



DEBATES
OF THE
LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY
FOR THE
AUSTRALIAN CAPITAL TERRITORY

DAILY HANSARD

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6 June 2018

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Wednesday, 6 June 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.

Visitors

MADAM SPEAKER: Members, before I call the Clerk, it is worth acknowledging the schoolchildren in the Assembly today. Holy Trinity Primary School, welcome to the Assembly.

Anti-corruption and Integrity Commission Bill 2018

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

Title read by Clerk.

MR COE (Yerrabi—Leader of the Opposition) (10.02): I move:

That this bill be agreed to in principle.

I am pleased to table this significant piece of legislation which again emphasises the Canberra Liberals' commitment to integrity in the ACT. Canberra needs an anti-corruption and integrity commission. Whether it be actual or perceived corruption, there is no doubt that there are concerns in our community. Whilst these concerns may not be as widespread as those we have seen in other jurisdictions in the past, we must not be complacent and we must accept that where there is power and money, there must be integrity.

Whilst other commissions have had problems with oversight and prioritisation, I believe we can get the balance here right in the ACT. Of course, in the lead-up to the 2016 election, the Liberals, Greens and Labor all agreed that Canberra needed and should get an anti-corruption commission.

The Select Committee on an Independent Integrity Commission was established on 15 December 2016 to “inquire into the most effective and efficient model of an independent integrity commission for the ACT”. The committee unanimously recommended that:

... the ACT Government establish a standing ACT independent integrity body to investigate corruption in public administration and strengthen public confidence in government integrity.

The final report of the committee was presented to the Assembly on 31 October last year. It contained 79 recommendations relating to jurisdictional matters, relationships with other integrity stakeholders, the power to hold public meetings, accountability

and independence, staffing and resourcing requirements, application of other legislation and, of course, other matters.

The government response agreed, or agreed in part, to 25 recommendations, agreed in principle to 11 recommendations, and noted 43 recommendations. The government also indicated that the time frame for the establishment of the integrity body would be delayed.

The Anti-corruption and Integrity Commission Bill 2018 has been drafted to give effect to 76 recommendations made by the committee. The three remaining recommendations cannot be met through legislation. They are recommendation 3, which will be fulfilled through a motion to refer the bill to a select committee; recommendations that require the ACT government to seek advice on potential amendments to the Criminal Code 2002; and recommendation 46 regarding a budget consideration for resources for the Office of the Director of Public Prosecutions.

The committee thoroughly and thoughtfully investigated independent integrity bodies in other jurisdictions and provided comprehensive analysis and recommendations. By incorporating each recommendation as if it were agreed to, the bill ensures that this model contained in this legislation has a high likelihood of being the most effective and efficient model for our jurisdiction.

The bill is quite comprehensive and very detailed. As a general overview, the legislation establishes the anti-corruption and integrity commission and emphasises its independence and focus on integrity. It outlines the meaning and general nature of corrupt conduct. It includes all ACT public authorities and public officials, incorporating third parties who may be performing an official function on behalf of the ACT government.

It allows any person to make a complaint to the commission and it imposes a duty to report suspected corrupt conduct of high-level officials. It contains protections and immunities for complainants and reporters. And it sets out powers and procedures for the commission for investigations, examinations and dealing with privilege claims.

It also details reporting requirements for the commission. It includes a legislative process on how to handle conflicts of interest should they arise for the commissioner and the inspector. It allows for oversight of the commission by the Legislative Assembly. It sets out information protection requirements and creates offences if an individual were to inappropriately use or divulge information.

It requires the development of a reputational repair protocol. It provides powers to cooperate and enter into agreements with other entities, including interjurisdictional integrity bodies and it includes provisions for the review of various pieces of legislation.

The commission retains complete independence and discretion over the existence and exercise of these functions. The commission has the power to decide how to handle complaints, whether they should be investigated, referred or dismissed. The commission has the power to conduct preliminary inquiries into issues prior to

investigations to determine whether there is evidence to substantiate the complaints. The commission has the power to refer matters to other entities and to follow up on those referrals.

The commission has the power to employ staff and engage individuals. The commission has the power to inform itself on matters as it deems appropriate, including developing its own guidelines. The commission has the power to conduct public and private examinations in a manner which it deems appropriate and in the public interest with regard to human rights and natural justice. And the commission has the power to decline to report on matters it finds not to be in the public interest or that are better kept confidential.

The commission has similar powers in its own right to the Auditor-General. However, it must go through judicial officers outside those powers. The laws will give the anti-corruption commission power to obtain documents, subpoena witnesses, require search and arrest warrants, seize evidence relevant to a search warrant, and conduct public and private hearings.

Madam Speaker, as you will see from page 25 of the explanatory statement, we have gone to great lengths to ensure that all recommendations of the Assembly inquiry have been adhered to. While each recommendation from the report is important, I would like to take a few moments to focus on key recommendations and provide further context to some of those important concepts.

Corrupt conduct is conduct that could constitute or involve a criminal or disciplinary offence or provide reasonable grounds for terminating the services of a public official. In the case of ministers or members of this place, corrupt conduct may constitute or involve a substantial breach of the applicable code of conduct, or cause a reasonable person to believe that it would bring the integrity of the office of the minister or MLA into serious disrepute.

Importantly, conduct may amount to corrupt conduct regardless of whether the conduct happened before the commencement of this bill, or if some or all of the effects or other matters occurred before commencement. Additionally, the bill applies regardless of whether the person is no longer a public official or was not a public official at the time the conduct happened if the conduct was in relation to the exercise of the person's functions after becoming a public official.

The terms "public authority" and "public official" have been given a broad scope to include both public sector personnel and entities as well as non-public sector entities, including contractors and consultants, to the extent that they perform a public function or are engaged to provide public services. This ensures that all levels and connections to the public sector are covered by the bill.

An individual performing an official function on behalf of the government should not avoid scrutiny simply because they are a contractor. While there are already misconduct and investigative mechanisms in place within the public service, it is appropriate that the legislation augments these processes to ensure consistency and

allow the commission to provide authoritative leadership in line with the bill's objectives.

The commission is not bound by the rules of evidence but instead may inform itself of a matter in any way that it deems appropriate. In exercising its functions with as little formality and technicality as possible, the commission must accept written submissions which may not ordinarily be accepted as part of legal hearings.

This approach also allows for some of the complexity surrounding legal evidentiary burdens to be relaxed and means that more evidence, or types of evidence, may be considered by the commission without regard for legal precedent. This would mean that hearsay may be applicable in certain circumstances outside settled common law exceptions. The legal background of the commissioner or presiding officer is important to allow the informed discretion in terms of evidence admitted and what evidence may have subsequent uses.

Notwithstanding those broad powers, the commission must comply with the rules of natural justice and consider potential subsequent use of information obtained by the commission in the course of their investigation. Safeguards have been put in place to ensure the rules of natural justice are legislatively protected.

One of the primary functions of the commission is to investigate and expose corruption. The commission is limited to making findings of fact and opinion, such as whether corrupt conduct has occurred. This makes the commission unique and requires broad investigative powers. Without the ability to inform itself as it sees fit, the commission would be restricted to evidence that could be admitted in court and this would impair its functions.

The evidentiary thresholds in court are deliberately high as there are clearly delineated punishments attached to those offences and conduct. However, the commission has no powers to enforce any penalties, except in relation to conduct against itself, such as contempt of the commission. It is therefore appropriate that the commission has a discretion to act in a manner which enables them to most effectively and efficiently carry out their duties.

Importantly, an examination must be conducted in public, unless the commission decides it is in the public interest to hold the examination in private. This is essential to many of the commission's core objectives and functions, including fostering public confidence, exposing corruption and informing educative resources for preventing future corruption. Public hearings are a key accountability mechanism and allow the commission to be authoritative, impartial and a diligent public face of integrity.

As discussed in the committee's report, and demonstrated in many jurisdictions, public examinations are an essential tool of anti-corruption and integrity bodies. Examinations often follow extensive private investigations. There is evidence to suggest a correlation between the effectiveness of integrity bodies and their ability to hold public examinations.

Similar to the court system, there are a number of key principles that underscore the necessity of an open and public process. The default of public examinations provides for the transparency and accountability of the conduct of the commission, public confidence in its operations, the discovery of further evidence, the education of the public, and it also has a general deterrent effect to prevent future corruption.

With this in mind, there may be times when the commission feels an examination would be more appropriately held in private. The public interest test has been incorporated to minimise risks to privacy and reputation and to allow the commission discretion to balance multiple considerations of procedural fairness and individual rights.

What I am presenting today is a proposal for what I think is a very good framework for an anti-corruption commission in Canberra. As per the select committee recommendation, this bill should be sent to another select committee for review and improvement so that we can have this legislation passed in 2018. My office has done a huge amount of work on this legislation because we believe it is important. We were very concerned that this process would drag out unless we drove it.

The importance of public accountability and transparency cannot be understated. This bill puts integrity first and makes public examination the default of the commission. As Lord Justice Salmon said, it is only when the public is present at an inquiry that it will have complete confidence that everything has been done for the purpose of arriving at the truth. Whilst we have an Auditor-General and we have the police, there is a gap. I believe, and I hope, that the anti-corruption and integrity commission will fill that void. Madam Speaker, I am pleased to present this bill.

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

Independent Integrity Commission 2018—Select Committee Establishment

MR BARR (Kurrajong—Chief Minister, Treasurer, Minister for Economic Development and Minister for Tourism and Major Events) (10.17), by leave: I move:

- (1) that a select committee be established to further inquire into the establishment of an integrity commission for the ACT, through examination of a draft Government bill and the Anti-corruption and Integrity Commission Bill 2018, and other related matters, with consideration of:
 - (a) the Select Committee on an Independent Integrity Commission's report released in October 2017; and
 - (b) human rights requirements under the Human Rights Act 2004;
- (2) the select committee shall consist of the same Members of the previous select committee inquiring into an Independent Integrity Commission, unless a Member is unavailable, consisting of:
 - (a) two Members to be nominated by the Government;

- (b) two Members to be nominated by the Opposition;
 - (c) one Member to be nominated by the Crossbench; and
 - (d) the chair shall be a Crossbench Member;
- (3) the select committee be provided with necessary staff, facilities and resources;
 - (4) the select committee is to report by 31 October 2018;
 - (5) if the Assembly is not sitting when the committee has completed its inquiry, the committee may send its report to the Speaker or, in the absence of the Speaker, to the Deputy Speaker, who is authorised to give directions for its printing, publishing and circulation;
 - (6) the foregoing provisions of this resolution, so far as they are inconsistent with the standing orders, have effect notwithstanding anything contained in the standing orders; and
 - (7) nominations for membership of the committee be notified in writing to the Speaker within two hours following conclusion of the debate on the matter.

The motion I have moved and which I understand has been agreed to across all parties is that a select committee be established to further inquire into the establishment of an integrity commission for the ACT through the examination of both the bill the Leader of Opposition has introduced and a government bill that is being drafted. It will be interesting to see with what would appear to be essentially the same drafting instructions how two different drafters within parliamentary counsel have arrived at achieving the same ends. The committee will certainly have the opportunity to examine those questions.

The select committee released its report last year and indicated a willingness in its recommendations to effectively reconvene to examine in detail the legislation so that it met the intent of the recommendations from that committee.

The motion I move today recommends that the select committee consists of the same members as the previous select committee unless a member is unavailable, and that the committee consists of two members nominated by the government, two members nominated by the opposition, one member nominated by the crossbench and that the chair shall be the crossbench member.

The select committee are to be provided with the necessary staff, facilities and resources and are to report by 31 October 2018. As is usual practice, if the Assembly is not sitting when the committee has completed its inquiry the committee may send its report to the Speaker.

Members would be aware in the budget I tabled yesterday that through the appropriation bill for the Office of the Legislative Assembly funding has been provided for the integrity commission. With this time frame in relation to the select committee's work—and of course depending on the recommendations of that committee and the necessary Assembly processes that will follow—we will be able to debate legislation this year.

If it is the will of the Assembly to introduce and debate the bill in the one sitting period it can seek a dispensation from the relevant standing order and then it is entirely possible that legislation can be passed in the November sittings. Otherwise it would be in the first sitting week in 2019. That is, of course, a matter for the Assembly and will be subject to consideration post the findings of this committee.

As I have mentioned, it will be interesting to see how two different parliamentary drafters have approached essentially the same drafting cast, but that will be revealed for the committee in due course. I commend the establishment of this select committee to the Assembly.

Question resolved in the affirmative.

Municipal services

MS CHEYNE (Ginninderra) (10.20): I move:

That this Assembly:

(1) notes that:

- (a) Canberra has the second fastest growing population in Australia, with our population predicted to reach 428,000 by the year 2020;
- (b) every year about 4,000 new homes are being added to our city; and
- (c) our growing population means greater demand is being placed on municipal services to keep our city and suburbs neat and green and on our transport networks to keep our city moving;

(2) acknowledges that the ACT Government has announced funding in the 2018 Budget to deliver growing services for our growing city, including:

- (a) growth funding to maintain the public realm and provide municipal services to new communities across Canberra including homes in both infill developments and new suburban estates;
- (b) providing additional city services including mowing, lake and pond cleaning, graffiti management, weed control, tree maintenance and bus shelter cleaning;
- (c) improving local playgrounds, including a participatory budgeting process led by the Better Suburbs Citizens Forum and providing ongoing maintenance of playgrounds to address high priority, high risk safety concerns in playgrounds; and
- (d) planting 1,330 trees to reduce heat island effect in urban areas;

(3) further notes that the ACT Government is also delivering better town centres and encouraging an active lifestyle by providing safe and convenient active travel and transport infrastructure, including:

- (a) building the Belconnen bikeway and improving pedestrian connections in the Belconnen Town Centre;
- (b) providing new and improved cycle ways and streetscapes in the Woden Town Centre;

- (c) revitalising cycling and pedestrian connections in the Tuggeranong Town Centre; and
- (d) road improvements, including safer intersections, across the Territory;
- (4) further notes the ACT Government is investing in a modern, convenient integrated public transport network; and
- (5) calls on the Government to continue to:
 - (a) deliver core services that provide on-the-ground, tangible, every-day improvements that directly impact the lives of ACT residents; and
 - (b) engage ACT residents in determining what improvements are important for their communities.

As you have heard plenty of times in this place, because it is a pretty important fact, Canberra is growing. In fact, we are the second fastest growing population in Australia, and we are not stopping any time soon. Our population is predicted to reach 428,000 by 2020. I do not want to alarm anyone, but 2020 is just around the corner. Our city is expanding up and out as we build homes for our new residents and create new communities. Our inner city corridors and town centres are being infilled and densified and new suburban estates are coming online.

With this growth comes greater demand for city services. We need to make sure everyone's rubbish is getting collected, that public transport is able to meet increased demand, and that new parklands and infrastructure are maintained. Of course, this is on top of the business-as-usual city services provided all around Canberra. It is a big task, but we are committing the funds to make sure the job gets done and is done well.

In the 2018 budget the ACT government is investing to maintain the public realm and provide municipal services to new communities across Canberra as well as stepping up existing services and renewing town centres. In short, there is more of everything. This year's budget includes nearly \$3.5 million to expand essential services to new Canberra homes in both infill developments and new suburban estates. A suburban estate demands a whole host of core services. It is easy to take these services for granted, but I think people would get quite a shock if these services ever stopped.

Take just a moment to think about your own suburb and all of the infrastructure you use every day: each time you get in your car, you use local roads and rely on traffic lights, road markings and signage to make sure you get to your destination safely; if you walk down to your local shops or park you probably use local footpaths and verges, and you expect the shops, parklands and playground equipment to be clean and safe; one night each week or fortnight you take your full rubbish and recycling bins to the kerb and know that they will be emptied the next morning; and if it rains, you know you can rely on stormwater infrastructure to keep your home from going under. It is quite a lot.

The ACT government is investing to make sure new homes in suburban estates or infill developments receive the municipal services that Canberrans across the ACT expect and to fund the ongoing maintenance of the public realm and community infrastructure.

