the Shops was as successful this year as it has been in previous years, if not more so. I am also told that the team's stall was well attended and that the kids of Hackett loved making pasta jewellery just as much as the kids of the inner south. I thank Chris Mobbs and the Hackett Community Association for inviting me to attend and for providing the Hackett community with such a fun event every year. The Party at the Shops is a catalyst for the connections that build a sense of community.

While I was unable to attend the party at Hackett shops, I am looking forward to being able to enjoy the party at Downer shops which is coming up on Saturday, 17 November. Those who have not yet visited the revitalised Downer shops should consider marking this date in your diaries. Downer is a unique example of Canberra's early suburban history, and I am pleased to see the community embracing that history alongside the change that is happening as our city grows. I am looking forward to talking to Downer residents about the future of their community, with the shops at its centre.

Spring in Canberra is the ideal time to get out and enjoy our city's wonderful parks and open spaces. I am pleased to have been able to update the Assembly on some of the ways the Kurrajong community is embracing these opportunities and making our city an even more vibrant, friendly and fun place to live.

Belconnen showcase

MS CHEYNE (Ginninderra) (5.41): I rise tonight to talk about the fantastic Belconnen showcase which was held at the start of this month on 3, 4 and 5 October. This three-day festival really lived up to its name in terms of showcasing Belconnen and, in particular, the Belconnen town centre.

It started as a germ of an idea. Soon after I was elected, it became quite apparent to me that there is so much happening in the Belconnen town centre. There are quite a lot of changes underway. We had a brand new Belconnen town centre master plan, and now draft variations to the Territory Plan are underway based on that master plan. There has been a huge injection of residential development there and, with that, residents and plenty of new businesses coming, but also some businesses going.

It just seemed like a fantastic opportunity, and one that we were missing, to connect people, to get people in the right spaces at the right time to talk with each other, to

celebrate Belconnen and Belconnen businesses and to identify any things that needed improving. So last year when we had the community cabinet in Belconnen, I called on the ACT government to consider hosting this Belconnen showcase. I was very pleased to get that commitment earlier this year, which resulted in the October showcase.

It was fantastic to see it truly come to life. Day one, Wednesday, began with the Canberra Innovation Network's First Wednesday Connect. That was an opportunity to talk about the innovation side of things in Belconnen. It was hosted at the University of Canberra, which is leading the way in innovation. People were able to give one-minute pitches about different exciting things that they are doing and businesses that they are thinking of creating, and to network with each other in that environment. So the theme of day one was innovation.

Day two was about doing business in Belconnen. We partnered with the Canberra Business Chamber, who hosted sessions in the morning and in the afternoon with a range of Belconnen businesses, from small businesses like small accounting firms right up to some of the bigger players like Westfield Belconnen and the Lighthouse, although perhaps the Lighthouse is just big in my mind.

It was really important to have people coming together, talking about what it is like to do business and some of the things that they did not know were going on in the town centre, and to bring the master plan to those businesses as well. It has become apparent to me out of that consultation that we need to do a bit more to connect with businesses there and to bring all the government initiatives to them, and to get their feedback very directly as well. I am very much looking forward to working with businesses on that in the future.

Day three was the highlight, of course: a celebration with the Belconnen Twilight Market. I will put on the record my thanks to the organiser, Damian Haas, who is also the deputy chair of the Belconnen Community Council. They had a very big role to play there as well. Margaret Timpson Park is often thought of as being underutilised and just a bit of a thoroughfare between the library, the Lighthouse and Westfield Belconnen. It was incredible to see this humble park that I usually think of being as quite a small park absolutely brought to life with over 70 stallholders, 50 of them with a very strong Belconnen connection. This apolitical event was just thronging with people. We believe that a conservative estimate is that about 2,000 people came, even though the weather turned atrocious despite being quite perfect earlier that week.

I was very pleased to be able to host a photo competition about Belconnen town centre. The winning photo was by a bloke called Davey Barber. He took an absolutely magnificent shot of a man going to work as a bus driver in Belconnen. And it turned out many days later that I actually knew that man and I was able to give him a copy of that photo. All in all, the Belconnen showcase was tops.

Question resolved in the affirmative.

The Assembly adjourned at 5.46 pm.