That is not all this budget is offering for city services, though; far from it. We have been listening to the community when they have said they want more services in existing suburbs—more mowing, more lake and pond cleaning, more weed control and better graffiti management. We have heard our residents when they have requested more tree maintenance and bus shelter cleaning. We have heard, and we are delivering. That is why we are committing \$10 million over four years to build better suburbs for Canberrans. This money will be used to step up existing maintenance services so we can keep our suburbs neat and tidy and so we are better positioned to respond to the maintenance reports from the community.

I know investing in a clean and beautiful Canberra will make a big difference to Canberrans. We take great pride in our city, and each and every one of us hates to see it ever looking unkempt. I have had a number of conversations with my constituents about serial graffiti taggers around Belconnen, including Surge and Pablo, for example, and additional funds for better graffiti management will be welcomed by many people.

Another issue my constituents often raise with me and other members in this place is playgrounds. They are a cornerstone of community building, and they play a vital role in the mental, physical and social development of the youngest members of our community. For the most part Canberrans enjoy fantastic playgrounds around town. They are safe, fun and plentiful. In fact, we have more than 500 playgrounds across our city, and I believe in a previous annual reports hearing I heard there is a playground within a 400-metre radius of every single person's house in the ACT.

However, sometimes playgrounds fall victim to vandalism or they require a fix-up as they age. In these cases it is so important that we have the resources to ensure complaints are responded to quickly, and that playgrounds are kept safe for young Canberrans. This budget commits \$300,000 to fix up high priority playgrounds. At least a further \$1 million will also be allocated to playgrounds through the better suburbs citizens forum. This forum represents an innovative step in civic management. We are not just listening to Canberrans on how they would like money to be spent on playgrounds, but we are also letting them decide themselves how and where that money should be spent.

Sixty-five members of the community will be able to directly allocate \$1.9 million to plan city services. At least \$1 million of that money must be used on playgrounds, either to upgrade existing playgrounds or to build new ones. Participants in the citizens forum will represent individual community members as well as community organisations.

As we talk about Canberra's growth it would be remiss not to mention the town centres, particularly my own. They are hotspots of growth and development, and the ACT government is investing in active, connected and safe town centres. In my electorate of Ginninderra we are building the Belco bikeway and upgrading pedestrian connections and road intersections in the town centre. These are projects dear to my heart and not just simply because I live there.

In late 2014 the government embarked on a major consultation on the Belconnen town centre master plan. The government went out and asked for the community's ideas about what needed changing or updating in the Belconnen town centre. As chair of the Belconnen Community Council I took a lead role in promoting this consultation, together with other like-minded organisations like the Belconnen Arts Centre and the Belconnen Community Service. We letterboxed and we hosted our own public forums at the Belconnen Arts Centre and also, to some people's surprise, at the Ginninderra Tavern in addition to the government-led forums. That meant that we got a really wide-ranging set of views.

This high level of participation, which I still believe stands as one of the best examples of community feedback feeding directly into a master plan process, meant really strong themes emerged in the consultation. As a result, they became a prominent feature of the master plan. One of these—and the consultation report strongly reflects this—was making use of the old Joynton Smith busway. Overwhelmingly, people supported making it into a pedestrian and cycleway, connecting back into the town centre. Those residents in Totterdell Street and Morell Close for so long have been kept away from the broader town centre by the fencing that has been put up in that old busway, and they wanted something to be done.

The master plan more broadly recommended that on top of this there be better cycling connections throughout the town centre and linking to other suburbs. The master plan recommended it; ACT Labor then committed to it at the election; and last fortnight the detailed design was released. I have been out talking with the local community, particularly with residents in Totterdell Street and Morell Close, which surround the old busway, and that strong support we saw with the master plan process has held true.

I am pleased with how many people have engaged with the online forum on the design and suggesting amenities for along the route. That was further underlined with a great turnout this past Sunday at a face-to-face consultation at the Belconnen Arts Centre. That goes to the heart of this motion as well—we are connecting better and providing better services, better amenities and more of everything. While the minister is here I will flag that I would like to see some more bins.

The 2018 budget also commits funds to construct a boardwalk around the lakeside of the Belconnen Arts Centre to complete the loop around Lake Ginninderra. It may not seem like much to those who do not live in Belconnen, but completing the loop around Emu Bank and the entire lake will make a big difference to locals who spend their leisure time by the lake and will positively affect how the community engages with the arts centre. It will change the orientation of the arts centre. Its front will no longer necessarily be the busy roadway of Emu Bank where Benjamin Way connects to it but, rather, it will be the lake. It will finally mean we have a connected path right around the lake adjacent to the foreshore. There has been overwhelming support for this for such a long time because it just makes sense, especially to those of us who live there and use it every day.

One of the Belconnen budget initiatives I am most excited about is the upgrading of two dangerous intersections. Tillyard Drive and Ginninderra Drive, and Owen Dixon

Drive and Kuringa Drive will both be reworked to improve driver safety. Anyone who has tried to navigate these intersections knows how hair-raising it can be, particularly when driving conditions are not ideal like when the sun is setting or during peak hour.

The upgrades will include traffic lights at both intersections as well as additional lanes at the Kuringa Drive intersection to ease congestion and make movements through the intersections much safer. This is the budget announcement the people of Belconnen have been asking for. I know that all Ginninderra MLAs have been listening and that all Ginninderra MLAs are very pleased with the announcement. We have all been working on this in our own ways.

Madam Speaker, you know that it is not all about getting in front of the media. All of us in this place know that most of the work that gets things done is work behind the scenes, and I can speak on behalf of all of the Labor Ginninderra MLAs and the minister about the work we have done in this space working together. I am very proud that we are delivering on this.

Canberrans love our clean, green city. We are proud to be recognised as one of the most livable cities in the whole world, and we want it to stay that way. With this budget, the ACT government is making sure that is the case, delivering growing services for our growing community. More municipal services, more green spaces and more connected town centres will keep Canberra beautiful, encourage active lifestyles and enliven our public spaces.

This budget is providing on-the-ground, tangible, everyday improvements that people will see and feel and they will positively impact the lives of those people—more of everything. I encourage the government to keep up the great work in listening to what our community wants and delivering growing services for our growing city. I commend the motion to the Assembly.

MS LE COUTEUR (Murrumbidgee) (10.32): I was not expecting to be the next speaker but I am delighted to be the next speaker on this motion. I support Ms Cheyne's motion. One of the reasons is that I am very pleased to be able to say the budget implements a huge number of our parliamentary agreement items. In the city services area the budget has implemented at least seven of our parliamentary agreement items.

It is possible that I have missed one; I apologise. We have not yet had 24 hours to read every single line in budget paper 3. But at this stage of the city services there is obviously planning for light rail stage 2. There is a 12-month extension of free off-peak travel for seniors and certain concession cardholders. There are new bus stops for the new rapid bus routes. There is substantially more money for active travel upgrades around our city, which is great. There is the implementation of the World Health Organisation's HEAT model for assessing active travel projects, which should lead to long-term, really positive outcomes for Canberra.

It is probably hard to say how important it is to get our transport system—our whole way of living in Canberra—such that we become healthier people just through our everyday life. The rate of obesity in Canberra and Australia as a whole has increased

dramatically in the last 20 years. This is becoming the biggest preventable cause of disease and premature mortality in Australia.

We need to do something about it. One of the most important things we can do is make sure our city is a walkable city, a city where people do walk, where people use active transport so that everybody has what the Heart Foundation recommends for us all, which is half an hour of active exercise every day. More of course is better.

There is funding for an adopt-a-park scheme and funding for eight micro parks. On top of this, the government's ongoing better suburbs consultation is building the foundation for next year's city services participatory budgeting trial that I called for last year in the Assembly. The Assembly in its wisdom passed a motion calling for this.

I will now talk about a few of these items in a bit more detail, focusing on the smaller elements which will be of particular interest in my electorate. Ms Cheyne talked about Ginninderra. Not being quite as au fait with Ginninderra, I will concentrate on Woden and Murrumbidgee.

First, there is light rail stage 2 funding. Part of that is restarting work on the Woden bus interchange. For those members who unfortunately do not go to Woden very often, the interchange is well past its use-by date. It is stuck out the back next to the loading zone for the mall, a vacant site which used to be the police station and a multistorey car park.

At night it does not feel particularly safe, although I believe it is. In fact ACTION has staff there until the last bus arrives, but people do not see those staff. It does not look like that. Unfortunately, the buses are required to go in and go around in a circle before they go out again. In peak time this can lead to a minute or two delay. This is a delay that we should not have.

There have been several attempts at getting a new bus station over the years. Probably about six years ago, I was involved in an awful lot of consultation about it. At that stage Westfield wanted to expand and the deal was going to be that they expanded the mall. As part of that, the bus interchange would be reworked and expanded.

I guess it would have ended up somewhat similar to what happened in Belconnen. But unlike Belconnen, the mall has not expanded and the bus interchange has continued to quietly decay. It is really good to see that this is back on the radar. It looks like this overhaul will be happening soon as part of the light rail project.

Secondly, I want to highlight a particular piece of active travel infrastructure in my electorate which appears to have been funded and will be of great interest to cyclists in Woden and Weston Creek. Page 166 of budget paper 3, under "better infrastructure for active travel", includes the following little snippet of text:

... complete the Lyons to Weston Creek (Heysen Drive) cycle-path link.

I am afraid that all the members listening to me in the chamber have the misfortune of not being Murrumbidgee members. But if you were a Murrumbidgee member you

would realise this is really important because this is the link between Weston and Woden. And it is becoming more and more important because it is the back, quick way through. Now that we have Molonglo, you go from Molonglo to Weston and then in to Woden. What used to be a quite quiet road has become a very busy road. I was at a public meeting last week where there was talk about needing speed humps. It is a very busy road.

There is proposed development on the old AFP site. It is very important that there is a safe way for cyclists to go along Heysen Drive. Commuting cyclists are probably more interested than car drivers in not going extra kilometres just to go around three sides of light rail rather than one side. Going through Heysen Drive enables them to save an awful lot of time going between Weston and Woden, and between Molonglo, Weston and Woden. There has been a great grassroots campaign from local residents to try to get funding to fix this missing link. From budget paper 3 it looks like they have been successful. This is very welcome news.

Thirdly, I want to talk about adopt-a-park. Again, Murrumbidgee members of the Assembly will have noticed that local parks and playgrounds have been very popular topics of interest over the last year and a half. I assume that members from other electorates have also found this to be a very major topic of conversation. Several communities in Murrumbidgee—Farrer and Waramanga most noticeably—have come together to put forward a suite of ideas about how open space around their local centres could be upgraded, starting in both instances with proposals for a new playground.

It is really great that people want to get involved in their local area. They have loads of energy, enthusiasm and great ideas to contribute. The problem often comes when these ideas hit TCCS Directorate. First, of course, they have to find the right part of the bureaucracy to work with. That, as we all know, is not straightforward. Secondly, those bureaucrats clearly do not have any process for working with a proactive local community. Thirdly, of course, the directorate does get very nervous about cost. That concern about cost is very understandable. They have to look at Canberra as a whole. They do not want to be in the situation of giving a shiny new toy to one community and having to say no to the rest of Canberra. They have very limited money to go around.

Hopefully, if the adopt-a-park initiative is well implemented—all I know about it is the one line in budget paper 3—it could solve many of these problems. It could provide a clear process and an entry point for local communities. It might also resolve some of the cost concerns. It provides a way forward for TCCS and the community to agree that TCCS will fund X as part of the ongoing budget and the community can fundraise for Y and Z. There will also be a grant from adopt-a-park, which will be enough to get the whole project over the line. TCCS can then check that everything is safe. There will probably be some volunteer working bees. TCCS will have a process for doing whatever it needs to do as far as asset acceptance is concerned if TCCS will have an ongoing role in maintenance.

In summary, I support Ms Cheyne's motion. What happens in city services is really important to making a livable Canberra, a Canberra that we all enjoy living in, a

Canberra which will help make us healthy because it provides us the spaces to walk in, to go out—outdoor recreation—and enjoy the bush capital which we are so lucky to live in.

MS LAWDER (Brindabella) (10.42): I thank Ms Cheyne for bringing this motion on today. Unfortunately, unlike Ms Cheyne, I am not convinced the government is delivering on that core commitment to deliver great basic local services, or even adequate services, for our city.

It was interesting, and a little disappointing, to note that much of Ms Cheyne's motion seems to come directly from a cut-and-paste of Ms Fitzharris's media release of 23 May, which was headed "More essential services for Canberra's growing suburbs". It seems as though it is a case where if you keep telling yourself that something is great, you must believe that it is true. If you move away from here on London Circuit, or indeed from Ainslie Place, you might see that things are actually quite different.

The appearance, the amenity and the safety of our city were something that once all Canberrans were very proud of and that visitors to our city remarked upon. It was once a city where, whether you lived north of the lake or south of the lake, whether you lived in what was nappy valley—at various times that could have been Woden, Tuggeranong or potentially Gungahlin—whether you were in the inner city or the outer suburbs, everyone was proud of their local parks, playgrounds, shops, bike paths, libraries, parks and lakes.

I am very proud of Canberra. I am proud to live here. I made a decision to live here after living in all other states and territories of Australia and overseas. But in the 30 years that I have been here, I have seen that gradual deterioration of the general suburban amenity. So do people who visit here from interstate.

Canberra was a city where you used to know that the barbecues would work when you went down to your local park or to the lake; where the toilets were always open and always clean; where the trees were pruned; where the footpaths, verges and parks were mown; where the streetlights worked; and where dogs were kept under control. When things needed repair, they were fixed quickly and without fuss. Playgrounds were maintained and upgraded when necessary. Graffiti was removed. Streetlights were on all the time at night. Streets were swept and repaired. We do not have that attractive appearance any longer: the rich amenity and urban safety that Canberrans were once so proud of.

Over the years, Madam Speaker, you can see, from analysing and looking at the annual reports, that this government has gradually starved our local services of resources. This is despite huge increases in our rates and despite population growth, more and more suburbs, and more and more ratepayers. This has resulted in a litany of broken footpaths, gaping potholes, unmown parklands, broken streetlights and more roaming dogs.

Many Canberrans feel less safe. Dog attacks are still not being investigated appropriately, even though there was the terrible case of a Canberra woman killed by a dog last year. More attacks are being reported all the time and going

under-investigated. You just have to see some of the social media pages of various suburban groups around Canberra to see people reporting that their dogs have been attacked, and in some cases killed, by other dogs, in some cases with other dogs coming onto their own property and killing their dog.

This comes down to staffing pressures at domestic animal services as well as weak dangerous dog laws. We are just not backing up the staff who work in that area appropriately. We have found now in this budget that the long-promised staff increases do not appear to be there. Last year, the minister was on, I think, ABC Radio, talking about doubling the front-line staffing at domestic animal services. This appears to be a bit of a cruel hoax on that hardworking front-line staff. This budget actually announced two additional animal rangers. It is also a deceit of the public, who increasingly do not report roaming dangerous and menacing dogs anymore because they know that nothing will be done, because of a lack of support and resources in that area.

On a different matter, over eight years the number of kilometres of street sweeping has decreased. It declined in real terms up to 2016. Conveniently, then the government stopped reporting the kilometres swept in annual reports. Whilst we have additional kilometres of streets because of more and more suburbs, in real terms, street sweeping has declined.

This is not only a visual amenity and safety issue. I hear from elderly people especially, and in some particular suburbs, about leaf litter making it dangerous for pedestrians. It results in dangerous roads and clogged drains. Of course, that adds to the organic load in our lakes. That leads to more public risks, as our lakes are then dangerous for swimming and are closed because of algal blooms. We saw the devastating effect of neglected stormwater assets in the recent February flooding, soon after an Auditor-General's report on this very topic of the handover of stormwater assets.

Over the past few years the government is gradually squeezing funding from street sweeping even though we have more roads and footpaths, and more people using them. It is also nearly impossible for Canberrans to get streetlights fixed in a timely manner. Many Canberrans wait three months or so to get a single streetlight fixed. It might not seem to matter, it might not seem like a big deal, but for some people it is very much a safety issue. If that light is the one you depend on to walk safely in your street or put your bin out, it does matter. If it is the light that makes the walk home from the bus stop safe, it does matter. And at this time of the year, when it is darker earlier, more and more people are walking home from the bus stop or from the shops in the dark because of the winter hours. People report them, and they take a long time. I get a number of emails about this. I encourage people to report via fix my street; I report things myself via fix my street. People come to me when the fix my street request has not been acted upon for quite some time.

We expect and deserve to have safe and attractive suburban surrounds, especially when rates are at record levels. This week's budget has confirmed that the ACT government is collecting the cash. The general neglect of local services is therefore inexcusable.

What makes it even worse is that the government does not appear to care about or to want community feedback about these local services. In this week's budget, the government have conveniently removed five measures of customer satisfaction and public safety. Unsurprisingly, these measures in the past few years have shown a decline in satisfaction with the government's management of public spaces. The best way to do away with poor customer satisfaction levels is to abolish the measures so that we no longer have to deal with not meeting targets. It is a very convenient way of working. Then we have this self-congratulatory motion which seems to ignore the fact that satisfaction was declining over the years and now has been removed as a measure from the budget.

There is only one real detail in Ms Cheyne's motion, one figure, and that is the planting of 1,330 trees. These trees are to reduce the heat island effect in urban areas. That is interesting. I repeat, Madam Speaker: to cool down the city, the government will plant 1,330 trees. It is admirable to plant 1,330 trees, and we support that. Many of us have planted that and many more in projects across the country over the past few years. The point is that the government are trying to make a virtue out of something that is pretty much business as usual. And it is not much of a contribution to Canberra's urban tree forest. They are saying they are going to plant 1,330 trees when it is actually a fraction of the annual plantings of other years.

Let us put 1,330 trees into perspective. In very rough terms, it is about 13 trees per suburb. We have over three-quarters of a million public trees in Canberra, so this year's 1,330 new trees is around 1.6 per cent of the number of urban public trees. Planting this number will hardly keep up with the current rate at which our suburban and street trees are dying.

By comparison, in 2007 this government committed \$30.8 million as part of the million trees project. By comparison, in 2009 the government planted 6,250 trees in Canberra streets, a further 2,600 around our lakes, and 558 trees to replace dying trees. We know that 1,330 trees is only around double the number the government cut down for the light rail project. It is only a fraction of the 230,000 trees that the government has planted along the Murrumbidgee corridor since 2008.

We support the sensible and carefully selected planning of urban trees, but this motion is trying to make a big deal out of something that is pretty much business as usual for the government, nothing out of the ordinary.

The second part of that point in Ms Cheyne's motion is that these 1,330 trees are being planted to reduce the heat island effect in urban areas. A report called *Mapping surface urban heat in Canberra* by CSIRO, commissioned by the ACT government, has very telling lessons for urban microclimates and the heat island effect in urban areas.

One of its findings is that Gungahlin has the highest heat exposure and vulnerability of any Canberra district. Retrofitting urban trees into Gungahlin to try to reverse the impacts of decades of poor planning policies will have only marginal impact for that area. Suburbs in Gungahlin are dominated by small blocks, extensive rooftops and

narrow road verges with no space for trees. Even if 1,330 trees could be planted, they will have very little effect, because of the planning regime under which Gungahlin was built. By comparison, in the new development of Ginninderry, the urban heat island effect is being tackled at the planning stage. In stage 1 of this development, 350 houses will be built and 1,200 street trees planted.

We support the adoption of policies to reduce the urban heat island effect, but they must be based on facts. Trees are important, but the planning policy must incorporate that, not thwart or discourage it. Throwaway lines in the current budget like “plant 1,330 trees to reduce heat island effect in urban areas” must be seen for what they are: at best, business as usual; at worst, hypocritical, self-gratifying and out of step with policies in other areas.

I will briefly touch on playgrounds. A million dollars has been allocated, which could include funds for new playgrounds. We have had a lot of requests from the public about playgrounds, many of which have been denied by this government. How much will actually be spent on running the consultative process when we are ignoring the input of constituents as it is? We have seen petitions and approaches from many groups in this place, for Greenway, for Higgins, for Torrens, for Waramanga. We need to upgrade and improve our existing playgrounds, not only build new playgrounds.

We also want to see what the government is actually promising this year. What are we getting? We are getting \$56 million spent with more rangers. How many more? The answer is: not as many as promised. We are seeing upgrades to three ovals and more mowing, weeding, removal of graffiti, tree trimming, and waterway cleaning. This is simply catch-up for years of declining budget in this area. It is not even keeping pace with population growth. When you starve areas of resources over years, it is easy to make it look as though you are suddenly allocating additional resources with a bit of a boost in a year. That is what we are seeing here. It is not a particularly good real increase in resources; it is merely playing catch-up. We are barely keeping our head above water in providing basic local services that people expect for their rates, for the very high rates and ever-increasing rates that we are seeing from this government.

MS FITZHARRIS (Yerrabi—Minister for Health and Wellbeing, Minister for Transport and City Services and Minister for Higher Education, Training and Research) (10.57): I would like to thank Ms Cheyne for not only bringing this motion to the Assembly today but for her extensive insight and experience in this area, not only in this place but also, obviously, as she mentioned and as many people in Belconnen know, from her considerable community activism before being elected to the Assembly. It is, of course, important, as all members have recognised, that the government does continue to deliver on core city services that provide the on-the-ground, tangible, everyday improvements that directly impact the lives of ACT residents and engage ACT residents in determining what improvements are important for their communities and neighbourhoods.

As we know, by 2033 the Canberra population is expected to grow to over half a million people. To service the growing and diverse mix of residents and visitors, the ACT Labor government is committed to improving how people move around

Canberra and experience our city and our neighbourhoods. One of the key ACT government transport initiatives is to provide an integrated public transport and mobility network which includes creating better flexible and on-demand transport options for people to get where they need to go. These transport options will include buses, light rail, roads, ridesharing, taxis, cycling and walking.

The bus network will focus on delivering what Canberrans have asked for: faster trips and more direct routes, more frequent and reliable services and increased services at peak and off-peak times. This has started with the introduction of two new rapid routes in 2017 and will expand to nine over the course of this term. This work will provide a better-connected, seven-day transport network for Canberrans.

The budget does provide additional funding to improve customer access and amenity for the city's public transport network. Following community consultation, funding will also be used to deliver upgrades to key transport network connection points which will include upgrades to shelters, lighting, footpaths, signage and crossings.

As all Canberrans can see, construction is well underway for light rail stage 1— notably this week a considerable improvement in the Gungahlin town centre, with the fencing coming down, trees planted, landscaping being further progressed literally in the last 24 hours. The budget will also inject another \$10 million to progress the next stage of planning, design and enabling works for the light rail from the city to Woden. The budget will also invest a further \$2½ million in works to support light rail stage 2 for the preparation of detailed business cases for potential early works in the Woden town centre and the bus interchange, along Parkes Way and also at the Yarra Glen intersection, as well as looking at a city-wide park-and-ride strategy.

Together with these investments, as well as planning funding and a provision for the future delivery of a light rail stop at Mitchell and building on last year's investments, the ACT government will also continue to deliver on transport initiatives in the active travel space, investing over the last two budgets \$30 million in new active travel infrastructure. The government will improve and expand pedestrian and cycling infrastructure right across Canberra to ensure it is safe, sustainable, attractive and easy to use.

I am really pleased that work will get underway, and consultation has begun, on the detailed design of the Belconnen bikeway. I look forward to working with TCCS, the Belconnen community, the Belconnen Arts Centre and Minister Ramsay on the work underway to expand the Belconnen Arts Centre. This is going to be the next generation of separated cycling and walking infrastructure for our city and is an incredibly exciting project. And I encourage everyone who has an interest to participate in the community consultation that is underway.

We are also really thrilled to be providing further upgrades to the Tuggeranong town centre as well as the Woden town centre, to implement recommendations of town centre master plan processes and build on the work that is already underway in the Gungahlin town centre. Across Tuggeranong, Belconnen and Woden these works will include not only active travel upgrades but also streetscape improvements, additional landscaping and additional street furniture in these important town centres.

We will also invest in better promoting and better signage for our off-road bikeway network and we will investigate further improvements to connections to make sure that Canberra's off-road bikeway network can be better utilised.

We will expand the wonderful active streets for schools program, build on work done in previous budgets, and the very popular and very effective work we have begun with the school crossing supervisor program at 20 schools across the ACT. As Ms Le Couteur noted—and I know that my colleagues Ms Cody and Mr Steel, and you, Madam Speaker, also spoke to me at length about the Heysen Street cycle path link between Lyons and Weston Creek—this is a key cycling route that we are really pleased to fund in this year's budget.

As Ms Cheyne's motion notes, ensuring the amenity of our suburbs is maintained and providing essential services necessary for our growing city is a priority. The government aims to provide quality services and amenities in every suburb and neighbourhood across the city. And this is a significant focus of the government's 2018 budget.

In addition to implementing and building on our community consultations on town centre works—as I have just noted, work is underway to significantly improve urban amenity in our town centres, Gungahlin, Tuggeranong, Woden and Belconnen—this budget also invests significant resources in additional city services both to new suburbs and to existing suburbs. These investments include graffiti management, tree maintenance, bus shelter cleaning, focused maintenance at major entry roads into the ACT, and an increased responsiveness to tree-related public inquiries.

The government will also be delivering the adopt-a-park scheme, a Labor election commitment from 2016. It is scheduled to commence next year and will provide small grants to volunteer groups to achieve cleaner, greener parks and increase community pride in local parks and open spaces. I note Ms Le Couteur's comments around the adopt-a-park scheme and I too am very excited about the opportunities for communities to come together to propose community-led activities in their neighbourhoods. And we note there have been previous successes around this, including Lyneham Commons, which comes to mind as a wonderful community initiative in Lyneham.

We will also increase the annual mowing program to have increased capacity to manage grass growth, particularly following wet periods across Canberra, and to improve the look and feel of our city. In addition to more mowing, the budget will also provide for greater weed control. This will include hand-weeding suburban shrub beds and chemical control of weeds in kerbs, gutters and around roadway barriers. While also providing improved amenity, this additional weed control will prevent unnecessary damage to existing infrastructure.

Every year the ACT increases its urban footprint by way of establishing new suburbs and redeveloping older suburbs. In the last financial year the suburbs of Lawson, Denman Prospect, Throsby, Moncrieff and Taylor underwent major extensions. These areas are now funded with city services to ensure the public realm is maintained. This

budget provides \$10 million to support the maintenance of these assets as well as to support the provision of new mobile garbage bins and collection of rubbish in these suburbs.

In the last 15 years there has been a significant increase in the number of lakes and ponds across Canberra. Urban densification has placed some pressure on our waterways and the budget allows for an increase in lake and pond cleaning to our over 110 lakes and ponds in the ACT.

The budget also delivers additional investment in our urban forest, on top of ongoing base investment in our urban forest, with 1,330 trees planted in our urban forest, as well as another initiative under Mr Gentleman's portfolio which plants an additional 5,000 trees in the Murrumbidgee corridor. Maintaining and improving our playing fields is also a focus of this budget, particularly because Canberra is such an active city.

In addition I do want to highlight the exciting work underway under the better suburbs statement, a community deliberative process that is underway. Four thousand Canberrans have been sent letters of invitation to participate in this very exciting exercise. We look forward to this deliberative forum of 40 community representatives and 25 representatives of community organisations, government and business, to build and develop a better suburbs statement but also to undertake what is probably the first genuine participatory budgeting initiative in the ACT.

Alongside having kitchen table conversations and developing the statement there is \$1.9 million in this year's budget of which I will ask the better suburbs forum to allocate at least \$1 million to playgrounds, given there has been considerable interest in upgrading existing playgrounds across the territory, as represented by a number of petitions before the Assembly. I am really looking forward to the citizen forum having an opportunity to involve themselves in this program. And I really welcome their conclusions. I again thank Ms Cheyne for bringing forward this important motion today.

MISS C BURCH (Kurrajong) (11.07): I am pleased to be speaking to this motion calling for better local services for the people of Canberra. While the government may have thrown additional funding at local services in this budget, this Labor-Greens government, a government that has been in power for 17 years, does not have a very good track record when it comes to providing these essential basic services and providing residents with value for money for the rates dollars that we are all paying.

Rates have tripled in the last 10 years but Canberrans have not seen any increase in the provision of urban services. Whether it is rubbish collection, street sweeping, graffiti management or park maintenance, this Labor-Greens government continues to let down the people of Canberra in the provision of essential, basic services and the maintenance of public infrastructure, as my colleague Ms Lawder has spoken about at length today.

Ms Cheyne's motion today refers to graffiti management and bus shelter cleaning—and Minister Fitzharris has spoken extensively about public transport—but what I do

not understand is why the minister has actively chosen to undo small but vital aspects of public infrastructure by removing a large number of covered seating and bus shelters in our southern suburbs. With Canberra weather as inconsistent as it is, covered bus shelters provide significant amenity for residents, giving protection from sun, rain and wind, and serve as a welcome refuge for those who commute daily. The removal of covered bus shelters particularly impacts the elderly in our community who welcome covered seating areas when waiting for buses or simply taking a brief respite when they are on a walk. And somehow the government has described these removals as improvements.

I wrote to Minister Fitzharris on 19 February this year, sharing my concerns on behalf of many constituents who have been affected by this irresponsible decision. Yet 3½ months later I am yet to receive a reply from the minister, further highlighting the ACT government's indifference towards actually following through on its promises.

Madam Assistant Speaker, I draw your attention to one of the strategic objectives of the Transport Canberra and City Services Directorate as found within the budget papers. It reads:

The Directorate has a strategic objective of improving the customer experience of public transport and attracting new customers through high quality, friendly and reliable services.

Failure to consistently provide adequate, covered bus shelters with seating directly contradicts this objective and actively discourages the community, particularly the elderly, from using public transport.

If this government cannot get the small, simple things right, how can we trust them with long-term infrastructure that Canberra needs? If we cannot depend on the government to provide necessary and basic essential services, how can we believe the contents of this government's motion calling for an improvement in services which directly impact the lives of ACT residents?

As for active travel and transport infrastructure, there is enormous room for improvement. It is mainly residents of the inner north and inner south who commute to work by bicycle. The take-up is far less in other urban centres. Part of the problem is that there are not the necessary links between urban centres, and most cyclists do not feel safe using bike lanes on major highways. If active commuting is ever going to be viable for more Canberrans, the links between major centres must be improved.

The government tell us that they are investing in a modern, convenient and integrated public transport network. Yet there have recently been two motions passed in this Assembly calling on the government to urgently improve existing bus services, including school bus services, late-night services, and Sunday and public holiday services. Yet we have not seen any additional funding in this week's budget to actually provide these services that Canberrans so demand.

This budget saw rates, fees and charges continue to rise. Yet Canberrans are just not receiving the basic local services we deserve. While I welcome the call to action in

this motion, the government has not demonstrated a very good track record in this area. I call on the government to actually provide the necessary local services that Canberrans are already paying for.

MS ORR (Yerrabi) (11.11): I rise to speak in support of this motion moved by my colleague Ms Cheyne. As those who have spoken in this debate have mentioned, the ACT has seen unprecedented growth in recent years. With such a boost to our population, it is important we have a government that is willing and able to get on with the job of providing essential services for Canberrans.

I have been out in the community recently talking about the action this government is taking in expanding the services available to residents. I was at the Bonner shops last Thursday handing out information on some of the things I and this government have been working on. One impassioned, yet hurried, local only had time to inform me that he felt we needed to fix the roads. My answer to that is that we are.

In this year's budget we are taking further steps to increase the capacity of the transport corridors within Yerrabi. We are duplicating William Slim Drive, which will include 3.2 kilometres of new carriageway. This measure expands on the works already underway on the duplication of Gundaroo Drive and Horse Park Drive.

Taken together, this suite of investment will increase the capacity of our roads and improve linkages with the Belconnen area. With light rail fast approaching, the Gundaroo Drive and William Slim Drive corridor will provide a rapid transport corridor between the Belconnen and Gungahlin town centres. The black rapid bus service already links the two centres. The expanded road capacity will ensure a faster service and a better integration with the transport network more broadly.

The integrated transport network will be further supplemented by extensive investment in the active travel network. The budget includes \$10.5 million to improve cycling and walking connections into and around the Belconnen town centre. This will see the construction of the Belconnen bikeway and the extension of the Lake Ginninderra circuit around the Belconnen Arts Centre with an over-water boardwalk.

In addition to the William Slim Drive works, we will see 6.4 kilometres of new on-road cycle lanes and a new bridge over Ginninderra Creek, further improving the linkages between the town centres and the suburbs in between. I was also out on Saturday in Moncrieff in my electorate talking to locals. What I heard was that they love their suburb—how well it is laid out, how well it is planned and how residents have the space they need to enjoy their lifestyles.

This is a Labor government that continues to get better at providing for Canberrans. Over the years, we have continued to learn, never taking the job for granted. Moncrieff, Taylor, Jacka and Throsby are all examples of how the ACT Labor government has moved ahead in the way we plan our new suburbs. Our new suburbs are green, leafy, walkable and accessible.

They come ready for families to move into and for communities to form around. We facilitate this not just through the way we plan and design the suburbs but also

through our approach to helping people move into their new communities. It would be too easy to say and to think that the City Renewal Authority and the Suburban Land Agency are just there to release land. I point to the work each is doing to build and enhance our local community.

The SLA in particular is working closely with communities in my electorate, like Moncrieff and Throsby, through the mingle program. This budget builds on this by providing more services for our suburbs. We are providing \$10 million more to improve our city services. This will provide additional services for mowing, weeding, graffiti removal, cleaning up local waterways and tree trimming. In Yerrabi, \$1.7 million will go towards improving the Nicholls neighbourhood oval and we are expanding our major events with \$7.6 million in funding.

What I often hear when I am out in the electorate is that the Gungahlin town centre lacks adequate green spaces. In April I hosted the making space initiative here in the Assembly reception room. The event brought together MLAs, public servants, students, the built environment professions, community groups and the general public to better understand how we use our city and how we can better plan for its use.

At the event we heard from Louise, who works in the early childhood development profession. The organisation she works for operates an early learning centre in the Gungahlin town centre. Louise spoke about the lack of green space in the town centre for her staff and students at the centre.

We understand this and are taking steps to reimagine and reinvent the town centre. We have already announced a revamp of Gungahlin Place, which will see more greenery and play spaces added. As has been noted, this year's budget will also be planting an additional 1,333 trees across Canberra.

I note that Ms Lawder made a lot of comments particularly about Gungahlin. I would like to take this opportunity to address some of those. The 1,330 trees are in addition to business as usual. It will be targeting those newer suburbs where we know that we can improve the tree canopy. Particular comments were made about Gungahlin and the heat island effect. It is not a secret that the heat island effect is greater in Gungahlin but that is for a range of reasons, not just the tree coverage. A large part of it is also due to the grasslands that we have out there—grasslands that were protected as a part of planning processes.

I also note the fact that large parts of Gungahlin were established during a drought, meaning that the tree canopy and other green spaces that were put in place actually have not taken quite as well as we would have liked. There is also an issue there of climate change coming and of matching our species with our changing climate. All of these are factors in making sure that we address the urban heat island effect across all of Canberra and in particular in Gungahlin where we know that there is a little more work to do. But I note that the government is getting on with doing that and that every contribution we make towards it will be a positive.

As the Gungahlin town centre moves eastward, we are also putting into practice what we have learned. My office is currently running consultation on the Gungahlin town

centre east development linear park. While quite a mouthful, it is an important development for Gungahlin. I was out on Saturday speaking to residents in the Gungahlin town centre who live just to the north of where the park will go. I can tell you that I heard nothing but good things from these residents. They were all excited by the prospect of having a green space in such close proximity. The park offers the opportunity to inject a high quality green space into the town centre to complement the improvements being made to Gungahlin Place and to provide amenity to the local community.

The budget will also deliver on our commitment to being a leader in protecting our environment. We are increasing funding for the Ginninderra Catchment Group to assist in their transition to new Landcare arrangements. The group plays an invaluable role in preserving water ecosystems in the area and cooperating with other Landcare and conservation groups throughout Yerrabi.

We are also providing an additional \$1.6 million to support ecotourism at Mulligans Flat. What the ACT government and the ACT Woodlands and Wetlands Trust are doing in Mulligans is truly incredible. We should be sharing that story as far and wide as we can. Investing in ecotourism in the reserve allows another opportunity for us to do that.

While I was out in my electorate over the weekend, I was also asked about the nurse-led walk-in health centre coming to Gungahlin town centre. ACT Labor took the delivery of this centre to the last election, and we are delivering on that promise too. The ACT government is investing \$2.9 million to build the centre, with construction already underway. It is due for opening later this year. The nurse-led services will complement the services already provided at the Gungahlin Community Health Centre.

This is a government that is getting on with the job of providing for the people of Canberra. As Canberra continues to grow, we will continue to improve our services to better meet the needs of all Canberrans.

MR BARR (Kurrajong—Chief Minister, Treasurer, Minister for Economic Development and Minister for Tourism and Major Events) (11.19): I thank Ms Cheyne for bringing forward this motion this morning. It certainly goes to highlight the importance of our local government responsibilities, particularly in the municipal and transport areas. The day after the budget provides an opportunity to speak at a bit more length about the initiatives that we announced yesterday, particularly the investment in the core public services that Canberrans rely on.

The budget grows the services and infrastructure necessary to make sure that Canberra keeps on getting better. Yesterday the budget speech focused particularly on the largest areas of expenditure, in health, hospitals, and education, the school system. In speaking to the motion today, I would like to concentrate on how this budget and the government are focused on making commuting quicker, promoting an active lifestyle, improving the amenity of our town centres, making our suburbs neater, and making our parks better and more interesting places to visit.

As I mentioned yesterday, Canberra is undeniably growing. Approximately 7,000 more Canberrans are born or arrive here each year. People are moving here for good jobs and for our great lifestyle. Our economy is stronger than anywhere else in the country, and people are attracted to the quality, full-time, sustainable, well-paid jobs that our economy offers. People are settling here and raising families.

What we as a government—and, indeed, as this Assembly—must do as we cast our minds forward is to plan for this growth, to continue to invest in the core services that are essential to Canberra remaining the world's most livable city, and to shape our city as it grows, to retain what we love about Canberra and to improve on areas where improvement is possible.

As I outlined in the budget speech yesterday, no other government in Australia delivers as many services as we do. We are unique in being both a state and local government. We take responsibility for the provision of every service, from lawn mowing to emergency health treatment, very seriously.

Canberra is Australia's most active community, with more and more people walking or riding around our city. We want to continue our focus on keeping Canberrans active and making Canberra even more accessible by foot or by bike.

This is a change in thinking from the Canberra of the 1970s and 1980s. Just as we said we would, the government is delivering an additional \$30 million in active travel infrastructure over this term. This includes investing in an integrated bike network for Belconnen which links suburbs like Florey with the Belconnen town centre, the Lake Ginninderra foreshore and the major study and sporting institutions in the Bruce precinct. We are also expanding the cycling and footpath connections in the Woden and Tuggeranong town centres, constructing an off-road rapid bike network and completing the Lyons to Weston Creek cycle path link.

On top of these very practical and tangible active travel improvements, the budget has invested more in core municipal services for our suburbs. It is clear that Canberrans want a neat, well-maintained and pleasant urban environment, whether that is our parklands, our playgrounds or our local paths. We are aware of that, and we are investing more to achieve that outcome.

There is \$10 million additional in this budget for more mowing, for more weeding, for more graffiti removal, to protect our waterways, and to manage our trees. Playground improvements and construction will be led by a community-driven process to give all residents a say. And we are continuing our investment in improving basic services like rubbish collection as well as continuing the rollout of the very popular green bin service, with all households able to access the service by 2019. As Ms Cheyne has set out in her motion, this is another practical example of the ACT government investing to improve our suburbs.

We are also investing in overhauling Canberra's public transport system to make it faster, easier and more convenient for more Canberrans. I am particularly pleased to be able to allocate more funding to progress the planning and approval of the second

stage of light rail as well as to start design work on a number of important pieces of enabling infrastructure.

The city to Woden stage of the light rail network provides an essential north-south transport spine, allowing Gungahlin residents to easily get to work in the Barton or Woden regions, and allowing residents to travel to and from an employment hub in Dickson. Indeed, as more commonwealth and ACT government and private sector employment is located in the Gungahlin town centre, it will enable residents all the way along that transport spine from Woden through to the inner south and the inner north to make their way to Gungahlin for work.

The budget also funds road improvements that the city needs. We are particularly conscious of improving safety at key intersections. I particularly acknowledge Ms Cheyne's advocacy inside the government for improvements at intersections such as Tillyard Drive. It is very pleasing to see that this upgrade has been funded. And there are a number of other important road funding initiatives contained within the budget in different locations across the city: the better connections between Belconnen and Gungahlin through the duplication of William Slim Drive, for example.

The Canberra environment, our suburbs and our town centres should be enjoyable, fun and pleasant places for all Canberrans. It is incredibly important that Canberrans get to have their say and provide their input into government initiatives. I know that all of my colleagues are listening to their local communities and providing that feedback to assist directly in the budget development and policy processes. It is an important role for members of this Assembly to be that conduit between their local communities and the cabinet and budget-making process each year.

It is important that we can hear from the community directly and also through their elected representatives. That is why we are focusing in this budget on strengthening ways for the community to engage with government and let us know what they want. What we are hearing from our community is that Canberrans recognise that the city is growing, that this poses both challenges and opportunities. Many people are excited about the future of our city, particularly as our economy and city grow, and the opportunities that this will present for Canberrans in the years to come. The government needs to demonstrate that we have a plan to invest now to cater for this growth while maintaining those unique elements that make this city so special.

We understand that Canberrans want tangible, on-the-ground improvements to living spaces, to our parks, to our transport connections, to our walkways, to our bike paths. That is why we are so focused in this budget on delivering those outcomes. These municipal service areas will remain a priority for the ACT government throughout this parliamentary term, and clearly will be an ongoing focus for all members in this place representing their local communities. I am very pleased that we have been able to deliver on many of our election commitments in this area in this budget.

Of course, there is always more to do. This list will be never ending; there will be an ongoing task of improving our city, but it is one that we take on with relish and with passion. It is fantastic to see that such great local advocacy has resulted in some really

good investments in our local community in this budget. I commend Ms Cheyne for her motion today.

MS CHEYNE (Ginninderra) (11.28), in reply: Madam Assistant Speaker, with your indulgence, I might take a brief opportunity before I begin, for the benefit of some members—not all members—to flag that while I appreciate that there are a variety of accepted ways of saying my surname, I pronounce it “chain”, not “Shane”. That has the added benefit of not confusing me with Mr Rattenbury.

Let me go to the motion. I thank members for their contributions today. I did spend what I would call an inordinate amount of time trying to understand some of the comments from the opposition which, try as I might, I could not logically follow, including that somehow the minister not yet responding to a letter from Miss Burch equates to not keeping a government promise. I am still trying.

Madam Assistant Speaker, as we have heard today, our cool little capital is growing up and it is growing out. Our community is expanding into newer suburbs; our inner city is densifying. In just a few short years, about 430,000 of us will call Canberra home.

As the Chief Minister highlighted, no other government anywhere in Australia delivers as many services as we do. It logically flows that as we grow, the demand for city services increases. This means maintaining infrastructure like roads, playgrounds and footpaths; providing high quality public transport; collecting rubbish; mowing; cleaning; weeding; and removing graffiti. It is a lot of work; it is no easy task; and, as Ms Le Couteur rightly mentioned, it does cost a lot of money.

We have been listening, and this year’s budget does not disappoint. I draw Ms Lawder’s attention to the fact that central to this motion is that we do care and we do take community feedback seriously. We are now engaging community members directly to help decide where money should be spent on our city services—critically, on playgrounds, but on other city services too. I trust that opposition members, including Ms Lawder and Ms Burch, will be encouraging members in their electorates to get involved in this important forum.

I have already touched on the government’s initiatives to support suburban growth, step up municipal services and renew and connect our town centres. Miss Burch appears to be a great advocate for connecting town centres and making it easier to move between suburbs, as I think we all are in this space. She wants people to hop on their bike, figuratively and literally, and engage in active travel outside the inner north and inner south. That is commendable. I look forward to her strong and public support, particularly as the shadow minister for the Belco bikeway which I spoke about extensively today.

There is another significant city service which we are expanding around the city and which will have a big impact on people’s day-to-day activities: our integrated public transport network. As Canberra grows, we will continue to see more people and more vehicles on the road. If our transport network were not built to keep up, we would also see more congestion, more pollution and more road accidents. Unlike other cities,

Canberra can rest easy knowing that this government, this ACT government, will continue acting proactively to make it quicker, easier and safer for Canberrans to move about.

This budget invests significantly in our public transport network and in maintaining the quality and the safety of our roads. I want to use my comments to underline the points that the two ministers have made. This year the government continues to invest in new cleaner buses to expand our rapid network. We are also completing the delivery of light rail from Gungahlin to the city as well as investing more to make sure that light rail stage 2 happens and that we give the NCA what it needs to ensure that we get to develop that critical spine from the north to the south.

In building a more effective public transport network, the government has not forgotten our drivers and pedestrians. The budget invests even more in delivering a better road network. For the south, the government has allocated funds to design an extension of John Gorton Drive, including, really critically, that bridge across the Molonglo River that will connect the Molonglo region to future developments and to the Belconnen district. In the north, we will see the duplication of William Slim Drive. This will significantly reduce the congestion caused by the growth of both Belconnen and Gungahlin. Meanwhile, pedestrians can rejoice in the news that \$150,000 will be spent on planning safe pedestrian streets in places like Pialligo. As I mentioned before, over \$8 million will be spent on making intersections in Belconnen safer for everyone—not just drivers but anyone who is moving through those intersections.

With these significant investments, the government will make sure that our public transport and our road networks can keep up with a growing city. This budget demonstrates our commitment to making sure that moving around Canberra is easy, safe and free of congestion and pollution.

The 2018 budget is delivering a better Canberra for our community. From roads and footpaths to parklands, playgrounds and rubbish collection, we are increasing and improving municipal services right across this city and investing in an integrated and effective public transport network with the roads to match it. It is what the community has asked for. We are listening and we are delivering.

Question resolved in the affirmative.

Visitors

Light rail—stage 1 construction

MR MILLIGAN (Yerrabi) (11.34): I move:

That this Assembly:

(1) notes:

- (a) that Light Rail Stage 1 construction has had an impact on businesses;
- (b) that despite the Government's Environmental Impact Study assessing the risk to local business as "residual" based on the likely impact of

construction as “possible” and a consequence of “minor” – businesses are in fact suffering;

- (c) a central justification for the Light Rail project, according to the Government’s own business case was, to grow and diversify the economy, when in fact this project and its prolonged construction has hurt many local business owners and had flow on effects to their employees, suppliers and customers; and
- (d) there has been a similar independent study conducted in NSW which has resulted in compensation being offered to businesses in the form of rent relief; and

(2) calls on the:

- (a) Government to acknowledge that this project has caused major disruptions, reduced the custom of many local businesses and this in turn has impacted on business owners, employees, customers and the broader community;
- (b) Assembly to express its concern at the lack of adequate support provided to businesses, particularly in the Gungahlin and Mitchell section of the Light Rail corridor;
- (c) Government to provide financial compensation by engaging external consultants to assess the impact on local business and provide options for compensation and recourse; and
- (d) Government to provide a report on the assessed impact of Stage 1 Light Rail construction to businesses with options for financial remedies to the Assembly by 31 July 2018.

I stand before the Assembly today both as a local member for Yerrabi and as a former small business owner to put forward a motion I feel very strongly about. This motion is a genuine attempt from the Canberra Liberals to get this government to acknowledge the consequences of their actions. It is about the very real and harmful impact that light rail construction and associated activities have had on businesses.

Let me be clear: this motion is not grandstanding. It is about recognising the contribution that local businesses make to our community and to our economy. It is about the mums and dads who have put everything on the line to set up a small business. It is about the young entrepreneurs who have begged, borrowed and saved to try and achieve their dream of opening up a shop, restaurant or cafe. It is about the established, experienced business owners who, despite their best efforts, are hurting. And it is about the families and individuals that work from these small businesses and depend on regular shifts or extra casual hours to make ends meet.

This government has been so determined, so blinkered in its approach to push ahead with constructing light rail that it has failed the local business community big time. This government has failed to directly consult and engage with businesses to understand their needs. This government has failed to provide meaningful support to businesses in the lead-up to and during construction activity. This government has failed when it comes to providing useful information to help business owners plan for a downturn in trade. Most importantly, this government has failed to acknowledge

that the impact from light rail construction on the trade of local businesses has major consequences.

The Canberra Liberals believe local businesses deserve better, and this is why I am bringing forward this motion. It is to get acknowledgement from this government that businesses have been short-changed and to start a conversation about options to help these businesses that have been negatively affected.

Let us start with the first part of this motion—acknowledging that light rail stage 1 construction has had an impact on businesses. How do I know this? Quite frankly, I have simply been talking directly with business owners. After receiving feedback I increased doorknocking, did more visits to local businesses, held forums and sent out letters that made time for coffee and a chat with business owners. Businesses have been telling me without exception that this project has had a significant impact on their livelihoods.

Businesses are reporting between a 30 per cent and 50 per cent decline in trade. This means less customers, less income, less profits if any, less incentive to invest, less jobs and less growth. As a direct result, business owners are trying to cut costs by reducing staff, cutting hours, delaying payment of creditors, taking on additional debt, eating into savings, not paying themselves a wage for months at a time, and some are even looking to sell.

Let me tell the story of one cafe owner. I will not disclose his identity or business name but I want to share how the light rail construction has hurt his business. He runs a cafe which previously enjoyed strong trade and was a particular favourite of locals to sit outside in what was a busy, vibrant area. Ever since construction started the business has experienced a significant decline, so much so that the owner has stopped talking to his family about the state of his business. Worse still, his wife is expecting their first child very soon, and rather than being happy and looking forward to the future he spends his days and nights worrying about what is next. He is too depressed, too upset by it all and feels that this experience has actually changed his character as a person. Sadly, this is not unique.

What makes this situation even worse is that the government's own environmental impact study assessed the risks to local businesses as residual, the lowest possible level of impact in a traditional risk matrix. This was based on the assumption that the impact of construction on businesses would be "possible" and the consequences of this impact would be "minor". What a disgrace. Do local businesses not rate as part of the environment? This same assessment looked at things like trees, the risk of bushfires and climate change, but in the eyes of this government business owners are not as important. Clearly, their priorities are completely out of whack.

How could any rational person with just the slightest of common sense not understand that this construction would have a big impact on local businesses? Light rail is a major infrastructure project that has closed down streets, changed traffic flows, removed parking and impacted on the look and feel of suburbs and business precincts. The flow-on effect should have been obvious.

Let me tell another story about a young entrepreneur. Again I will not reveal his identity, but this young man has put everything on the line. Newly married, he delayed his honeymoon and asked his parents to co-sign on a retail lease. He has invested heavily in marketing, signage and promotion since light rail commenced, anything to get customers to visit the store. But as soon as the fences went up, trade dropped by 40 per cent, and not once did Canberra Metro, a representative of TCCS or the ACT government come to see him. Not once did they give him a project schedule or detailed time frame of works. How are businesses meant to operate under these conditions?

One of the central justifications for the light rail project, according to the government's own business case, is to grow and diversify the economy. I am not sure how realistic this is, because in the short term, as far as I can see, businesses are suffering. This is particularly true for small businesses that do not have the support of big chains or a franchise.

And let's not forget about the businesses in Mitchell who, despite the government's recent budget announcement of the light rail stop, will continue to suffer until 2020 when this stop is finally delivered. These businesses have endured unacceptable amounts of disruption with blocked traffic and reduced patronage for well over 18 months. Mitchell is more than just an industrial hub; it has local gyms, play centres, cafes, dry cleaners and chemists that have been significantly impacted. There are examples of formerly successful, established businesses posting their first losses in five years, some in excess of \$80,000, due to no fault of their own. This is a disgrace.

I have tried to give just a small snapshot of businesses in the area that are suffering. The pain, the hurt, the loss—these are not trivial matters. This is the livelihood of many Canberrans, and the future of their families. This does not mean other factors are not contributing to the downturn in business. There are construction projects occurring in the area associated with buses, walkway improvements and parking. However, I argue that these, too, are linked to light rail. There are new residential developments and community facilities being built which, again, are intentionally located near light rail. Yes, there are new shopping complexes in Yerrabi. However, these are grocery stores and small retail outlets; they are not large-scale retail sites with restaurants, cafes, gyms, and professional service providers.

Gungahlin is one of the fastest growing areas in Australia, and much of the development is in response to the population growth. By my thinking, this should result in commercial growth based on the strong economic conditions we are enjoying in the ACT. Under these circumstances, one would expect most businesses to thrive. However, this is not occurring, and light rail certainly has a case to answer in terms of contributing to this situation.

Given the various environmental factors that are affecting businesses, including the major role of light rail, this motion seeks an assessment, much like what the Liberal government has done in New South Wales to measure the impact of their light rail development. Following an active campaign from local business owners, the New South Wales government conducted an audit of local businesses. Consultants

reviewed the financial information of individual businesses before the project commenced and compared it to financial performances during the construction phase of the Sydney light rail project. The final result was an offer of rent relief for eligible businesses.

This may not be the end result for Canberra. This motion has been drafted without pre-empting a solution. There are many directions and possibilities for what an assessment may reveal as the impact of light rail on businesses. Regardless, it is time for this government to acknowledge that this project has had an impact on business. It has caused major disruptions. It has reduced the custom of many local businesses, and this in turn has impacted on business owners, employees, customers and the broader community. Remember, this is the livelihood of many hardworking Canberrans, and we should not dismiss what is happening to them. If this government seek to deny this impact, that will be yet another example of their true colours when it comes to supporting businesses in Canberra.

If your wage was reduced by 50 per cent, what would be the first thing you would cut? Food, utilities, school fees or mortgage repayments? And if you were asked to just hold on and to just wait, if you were told that this short-term pain will be for a long-term gain, or even told to weather the storm, how would you recover the losses you suffered during this turbulent time?

It is truly unfair that we are putting this burden on business owners who have already risked so much. Unlike many Canberra workers, small business owners do not work nine to five. They do not have job security or redundancy payments to bail them out. They have sleepless nights worrying about what to do next, how to survive and whether they will overcome the challenges imposed on them by external factors such as light rail. These businesses need recognition of the impact this project has had and real support options to help them continue to operate.

I understand that there is likely to be a range of promotional efforts once the light rail is operational, but, to be honest, I worry that this will be too little, too late. Businesses have already endured almost two years of uncertainty and construction activity. They are unlikely to recover their losses, and a marketing effort just before the finish line is just not going to cut the mustard. It will certainly help, and I welcome any support that can be provided, but we need more meaningful measures, targeted assistance, and meaningful actions to help these business owners now.

The time has come for this government to stop the spin, take action, and assess the impact of light rail on local businesses. This motion seeks information that will inform further decision-making. Importantly, this motion also demands that a report be provided by September 2018. A deadline is vitally important as the urgency and pressure being felt by many of these business owners is very real.

To summarise, this government needs to recognise the consequences on businesses of this prolonged, extremely disruptive light rail construction project. Too many businesses are suffering. The impact of the reduction in trade also needs to be acknowledged, as this affects the wider community—that is, the people who work and rely on these businesses for income, supplies, and of course customers. Landlords are

already considering rent increases. For some businesses, the vultures are circling, ready to pick off the weak and failing.

In addition to an environmental impact statement, the government should have commissioned a business impact statement. Perhaps that would have alerted them to the impacts that construction would have on local businesses. I can only hope that this motion informs future large-scale projects in the ACT so that the impact on businesses is considered and, where possible, overcome.

I acknowledge that Gungahlin, as the second fastest growing region in Australia, has a lot of things happening in terms of development, change and growth, but there is no denying that the light rail is at the centre of these disruptions and is also linked in some way to the other projects in the area.

It may be too late for meaningful construction scheduling changes, but focus must be placed on completing an assessment of the impacts of this project. Quite frankly, businesses in Canberra deserve better. I implore members of this chamber to support this motion and help the Canberra Liberals to support businesses in the ACT.

MS FITZHARRIS (Yerrabi—Minister for Health and Wellbeing, Minister for Transport and City Services and Minister for Higher Education, Training and Research) (11.48): I move:

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

“(1) notes that:

- (a) the ACT Government is delivering stage 1 of a city-wide light rail network, the biggest infrastructure project the Territory has ever undertaken;
- (b) the project is creating employment with almost 80 percent of the workforce coming from Canberra and the surrounding region;
- (c) the Government is delivering significant investments into the Gungahlin Town Centre, including light rail, the construction of a new bus station, and upgrades to key intersections, including new traffic lights. The Government is also creating a new shared-zone for Hibberson Street, after considerable community feedback to improve the pedestrian experience;
- (d) the Government acknowledges that these are significant construction projects which have caused disruption to local businesses and community, but will have significant community and business benefit when completed;
- (e) during construction in the Gungahlin Town Centre, the Gungahlin region has also welcomed new businesses in Franklin, Amaroo and Casey, significantly increasing the available retail in the region and improving competition;
- (f) the ACT Government provides funding to the Canberra Business Chamber for the Light Rail Business Link (LRBL) Program which provides ongoing communications, industry collaboration and business support programs, to mitigate impacts to business along the light rail corridor;

- (g) the Program has delivered six quarterly forums with 530 people in attendance in total. In addition, 225 people in total have participated in workshops and round tables;
- (h) the Program also makes regular briefings and educational presentations to individuals, Centre Managers, Business Reference groups and other public forums; and
- (i) focused business support has been provided including:
 - (i) installing new temporary signage around the construction zone to direct pedestrians to local businesses;
 - (ii) social media promotion involving producing and hosting video clips of individual local businesses; banners and promotional signage;
 - (iii) contracting local businesses as preferred providers for event catering, flu immunisation and participant rewards e.g. free coffee at a local café for attending the light rail tour; and
 - (iv) removing fencing as soon as possible to allow for improved pedestrian amenity and street appeal;
- (2) further notes that major light rail construction works in Hibberson Street Gungahlin are complete, the Gungahlin Bus Station is operating with landscaping to be completed in June, and other works on the Hibberson Street shared zone will be completed in August; and
- (3) calls on the ACT Government to:
 - (a) continue to support the LRBL Program until light rail stage one is operating;
 - (b) undertake an assessment of the impact of all construction activities on local businesses and report back in September 2018;
 - (c) ensure lessons learnt on the impact to businesses inform future infrastructure projects across the Territory;
 - (d) coordinate and support a Gungahlin Street Party event to advertise and celebrate the completion of light rail and other works in the Gungahlin Town Centre; and
 - (e) support a Gungahlin Town Centre precinct activation and broader marketing strategy which encourages locals to shop locally and visitors to increase their spending in the Gungahlin.”

I thank you for the opportunity today to talk with members of the Assembly about the unprecedented investments the ACT government is making in the town centre, and to outline what work the government has provided and how it will continue to support local businesses during light rail construction. I note Mr Milligan’s remarks, and also note what I believe to be an agreed amendment to the motion. That motion is circulated, and I moved that amendment.

As has been noted, in addition to the light rail terminus in the Gungahlin town centre, which just in the last 24 hours has seen even more progress towards completion, the government is investing in the construction of a new bus station and upgrades to key intersections, including important new traffic lights. As well, the government is creating a new shared zone for Hibberson Street—one that has come after many years

of community feedback—to improve the pedestrian experience on that section of Hibberson Street.

These investments will make Gungahlin the ACT's most accessible town centre, and will encourage more people to work, live and socialise in Canberra's fastest growing region. As a local, I understand this welcome investment has caused disruption to the local businesses and community, as I have mentioned and remarked upon many times in the past, but it will provide significant community and business benefits when completed.

I too have spent time with local businesses, employers, employees and community members in the town centre to hear their concerns. I know that they are excited and impatient to see the completion of these works very soon. The hoardings were removed outside Gungahlin Village just in the past week. The tree plantings and landscaping works progressed considerably in the last 48 hours. These will be very warmly welcomed, particularly by adjacent local businesses.

Local residents of Canberra's fastest growing region have also seen significant expansion of new businesses right across the Gungahlin region at the same time that construction really got underway in the town centre. Again these investments have been welcomed and called upon by the community for many years. This has seen the development of a range of different services provided in Franklin, Amaroo and Casey.

They are not town centres, but particularly Amaroo and Casey are major centres. They provide additional services like restaurants, bars, professional services in some instances, and of course major supermarkets. This has significantly increased competition for retailers in the town centre—at the same time these construction works are being delivered—as well as significant private investment in the Gungahlin town centre.

The government certainly recognises these impacts and has offered wide ranging support to businesses, principally in the Gungahlin town centre and also along the light rail corridor. This support has been provided by Transport Canberra and the Canberra Business Chamber through the light rail business link program funded by the ACT government and through the government's contract requirements for the Canberra Metro stakeholder engagement program.

The three agencies have worked in collaboration to provide information and seek feedback from local businesses, particularly those impacted by construction works, as well as identify issues and any practical assistance that can be provided.

A key strategy of the ACT government's support to businesses in relation to light rail has been through funding of the Canberra Business Chamber's light rail business link program. This program is funded to build business resilience and capacity during construction and be ready to take advantage of the opportunities that will be generated by light rail.

The program has delivered six quarterly forums with 530 businesses attending to be informed about topics such as light rail development, business opportunities and best

practice in managing throughout major infrastructure projects. In addition 225 people have participated in workshops and round tables on issues such as business strategy for a changing environment, contracting obligations and construction implications for businesses.

The light rail business link program informs and seeks feedback on emerging issues through regular briefings and presentations to businesses, reference groups and public forums, such as the business information session hosted by My Gungahlin. The light rail business link newsletter is published at least every second month with the latest published at the end of May this year.

Businesses along the light rail corridor have been offered tailored assistance through strategic marketing programs funded through the light rail business link program. One-on-one coaching and individual, tailored support have been provided for 31 businesses.

Building business capacity by the light rail business link program has involved the business chamber membership and outreach, as required, to ensure broad engagement across the relevant sectors of the business community. The light rail business link program coordinates information provision and referral to the business community to build awareness of services and support available to maximise business benefit from the project.

Regular updates are provided to businesses along the corridor to inform them of construction progress, likely impacts, emerging opportunities and business support. These updates are provided through business reference groups, Canberra Business Chamber networks and the light rail business link newsletter. Quarterly business forums are held in conjunction with Canberra Metro for the Gungahlin, Dickson and city precincts. I know that they are mindful of operating conditions for business owners and look to reach out to them regularly with people on the ground every week talking to local businesses.

There have been positive light rail project stories from many local businesses. Key people interviewed are also included in business marketing and communications. The business engagement activities undertaken by the light rail business link program identify opportunities and strategies to mitigate adverse impacts on business. The program then works with Canberra Metro and Transport Canberra to implement these.

Street and precinct activation, as construction moves towards completion, is a key focus at the moment and will be finalised for Hibberson Street in the very near future. This will include promoting local businesses and activities to attract visitors to the precinct and to increase local spending in the town centre.

It is important to note that, in conjunction with the broad business support activities provided to all businesses in the light rail corridor, there have been a range of specific business support activities during construction that have focused on Hibberson Street in Gungahlin and in Mitchell.

In the town centre there have been, and continue to be, regular drop-ins to businesses adjacent to the construction zone. A monthly meeting is also held with the Gungahlin town centre retail managers, Canberra Metro, Transport Canberra and the light rail business link program. From this feedback, specific business support activities have included marketing and promotion through banners, signage and social media video clips on local businesses.

In saying this, I do acknowledge the concerns about business activity in Hibberson Street adjacent to light rail construction works. I thank the businesses for their patience. Light rail construction fencing in Hibberson Street has now largely been removed and replaced with low barriers. Already the street is taking on the look and feel of a pedestrian boulevard as landscaping progresses. In the next few weeks we will see the streetlights installed and a significant change in that part of Hibberson Street.

As I mentioned, I have moved the amendment. I could not support Mr Milligan's original motion, which called on the government to provide financial compensation. As I have outlined the government has provided extensive support and assistance to local businesses and will provide more direct support through the promotion of local businesses in the town centre in the coming months.

I look forward to undertaking work, as noted in the amendment, on an assessment of business impacts in the Gungahlin town centre from all construction in the town centre. I also look forward to building on lessons learned to inform the further rollout of light rail stage 1 and how we go about developing and planning for light rail stage 2.

The amendment also outlines a commitment from the government that I have made with many local businesses and also with community groups in Gungahlin to support a street party event later this year, once construction activity is completed on Hibberson Street, to both celebrate the completion of that work and the completion of major light rail construction works in the Gungahlin town centre. The government will also support a Gungahlin town centre precinct activation and broader marketing strategy to encourage visitors and locals to shop locally in the town centre.

I also welcome the establishment of the Mitchell Traders Association late last year. The association has allowed proactive and coordinated business support activities in response to issues raised by local traders in Mitchell. Business support activities for Mitchell have included Transport Canberra funding for a Mitchell business website to be launched in mid-2018. It will also showcase promotional videos funded through TCCS.

Mitchell businesses have also been offered the opportunity to have a business promotion video produced. Nineteen have participated in this work, with 11 social media clips released to date and the remainder with the businesses for their final sign-off.

As I was pleased to announce earlier this week, the government has included in its budget funding the commencement of works for a light rail stop in Mitchell. This will

enable Transport Canberra to enter negotiations for a stop at Sandford Street and for that stop to be constructed in the 2019-20 financial year. We look forward to keeping Mitchell traders and the community updated and informed on the process for the construction of this site.

Madam Assistant Speaker, we can all see great outcomes for the Gungahlin town centre as light rail construction concludes and we move towards the start of light rail services for our city. Already the new bus interchange is operational with new and improved bus services starting later this year to connect directly with light rail in Gungahlin.

It is estimated that thousands of people will be attracted each week to Hibberson Street to commute by light rail, to shop and use local services right around the town centre and its upgraded pedestrian areas. There is real long-term economic benefit in the light rail project. The government's significant investment in the Gungahlin town centre and in an integrated and improved public transport system will bring benefit for many.

I particularly look forward to seeing the northern section of the light rail corridor, between Mitchell and Gungahlin, being completed. I look forward to supporting local businesses and working with them to celebrate the end of construction in the town centre and a new era for Gungahlin and for our city.

MS LE COUTEUR (Murrumbidgee) (11.59): The Greens will be supporting the ALP amendment to this motion. I think it will possibly be a consensus view, although I am not quite sure about that. The issue, however, that Mr Milligan raised is a very real one. It is not, of course, the first time we have discussed it in this Assembly and it will not be the last time, I am sure.

When governments deliver infrastructure, there is often an impact on the businesses around the infrastructure that is being delivered. The financial impact on these most affected businesses can be very large. The usual pattern is that the biggest impacts happen to those businesses that lose visibility or passing trade. In other words, it is a temporary reduction often in parking or sometimes hoardings, or something like that. We have all seen it in many places. It is almost finished now, I think, on London Circuit. We probably see it on a daily basis.

The scale of works can be less important, as with the London Circuit example. Small works such as paving upgrades can still have a huge impact on the businesses that are there, affected by it. It is not a problem just in the ACT; it is a problem round Australia—anywhere that we have city services that need to either upgrade or do substantial maintenance and anywhere that wants to build new infrastructure or maintain their existing infrastructure.

Mr Milligan's motion raises the case of Sydney's light rail project. On top of that, a quick Google search by my office highlighted the following other interstate examples over the last three months: business disruption caused by major road and rail projects in Melbourne; business disruption caused by the North Terrace light rail extension in

Adelaide; and business disruption in Tenterfield in rural New South Wales caused by sewerage works partially closing a road.

Mr Milligan's motion argues that the government should pay compensation to affected businesses. The problem with this proposition is that, if the government pays compensation for one project, it sets a precedent for other projects. This could quickly become unaffordable and make it very hard for governments to deliver infrastructure and public realm upgrades.

This was certainly the view of the New South Wales Liberal government, which was mentioned in Mr Milligan's motion. A *Sydney Morning Herald* article from 10 December last year quotes the Liberal transport minister saying the following about their infrastructure program:

If we compensated every business that was affected by the \$73 billion program, we wouldn't be able to deliver a thing.

Given these issues, what should the ACT government do in this case? Clearly, there has to be a balance between fairness to the business and the ability of the government to deliver infrastructure for the whole community. The government cannot just pretend that the impacts on businesses do not exist. But, in almost all cases, direct financial compensation will not be an option.

Long-term benefits for the businesses also need to be factored in. For example, for the businesses on Hibberson Street in Gungahlin town centre between Coles and ALDI, light rail will drop large numbers of potential customers right outside their door.

I am very pleased to hear from Minister Fitzharris and see in her amendment that the government has been trying to find ways to help the most impacted businesses. One of the calls is to coordinate and support a street party. This is a good move. I recently heard that the usual annual community event has been cancelled for 2018. Similarly, I am sure that the town centre marketing will be very welcome.

I would also like to talk briefly about Mitchell, which is mentioned in Mr Milligan's motion. In December last year, I went to Mitchell to have a look around with the Mitchell Traders Association. What I saw was fairly worrying. It was so bad. I came there on the bus. That was fine; no problems. I ended up not being able to go back on the bus because neither I nor my host could work out how to cross Flemington Drive. It was necessary to get to the other side of the road to catch the bus going the other way.

As well as that, there were lots of city services issues such as dead and dying trees not being tidied up and replaced. At that stage the light rail construction had cut Mitchell in two—half on each side of the red rapid bus stop, which is very negative. With that in mind, I was very pleased to hear from Minister Fitzharris's office that there has been extra focus on city services issues in Mitchell recently, and extra work has been done. I understand that there has also been some targeted marketing support for the light rail business link program, which is also great.

Hopefully, there is a solution to the problem for Mitchell. The budget has funding to start working towards a Mitchell light rail stop. This will be a relief to the traders association and hopefully will reverse the decline that the Mitchell traders have experienced.

To conclude, the impacts on business from infrastructure works can be severe but financial compensation is rarely the most appropriate option. I am pleased to hear and see that Minister Fitzharris has been working on a large number of non-financial compensation steps that the government can take to help businesses impacted by light rail construction work, and that the government has promised to do more. The Greens will therefore be supporting the minister's amendment.

MISS C BURCH (Kurrajong) (12.06): I thank Mr Milligan for raising this important issue here today and for all his hard work in fighting for local small businesses in Gungahlin and Mitchell—small businesses that this government has completely left behind. We have been told by this government time and again that the economic benefits flowing from light rail will be significant and diverse, that construction will be quick and painless and that any adverse impacts from the construction phase will be minor and unlikely. But as we have heard from Mr Milligan, the impact on local retailers and businesses has been anything but minor. This Labor-Greens government has failed these local businesses, either due to sheer incompetence or perhaps total indifference. Either way, something must be done.

Local traders are being hit hard in both Mitchell and Gungahlin, as footpaths close, traffic is diverted and noise and air pollution disrupt their business. Locals cannot find anywhere to park nearby, and the noise inside many shops is intolerable. As a result, these businesses have seen a significant decline in trade—in some instances by more than 50 per cent. This naturally leads to job losses and downsizing as small businesses struggle to survive.

These small businesses are now emotional and frustrated. They are emotional due to the incredibly difficult decisions that they now face—decisions whether to downsize and move to smaller premises, decisions whether to let go of staff, staff who have worked for them for many years and in some instances are basically family, decisions whether to just throw in the towel, give up on their dreams and close up all together. These small businesses are frustrated—frustrated by the extraordinary disregard and neglect this government has shown them over the past 18 months. Small business is of course the backbone of the ACT economy, and the loss of well-established businesses in this area will have a profound, long-term impact on the Gungahlin economy.

Of course, there are always going to be costs incurred by business, particularly small, when big construction projects like this take place. But what any responsible government should do is provide adequate compensation for these businesses and retailers who are affected. And it is very disappointing that the minister has today ruled out financial compensation.

Whilst we welcome the government's recent announcement to again include the Mitchell light rail stop, this means that, upon backflipping twice over the Mitchell

stop, the government has now blown out completion of construction to well over a year, maybe longer. Inadequate financial planning combined with a non-existent compensation system for these businesses means that there is no end in sight to their pain—more disruption, more chaos, more financial hardship, more job losses and more hurt for the already wounded small business community.

For whatever reason, the government does not seem to understand that these local small businesses are crucial providers of many products, services and employment in our community. All across Canberra hardworking small business owners are instrumental in growing our economy, providing more opportunities for Canberrans. This sort of hard work should be rewarded, not punished. The complete disregard of their current hardship is typical of this out-of-touch government. Meetings are all well and good but meetings do not help these businesses pay their rent, meetings do not allow these businesses to pay their staff. Every local business that is forced to cut back or close as a result of light rail construction means more people out of work and fewer services for the people of Gungahlin.

Ms Le Couteur has mentioned a number of interstate infrastructure projects but has conveniently failed to mention the Sydney light rail project. In New South Wales the state government implemented a rent relief scheme to help affected businesses in the Sydney light rail construction zone. Sydney businesses along the Sydney light rail route were awarded concessional rent support if their businesses employed fewer than 50 people. This is a thoroughly decent and responsible measure from the New South Wales government. Yet for some reason the ACT government refuses to extend the same courtesy to Canberra businesses.

In Sydney, businesses along the light rail corridor were also facing downturns of around 50 per cent. Staff reductions, downsizing and closures were on the cards for many of these retailers but, thankfully, the state government stepped in and provided compensation for these affected businesses. It is truly shocking that the ACT government has abdicated this responsibility to the Canberra business community when other governments have demonstrated very achievable strategies to support those affected by government construction projects.

Rent assistance, tax relief, interest-free loans, rate rebates—these are all potential solutions. More specifically, tailoring the level of compensation to the size and type of business, similar to the New South Wales government's compensation policy, is not only fiscally responsible but very simply the right thing to do. If this government does not act, the ACT government will be responsible for irrevocably destroying parts of Canberra's small business community. Two years of financial hardship is enough. Small businesses in Gungahlin and Mitchell deserve more from this government.

MS ORR (Yerrabi) (12.11): I rise today to speak in support of the amended motion. I firstly want to say I do feel for the local businesses and the local community in Gungahlin. As a resident of Franklin, I can appreciate the building works and the impacts they are having, as I have experienced them firsthand. I also appreciate that these works will be completed shortly and that the completed projects will make a positive contribution to our community.

I would also like to note Mr Milligan and his colleague Mr Coe were both in attendance at an event that I attended last week with Mark Scarborough from My Gungahlin. At the event, which celebrated five years of My Gungahlin and launched its new website, Mark was asked his thoughts on light rail. He responded by saying, “Honestly, I think it’s needed. Case in point, the other day I was driving during peak hour to Civic down Northbourne and I counted six buses running nose to tail straight down Northbourne Avenue. And those buses were full. I think that light rail has a purpose and that is a mass transit solution, moving lots of people quickly down the main corridors.” He went on to say, “I think it is going to be good,” but that it needed to be rolled out Canberra-wide to be a success. In the short term there has been a clear impact.

I support the amendment put forward by the minister which acknowledges the disruption caused to local business and the community. I encourage members to support the amended motion calling on the ACT government to undertake an assessment of all construction activities on local businesses. As light rail becomes a key part of our city-wide, integrated transport network, it is important we learn from the experience of each stage and it is also important for all of us to support our local businesses by buying locally.

My Gungahlin, which I noted before, is a portal for local Gungahlin businesses to advertise to the people who live, work and play in the Gungahlin region and, having seen My Gungahlin grow from a business directory in 2005 with only one paying customer to what it is now in its fourth iteration, Mark is well versed in the needs of local business in Gungahlin. My Gungahlin, like so many other businesses in the region, could not have grown into what it is today if it was not for the Gungahlin community supporting locally.

The ACT government recognises this as well and has been getting on with finding solutions for Gungahlin businesses. We have been working with the Canberra Business Chamber to provide the light rail business link program. The program brings together the ACT government, local businesses and Canberra Metro to discuss how opportunities for business can be maximised. Specific training and information sessions are available and the business chamber has been actively seeking to mitigate the impacts of construction along the rail corridor. The program is focused on identifying and cultivating new business development and growth opportunities that arise from the light rail project. This program is happening right now and offering support to local Gungahlin businesses in meeting the challenges they face, both now and into the future.

The light rail business link recently conducted a series of marketing masterclasses to businesses located along the light rail corridor. This series was targeted at helping businesses refine and develop their marketing plans to strengthen their business. In all, 10 hours of specialised marketing support, tailored to each Gungahlin local business that participated, was provided. This assistance will not just help businesses see their way through this period as the light rail construction is completed but will enable them to better realise the benefits light rail offers the region.

I also note the work the ACT government has done on ensuring a light rail stop for Mitchell. The Minister for Transport and City Services announced yesterday that a light rail stop will be built at Sandford Street in 2019-20. But this is not all we are doing. Since the Mitchell Traders Association contacted my office I have kept in regular contact with them. I have been working with them and have put them in touch with the ACT Young Planners Group to look at opportunities for activating the Mitchell precinct. I am also, along with Ms Fitzharris, hosting a morning tea to meet some of the businesswomen who are active in the area. This was the Mitchell Traders Association's idea and something we are only too happy to support.

If I think back to the My Gungahlin event last week, the key message I took away from Mark's comments that night was that Gungahlin locals want to buy locally. There is a strong sense of community thriving in the region, and residents will support local business wherever they can. If I look at the Gungahlin Jets sports clubs, for example, almost every sponsor is a local Gungahlin business, and every player and their family are strongly encouraged to return that support by buying locally.

The light rail business link also hits on this message, seeking to better able local businesses to capture the local market, and my message here today is for everyone who interacts with the Gungahlin region to buy locally, support those small businesses who employ our local workforce, and support those small businesses who support our local sporting clubs, charities and organisations.

I proudly shop locally in my region. Whether it be a coffee and breakfast at cafes like Atlas or Blind Dove, a pastry at Le Bon Melange Cafe, or a frozen custard at the Meadows, I am regularly enjoying the high quality products and services Gungahlin businesses offer the community, and I actively encourage everyone who lives, works and plays in Gungahlin to shop locally and support small businesses, both now and into the future.

MR PETTERSSON (Yerrabi) (12.16): I rise to speak against Mr Milligan's original motion and for the amendment. The ACT government is building a 21st century transport network. The main beneficiary will be the people and businesses of Gungahlin, but I do understand that the past few months have been tough for local businesses. Construction, loud noises and barricades are obviously not helpful in attracting customers. The ACT government acknowledges this. This is why we have worked extensively to help businesses, where appropriate. But there is light at the end of the tunnel, or should I say at the end of the tracks.

Indeed construction works in the town centre are close to finished. Soon the new and rejuvenated town centre will greatly benefit businesses in the town centre. Very soon, most of the Gungahlin public transport network will be funnelling people into Gungahlin town centre. The new Gungahlin bus interchange was opened last month. It will be the main start and end point for Gungahlin buses, with passengers transferring to the light rail and vice versa.

As well as being the main shopping centre in our city's north, making it the transport hub will increase patronage and help drive custom to local business. This is why the

electorate that Mr Milligan and I share votes so strongly for the ALP, rejecting the anti-tram sentiment peddled by Mr Milligan and his Liberal Party colleagues. They know that this will benefit Gungahlin and they supported the party that would support them.

In his motion Mr Milligan compares the ACT light rail construction experience to that of Sydney light rail. I am shocked that he would make such a comparison. Unlike the Liberal government in New South Wales, we can run a contract on time. We can run a project on budget. And do you know what, Madam Speaker? We even have a minister that makes sure projects like light rail are delivered on time.

New South Wales is staring down the barrel of an extra \$1 billion in cost overruns, along with months, and even years, of delays in its light rail project. If the Liberal Party cared about small business, it would make sure that its projects run on time. This is just a glimpse into the future if the Liberals ever get their hands on the levers of power. They will delay light rail, like their former leader Zed Seselja is trying to do right now—and, naturally, they will blow out the cost.

I did say in my opening remarks that this has not been an easy time for businesses along the light rail corridor and in the town centre. I acknowledge that. The ACT government acknowledges that. That is why the ACT government has been working with the Canberra Business Chamber through the light rail business link program. We do support these businesses.

This support includes funding for ongoing communications, industry collaboration and business support programs to mitigate impacts to business along the light rail corridor, helping these businesses get their message out that they are here, they are operating and they are offering valuable services. The ACT government is going forward. We are looking at more we can do to support these businesses, including a street party in Gungahlin later this year to celebrate just how far Gungahlin has come. I think there will be more to say on this in the coming months.

It is important to note that the Canberra Liberals seemingly come into this place every sitting week with only one demand, that the ACT government pay out to someone or something. They do not come into this place with ideas. They come in here asking for money. They are barely a political party. They are more a scraggly bunch of personal injury lawyers chasing a payout. If this is what they think government and fiscal responsibility look like, I do not think they will be sitting on the treasury bench anytime soon.

But more broadly, this ACT government has been making it easier for small business in the territory. We have the highest threshold for payroll tax in the country, at \$2 million. This means that 91 per cent of ACT businesses do not pay payroll tax. From 1 July this year there will be no stamp duty on commercial properties up to \$1.5 million, meaning 70 per cent of all commercial property purchasers will no longer pay stamp duty.

We have a one-stop shop at Access Canberra for all regulatory processes. We are also investing in innovative small business across the territory. We are doing lots for small

business. I think this is a really important point to make. Some landlords have reduced rents along the light rail corridor for the duration of construction. I would strongly encourage all landlords to show the same flexibility. The landlords will be beneficiaries of the light rail and bus interchange construction, with property prices along the route soaring as this valuable piece of government infrastructure is built. Indeed it is unconscionable behaviour to continue to hike rents in the middle of the construction phase when business is subdued.

The ACT government has also listened to the community and announced just yesterday in the budget that it will be building a light rail stop at Mitchell. The Mitchell Traders Association has been a vocal and persuasive advocate for a light rail stop in Mitchell, and we have committed to building one by 2020. Oddly enough, the Liberal Party have been strong advocates for a light rail stop in Mitchell. They opposed light rail stage 1 at the last election. Indeed they are still opposing light rail stage 2. It seems to me that the Liberal Party only supports one part of light rail, and that is one stop next to Mitchell and nothing for the rest of the city.

In summary, we are working hard to deliver for the people of Gungahlin. In a few short months these businesses will be in the prime location to service the tens of thousands of residents of Gungahlin. We have worked with the business chamber to mitigate some of the consequences of the construction while acknowledging that the main beneficiaries of this will be the businesses themselves. I would encourage landlords to show some restraint and for small businesses to engage with the light rail business link program and with the ACT government. Happily, most of the construction is complete and we will see a pick-up in trade over the coming weeks and months.

MR MILLIGAN (Yerrabi) (12.23): I would like to thank everyone who has spoken on this very important issue. I would particularly like to thank my colleague Miss Burch for what she said. It is quite interesting that everyone that spoke today on this particular matter admitted that businesses are suffering and that they are really hurting due to the construction that is occurring along the light rail corridor. However, I am also glad that an assessment will be done on the effects of the construction on local businesses along the corridor.

In closing, I would like to review where we stand now. We have businesses throughout the light rail corridor that are reporting a 30 to 50 per cent drop in trade. We have business owners that are taking on extra debt. We have business owners that are laying off staff. We have business owners that have not even taken a wage for several months. We have a community in Gungahlin surrounded by roadworks and construction either directly or indirectly associated with light rail.

What does this all mean? It means that businesses are hurting. Families are hurting. People cannot pay their mortgages or plan for their future. This is all a direct result of this government's poor planning and lack of consultation with the community. This is clearly not good enough and it is time this government took responsibility. What this motion seeks is a recognition of the impact light rail has had. It asks that we ramp up marketing efforts and that we really try to bring life and people back to these areas.

I acknowledge what is stated in the amended motion, that the light rail business link program has had 225 participants to date. But this is not representative of the business community that has been impacted. There are over 400 businesses in Mitchell, let alone the businesses in Franklin, Harrison and Gungahlin. If you add them all up, I am sure there are more than 1,500 businesses.

Given the widespread impact, this motion seeks an independent assessment of the impact of light rail on businesses, with two outcomes: one is a report being provided back to the Assembly to inform future decision-making. This report is intended to assess the financial impacts to businesses to determine if there has been a case for financial compensation.

I am determined to work with the government to ensure that this review is not a box-ticking exercise but that it provides an objective, independent assessment of the impacts on business. I want to see that every business along the light rail corridor, not just Gungahlin, is provided with an opportunity to have their say by using financial statements and other evidence. I am confident that this assessment will establish a link between the light rail project and other construction in the area that is affecting business.

This report will also provide a real, lived experience of this project so that lessons learnt can be applied to future large-scale infrastructure projects across the ACT. I would hate to see the hurt and loss experienced by business owners during light rail construction repeated in the future. No longer can the risk to business be seen as residual, the impact “possible” and the consequences “minor”. No longer can the public servants casually note in their business case that there will be benefits for business without actually investigating, consulting and communicating with the business community.

What the Canberra Liberals are seeking is a review of the facts. We are asking for businesses to be given the opportunity to provide evidence of financial loss and for the review to determine how much of that loss is directly attributed to the light rail versus other market forces and environmental factors occurring in the area. At the end of the day, if this government deny business an opportunity, they are not only showing their true colours when it comes to supporting business; they are also, by default, admitting there is a problem.

I ask that members reflect and really ask themselves whether the burden of government incompetence when it comes to the management of light rail construction should be worn by business. The Canberra Liberals do not think so and we believe businesses in Canberra deserve better.

Amendment agreed to.

Original question, as amended, resolved in the affirmative.

Independent Integrity Commission 2018—Select Committee Membership

MADAM SPEAKER: I have been notified in writing of the following nominations for membership of the Select Committee on the Independent Integrity Commission 2018. The members are to be Mr Rattenbury, Mr Steel, Ms Cody, Mrs Dunne and Ms Lee.

Motion (by **Ms Fitzharris**) agreed to:

That the Members so nominated be appointed as members of the Select Committee on an Independent Integrity Commission 2018.

Sitting suspended from 12.28 to 2.30 pm.

Questions without notice Land—Dickson land swap

MR COE: My question is to the Chief Minister and Minister for Economic Development. I refer to media reports of 30 May on the Dickson land swap. The article claims:

A possible box of documents that may detail 40 meetings between senior ACT public servants and the Tradies Club over the Dickson land swap seems to have gone “missing” ...

Chief Minister, has an internal investigation been conducted into the missing documents? If so, what did it find?

MR BARR: I am not aware of an internal investigation on this matter. I will seek advice from the directorate. It is not my directorate, as the Leader of the Opposition would be aware.

Mr Hanson interjecting—

MADAM SPEAKER: Mr Hanson, not today.

MR BARR: I am not in a position to comment any further at this point.

MR COE: Chief Minister, when were you first made aware of the possible missing documents and why are there apparently so few details regarding these meetings?

MR BARR: I was not aware that there was a box of missing documents. I am still not aware that there is a box of missing documents. There is a claim to that effect but it is difficult to ascertain at this point. I have not been privy to a lot of the conversations and discussions because I do not have portfolio responsibility in this area.

MR WALL: Chief Minister, what steps are you taking to improve recordkeeping practices in your directorate and to ascertain the veracity of the claims of the box of missing documents?

MR BARR: I refer the member to my previous answers.

Parks—southern memorial

MS LE COUTEUR: My question is to the Minister for Transport and City Services and relates to the apparent lack of funding for the southern memorial park in this year's budget. What is now the timetable for construction of the southern memorial park?

MS FITZHARRIS: There is further work underway and that work will progress, particularly over the course of the next six months, as will the government's getting underway the review of the relevant legislation whose specific title I cannot recall.

MS LE COUTEUR: Minister, can the government ensure there will always be burial facilities in south Canberra, or is a gap now locked in?

MS FITZHARRIS: As Ms Le Couteur is aware, there was a previous commitment by the government to expand the Woden Cemetery which at the time was supported by the Woden Community Council and had been somewhat progressed. In the intervening period a number of members of the community and members in this place have indicated to the government that they wish that previous decision to be reconsidered in light of the government's significant investments and commitments to the Woden town centre. The government agreed to do that and resolved earlier this year to not proceed with the expansion of Woden but to, instead, focus on further work on the southern memorial park. That work will continue. There is space already allocated at Woden where families, for example, have allotments available to them. They will continue to be available at Woden.

We are very conscious of minimising any gap that may occur in the provision of services on the south side and on the north side as well. Work is well underway, including by the authority, on this matter. I note it was previously supported by the community to expand Woden but then, for a number of reasons, that support was no long forthcoming. The government has responded to that community sentiment.

Budget—childcare funding

MR MILLIGAN: My question is to the Minister for Community Services and Social Inclusion. Minister, Yurauna has previously received government support through the Community Services Directorate to provide Indigenous students studying at CIT with subsidised child care. Given this service is so crucial to supporting Indigenous students who are trying to further their education and circumstances, why has this relatively small sum of funding ceased?

MADAM SPEAKER: I call the Minister for Community Services and Social Inclusion.

MS BERRY: Madam Speaker, if it is with regard to the early childhood centre—

MADAM SPEAKER: You are taking the question?

MS BERRY: I will take the question in that respect. The Education Directorate has been working very closely with the early childhood centre, with Northside Community Service, to ensure that that provision remains possible for people who are studying at Yurauna. We will continue to work closely with them to make sure that they continue to be supported.

MR MILLIGAN: Minister, will there be alternative childcare support options provided to Indigenous students attending Yurauna?

MS BERRY: There are already options available at Yurauna.

MRS KIKKERT: Minister, did the Education Directorate consult with other agencies prior to seizing this funding, given the intersectional nature of the service with child protection, corrections, health and higher education?

MS BERRY: I thank Mrs Kikkert for the supplementary. The funding to the Yurauna Centre is not from the Education Directorate but for the actual childcare facility. The Education Directorate is working closely with the facility to ensure that support continues to be available for people who are attending training courses at the Yurauna Centre.

Budget—government investment

MS CHEYNE: My question is to the Chief Minister. Chief Minister, how is the ACT government growing services for our growing city through the 2018 budget?

MR BARR: I thank Ms Cheyne for the question. We are providing a significant boost to the services that Canberrans rely on through the 2018 budget, through more and better schools, new facilities in Molonglo and 500 more places for students at four local Gungahlin schools. We are very pleased that we can strengthen front-line care in our hospitals, with more resources for our emergency department, 4,000 more elective surgeries and the expansion of the hospital in the home program.

We are focused on making commuting quicker, with better transport infrastructure, including funding to progress the next stage of the light rail project, the duplication of William Slim Drive and a significant number of investments to improve walking and cycling connections in and around our town centres in Tuggeranong, in Woden and in Belconnen. We are boosting our investment in services for our city and suburbs. There will be more mowing, weeding and the upgrading of playgrounds. We will be planting more trees and there are more rangers funded for better animal management. We are keeping Canberrans safe by recruiting more first responders for our police and

emergency services as well as backing up those emergency services workers with the purchase of a range of equipment improvements.

The city is growing and the budget is making significant investments now to ensure that the city gets even better as we grow.

MS CHEYNE: Chief Minister, how will the 2018 budget help more young Canberrans and families on low incomes to own their own homes?

MR BARR: We certainly understand that buying a home is a challenge. It is a massive challenge in cities like Sydney and Melbourne, but it is also a challenge for many Canberrans. That is why we have determined to accelerate our tax reform program by abolishing stamp duty altogether for eligible first homebuyers. First homebuyers with a household income below \$160,000 annually will pay no stamp duty at all, whether they are buying an established property or a newly built home.

At the moment some first homebuyers qualify for a stamp duty concession if they are purchasing a newly built property. But people buying established properties, which can sometimes be more affordable and located closer to jobs, did not receive support through that particular scheme. We are widening this to ensure that all eligible buyers get better help through the abolition of stamp duty for all property types and at any purchase price.

This builds on the tax reform program that we have been delivering progressively since 2012. I have indicated that we will continue to cut stamp duty on all properties across the forward estimates. This will assist all homebuyers, but we have particularly prioritised first homebuyers in this year's budget with the abolition of stamp duty. It is a significant achievement for the territory. We look forward to continuing to cut stamp duty year on year.

MS ORR: How is the ACT government working to ensure all Canberrans share in the gains of our economic growth through the 2018 budget?

MR BARR: This is a significant priority for everyone on this side of the chamber. We want to ensure the gains of our territory's nation-leading economic growth are shared across the community. That is why we are growing the range of services and supports available to Canberrans who need that help.

This year's budget delivers more mental health accommodation and services, more front-line support for women and their families escaping violence, more services to meet the needs of Canberrans with disabilities, and more accommodation for people at risk of experiencing homelessness.

We are also determined to keep pushing forward in making Canberra a more inclusive city. On top of this step-up in services, we are also growing annual grants funding for a range of community-led efforts to boost inclusion for people with disability, for older people, for veterans and for LGBTIQ Canberrans.

Our social and community services sector is a critical source of support for Canberrans when they need it most, as well as being a major local employer. We are backing our local community sector providers with more investment in this budget because as our city grows and as our economy grows, everyone should share in those gains.

Courts—building works

MR HANSON: My question is to the Attorney-General and it relates to the new court buildings for the ACT. When announced, stage 1 was due in early 2017 and stage 2 was to be completed in late 2018. It is now apparent that the court building will be significantly delayed, with stage 1 not yet completed. Attorney-General, when will this building be completed?

MR RAMSAY: I thank the shadow attorney-general for his interest in the court building, which will be an excellent facility for the Supreme Court and for the Magistrates Court. We are certainly looking forward to the improvements that will come with that: the expanded number of courtrooms, the jury service rooms and the broader services that will be provided.

There was some delay that was the case primarily because of the wet winters that we had in previous years. The anticipation is that it will be completed in coming months. I look forward potentially to being able to—

Mr Hanson: What does “coming months” mean?

MR RAMSAY: In the coming months, and I look forward to being able to share in the opening of the building with the shadow attorney-general very soon.

MR HANSON: I certainly look forward to that in the coming months. Attorney-General, what is the final projected total cost for this project?

MR RAMSAY: I will take the details of the question on notice but I do note again that because of the nature of the agreement—the public-private partnership—any of the delays that are happening have no negative budgetary impact on the ACT government at all.

MS LEE: Attorney-General, who is responsible for the extra costs of this delay, including costs of trials that should have been heard in the new building but that will now have to be heard in other venues such as Queanbeyan?

MR RAMSAY: I refer the member to my previous answer.

ACT Health—proposed organisational changes

MRS DUNNE: My question is to the Minister for Health and Wellbeing. In an exchange of emails at the start of the decision to restructure ACT Health, the then director-general advised the Head of Service that you, minister, wanted the restructure

because you claimed you received too many reports. You seem to have had trouble reading reports and briefs in the past, minister, including a brief in October on health data issues which you did not read at all and a January brief on the same topic which you took several weeks to read. Minister, other than claims that you received too many direct reports, why did you advocate the restructure of ACT Health?

MS FITZHARRIS: Mrs Dunne either misread the question or I misheard Mrs Dunne's question. It was not a matter of me receiving too many reports. I recall that the email from the FOI says the director-general made that comment. I have outlined fairly extensively, including in a ministerial statement, the reasons I recommended that ACT Health be separated into two organisations, and there has also been media coverage. I refer Mrs Dunne to all of those extensive previous statements.

MRS DUNNE: Minister, why have you been so badly briefed in the past? How will this restructure of ACT Health improve the capacity to brief you well?

MS FITZHARRIS: I do not agree with the premise of the question. I refer Mrs Dunne to my previous answer today and to my extensive previous answers in this place that are also on the public record.

MR PARTON: Minister, what important briefs and reports will you now not read as a result of the restructure of ACT Health?

MS FITZHARRIS: That question does not make sense, so I will just leave it at that.

Budget—education

MS ORR: My question is to the Minister for Education and Early Childhood Development. Minister, how will the 2018 budget make sure that all ACT families have access to a high quality local public school?

MS BERRY: I thank Ms Orr for her question. We announced last week that the ACT will invest \$47 million into building a new P-6 school in Molonglo. This will open in Denman Prospect in 2021. It will deliver on ACT Labor's election commitment to provide education for families that are moving into this growing part of the ACT. The school will cater for 600 students between kindergarten and year 6, with spaces for 44 full-time equivalent preschool students and space for future growth.

The government will also undertake early planning and feasibility work for a future years 7 to 10 campus on this site to accommodate continued growth in Molonglo. This is in addition to the new Gungahlin school in Taylor which is already under construction, funded in the last ACT government budget.

The budget will also provide \$9.2 million over four years to improve teaching in every classroom every day, as well as enabling continued development of long-term strategic reform. High quality school education relies on the teachers and the support staff in our schools. This government knows this and is dedicated to supporting quality teaching.

The government will invest in teacher capability in literacy and numeracy and will build strong relationships with the University of Canberra, which is where many of the ACT's teacher graduates come from. The university partnership will provide teachers with the chance for professional learning through research collaboration.

MS ORR: Where is the government investing to expand existing public schools?

MS BERRY: The ACT government is investing in areas of growth. Last year's census confirmed that Gungahlin is the second fastest growing region in Australia. The ACT government will expand schools in the area so that all Canberra students can access quality education close to home. Another 500 students will be welcomed across Amaroo, Neville Bonner school and the Gold Creek junior campus, with the Franklin Early Childhood School receiving transportable buildings to immediately expand the school to accommodate current year 2 students in a new 2019 year 3 class and beyond. The government will also fund planning and consultation on a permanent expansion to a full preschool to year 6 school.

Parents have been very happy to learn that their children will be able to continue learning in the school environment that best suits them and the community that supports their needs.

The ACT government is committing \$31.1 million for teachers and support staff who will continue to deliver education to more than 1,300 additional students as Canberra grows. The government will continue to deliver excellent teaching and support staff, with an additional 66 in local public schools, and will lock in support for students with a disability, boosting the delivery of quality education for Canberra's children and young people.

MS CODY: Minister, where is the government investing to upgrade existing public schools?

MS BERRY: I thank Ms Cody for the supplementary question. The 2018 budget will deliver \$18.8 million to replace buildings at Campbell Primary School with new modern learning facilities and upgrade ageing infrastructure. The new buildings have been designed for contemporary learning and teaching, disability access and environmental sustainability.

The ACT government will also provide funding to scope and plan for the modernisation of Narrabundah College. Calwell High School and Telopea Park School will benefit from roof replacements under this budget, along with several of Canberra's other older schools.

On top of the \$85 million commitment in the last budget, the ACT government is continuing the work of the public school infrastructure upgrade program, which last year included upgrades like a natural play area at Macgregor Primary School, an appropriate cultural space at Narrabundah Early Childhood School, increased access for students with disability at Alfred Deakin High School, as well as tree planting programs and flagpoles for schools all across the ACT.

ACT Health—proposed organisational changes

MRS KIKKERT: My question is to the Minister for Health and Wellbeing. Minister, on 11 April 2018, in answer to a question about the restructure of ACT Health, you said the restructure involved your office but not just your office. Documents obtained under FOI indicate that the Chief Minister made the decision with no evidence of significant involvement by you or Mr Rattenbury in the decision-making process. Your office was involved in developing the communications strategy after the decision had been taken. Minister, why is there no record of you, your office or your directorate playing a significant role in the decision taken by the Chief Minister to restructure ACT Health?

MS FITZHARRIS: I refer to answers in this place yesterday, and to previous statements by me, by Minister Rattenbury and by the Chief Minister. I also can confirm, once again—as three ministers did yesterday to rebut any conspiracy theory that the opposition may have—that I had considerable input into this decision. I also had a number of meetings, including with the Head of Service, with Minister Rattenbury and with the Chief Minister, on this matter. I am very much looking forward to continuing the work to make sure that the separation of ACT Health occurs later this year and involves extensive consultation with the community, stakeholders and particularly with ACT Health staff.

MRS KIKKERT: Minister, will you table by tomorrow all documents in your possession about the decision to restructure ACT Health?

MS FITZHARRIS: The opposition has done an FOI, and I refer the opposition also to my previous extensive statements in this place about that decision and the process from here until 1 October. I also note that I attended a number of ACT Health staff forums where I discussed this matter with staff.

MRS DUNNE: Minister, why is there no record of the Chief Minister consulting with you or your directorate before he took the decision to restructure ACT Health on 15 March?

MS FITZHARRIS: I think the record is one of extensive comment in this place and on the public record.

Hospitals—waiting times

MR PARTON: My question is to the Minister for Health and Wellbeing. On 22 February this year you advised the Assembly that:

On the issue of waiting times in both elective surgery and emergency departments, it is clear that we are making improvements ...

You advised the Assembly on at least nine occasions between August last year and February this year that waiting times for elective surgery were coming down. The ACT budget papers show that the target for emergency department presentations seen

on time in 2017-18 was 70 per cent; FOI documents show that in February 2018 only 44 per cent had been seen on time; and the budget reports an expected outcome for the year of only 50 per cent. Did you mislead the Assembly in your statements of 22 February 2018 and on previous occasions about improved performance on waiting times for elective surgery?

MS FITZHARRIS: No. Mr Parton has talked about elective surgery and emergency department waiting times. Particularly with emergency department and elective surgery wait times, there are a number of different measures, and I believe he has confused them in his question.

MR PARTON: Minister, when did you first become aware that our hospitals were unlikely to meet the target of 70 per cent of emergency department presentations seen on time?

MS FITZHARRIS: I will have to take that question on notice.

MRS DUNNE: Minister, what action have you taken or will you take to ensure that you do not mislead the community about the performance of the hospital in emergency department waiting times in the future?

MS FITZHARRIS: I have not, and I have also said in this place that it is clear that there is significant progress that we need to make. Yesterday's budget, of course, invested considerably in core public hospital services. One of its key aims is to bring down waiting times, but it is important to note that it is a whole-of-hospital investment in beds, in the emergency department, in emergency surgery, in the intensive care unit and in elective surgery right across the territory.

Domestic animal services—rangers

MS LAWDER: My question is to the Minister for Transport and City Services. On 1 November 2017, only days after the tragic death of a woman in Watson following a dog attack, you released a statement which read in part, "The ACT government has already announced several measures to protect the community including doubling the number of animal rangers." In an article in the *Canberra Times* on 12 January 2018, the operations manager of domestic animal services said that he now oversees eight rangers and that "eight new staff are coming on next month". In the budget announced this week, there is funding for two new ranger positions to manage domestic dogs. Minister, has the number of animal rangers doubled since 1 November 2017?

MS FITZHARRIS: Yes, it has.

MS LAWDER: Minister, has the total number of DAS staff increased since 1 November 2017 and, if so, by how many?

MS FITZHARRIS: Yes, it has. As of last year, in October, there were 15 staff, eight of whom were dedicated rangers. There are currently 20 staff. Sixteen are now dedicated rangers.

MS CHEYNE: Minister, can you expand on what this investment in extra rangers will bring?

MS FITZHARRIS: I thank Ms Cheyne for the supplementary question. Certainly, there has been significant work underway in domestic animal services over a number of years in response to community feedback and also increased levels of activity in the community. With additional rangers and with rangers whose roles have been upgraded as a result of investments in yesterday's budget, they are now much better placed to deal with administrative, investigative and animal behavioural issues. As well as providing victim support and public education functions, an extensive education and awareness-raising campaign has been undertaken by domestic animal services.

Madam Speaker, as you are well aware, extensive work was done last year, particularly on legislative amendments and improvements which were supported right across the chamber at the end of last year.

Budget—light rail

MS CODY: My question is to the Minister for Transport and City Services. Can the minister please update the Assembly on how the 2018-19 ACT budget supports the development of Canberra's light rail network?

MS FITZHARRIS: I thank Ms Cody very much for her question and her interest in light rail, particularly stage 2 of light rail from the city to Woden. Yesterday's budget supports the development of Canberra's city-wide light rail network by continuing the development of the extension of light rail from the city to Woden through an additional investment of \$10 million for further technical and design work on the second stage of this network.

The budget will also invest a further \$2½ million in works to support light rail to Woden. This funding will support the development of business cases for the redesign and build of a new Transport Canberra bus interchange in the Woden town centre. The purpose is to ensure that future bus and light rail interchange plans are well integrated. It will include an upgrade of Parkes Way to improve traffic flow around light rail. This will examine the impact of population growth and development on the existing road network and recommend proposed improvements to Parkes Way. It will also include an investigation of network-wide park-and-ride provisions and opportunities right across the city and the redevelopment of the Yarra Glen intersection with Melrose and Yamba drives to accommodate light rail.

I am pleased to say that the funding will also support a stop to be built on Sandford Street in Mitchell in the following financial year, adding to the stage 1 light rail route.

There is also continued collaboration with the National Capital Authority, and further consultation with the community and stakeholders will continue to be a priority. I note that the government is preparing a submission to the current commonwealth parliamentary inquiry into stage 2 of light rail.

MS CODY: Minister, can you also provide an update on the progress of light rail construction for stage 1 of light rail from the city to Gungahlin?

MS FITZHARRIS: Thank you; I would be delighted to. Certainly, Canberra Metro's current program for light rail stage 1 is reaching construction completion in December 2018. It is anticipated that in the second half of this year we will see further construction activities completed in various sections of the alignment and at the depot, allowing for testing and commissioning activities to proceed.

Canberra Metro has made significant progress in construction, with 19½ thousand metres of track slab being laid to date. This is 77 per cent of the total track slab length. It is important to note that the forecast date for construction completion in December of this year remains contingent on a range of activities and, as always, weather. Assuming all sections successfully complete initial testing, full system testing will progress over October to December 2018.

As with any construction project, the construction completion date remains subject to a range of general and project-specific risks, including bad weather, system and operational testing and commissioning, and timely receipt of accreditation from regulators, specifically including the office of the national safety regulator.

Canberra Metro, supported by Transport Canberra, have commenced an important public education campaign for light rail. The first campaign messages build community awareness of testing activities starting, such as energising overhead wires and light rail vehicles moving onto the alignment and is further supported by an investment in yesterday's budget. Later stages of this campaign will advise the community about how to use the system as we move ever closer to the exciting prospect of light rail services commencing in our city.

MR PETTERSSON: Minister, what is the ACT government doing to prepare for the commencement of light rail operations?

MS FITZHARRIS: I thank Mr Pettersson for the follow-up question. It is certainly exciting to be preparing for the commencement of light rail operations in the ACT. Transport Canberra light rail has a dedicated operations team which is managing a wide range of operational readiness activities towards the planned beginning of services.

Key activities that the team is managing or providing substantial assistance on include legislation. Two bills have now been passed by the Assembly, presented by Minister Rattenbury, to enable the operation of light rail as a form of transport and in regard to normal passenger operations. There has been significant cross-government coordination, including a detailed works program which has been developed that identifies all activities across TCCS as well as more broadly across government, that will facilitate the introduction of light rail—for example, sharing of light rail CCTV with the AFP and management of traffic signals and street lighting, and implementation of these measures is closely monitored.

Interface agreements include assistance in the development of formal interface agreements between light rail and the territory—for example, a statutory requirement to have a road-rail interface agreement—and customer services, ensuring appropriate processes are in place for all customer elements like managing public inquiries and complaints, journey planning and website information.

Other activities include a fully integrated ticketing system, developing an integrated light rail and bus network and a comprehensive safety campaign; and, of course, lots of thinking about the actual first service. We are looking forward to discussing more broadly with the community how community members right across the territory can be involved in the incredibly exciting first light rail journey. We very much look forward to the commencement of light rail services in the ACT.

Light rail—disability access

MS LEE: My question is to the Minister for Transport and City Services. Minister, were disability and other mobility advocacy groups involved in the design of the light rail carriages and platforms?

MS FITZHARRIS: Yes, I believe they were. It is my understanding that there was significant community engagement, including through community forums and a community reference group that, from recollection, included particularly ACTCOSS and other representative groups, including representative disability groups. If there is anything further to add, I will provide that information to the Assembly.

MS LEE: Minister, what provisions have been made to ensure that the gaps between the tram and the platform are small enough to allow those with wheelchairs or walking frames with small wheels to safely board the tram?

MS FITZHARRIS: I thank Ms Lee for the supplementary question. There are, of course, standards about disability access, and Canberra Metro and TCCS have been aware of that right through the planning, design, procurement and construction phases of the project. It is indeed a notable feature of light rail that it is universally accessible and it is a much easier and more comfortable mode of transport; for many people with a disability, it is much easier to access. Through the development of and the discussion about light rail there was considerable community conversation about the accessibility of light rail, particularly for people with a disability.

MISS C BURCH: Minister, will light rail carriages be able to accommodate larger mobility scooters?

MS FITZHARRIS: Yes, it is my understanding that they will.

Light rail—Mitchell

MISS C BURCH: My question is to the Minister for Transport and City Services. Minister, early plans for light rail included stops in Mitchell. Why will it now cost \$150,000 more to design a single light rail stop at Mitchell?

MS FITZHARRIS: Miss Burch is incorrect; there were not plans for additional stops in Mitchell. That is not correct. There was significant community consultation which proposed a number of stops along the route—around 24, from memory, possible stops along the route. As with anything, a range of options go out for community, stakeholder and industry consultation.

The stage 1 light rail route could not accommodate, and was never going to accommodate, 26 stops along the route. There was considerable discussion and debate at the time, and the combination of patronage, travel time, distance between stops, and where current and future development was to take place were all considered. There were a number of stops—

Mr Coe: A point of order.

MADAM SPEAKER: Minister, resume you seat.

Mr Coe: It is on relevance. The question was: why will it now cost \$150,000 to design a single light rail stop at Mitchell? She has yet to address that.

MADAM SPEAKER: I think she is talking about the planning process for light rail. I do not believe there is a point of order, but you have 40 seconds left, minister.

MS FITZHARRIS: The simple answer is that that is what it will cost.

MISS C BURCH: Minister, given that light rail construction is being done in the area now, why are you delaying construction of a stop at Mitchell for more than a further 12 months?

MS FITZHARRIS: The irony, the unbelievable irony, of the opposition, who blanketed this city with anti-light rail propaganda for years—for years. It is laughable. It is laughable for the opposition to think that anyone had for a moment contemplated that it wanted to support—

Opposition members interjecting—

MADAM SPEAKER: Members!

Mr Hanson: Madam Speaker, a point of order.

MADAM SPEAKER: Stop the clock, please.

Mr Hanson: There is a great deal of interjection. I cannot hear the answer.

MADAM SPEAKER: I will call the minister. You have a minute-plus left. Please continue.

MS FITZHARRIS: Despite their relentless negativity and questioning of this project, they fail to appreciate what has been extensively discussed in this place in public and

through committee inquiry about the nature of the contract. They fail to understand that. They also fail to understand that constructing an additional stop at Mitchell is about a number of factors.

One of them is about the construction of the stop. The other is about the operational impact of adding another stop, the timing of the route and the resequencing of traffic lights, for example, along the full route. The government will build a stop in Mitchell. It is, as I have said previously, the only stop along the route that has future-proofed utilities underground. The government has funded it.

The government will look forward to doing that work over the next 12 months. The government will look forward to further engagement with the Mitchell Traders Association. Most of all, the government will look forward to light rail operating in the ACT because no-one is under any illusion that the opposition opposed that. (*Time expired.*)

MR MILLIGAN: Minister, what would it cost now to contract this stop in this stage, the first stage of light rail?

Mr Steel: Madam Speaker, a point of order. That is just a hypothetical and it should be ruled out. Under standing order 117, hypotheticals cannot be asked. It is as simple as that.

MADAM SPEAKER: Can you repeat your question, Mr Milligan?

MR MILLIGAN: Minister, what would it cost to construct the stop for Mitchell under the current contract?

MADAM SPEAKER: I believe it is in order, Mr Steel.

MS FITZHARRIS: As I have indicated, the government has not considered opening up the contract at this point because the construction of that stop would involve significant negotiation not only about the construction of the stop itself but also about the complete operations of the entire route. The government has funded the provision of a stop in Mitchell. It was pleased to do so in yesterday's budget and looks forward to progressing that work over the next 12 months.

Budget—disability services

MR PETTERSSON: My question is to the Minister for Disability, Children and Youth. Minister, what is the ACT government doing to support Canberrans with high and complex support needs which are not being met by the NDIS?

MS STEPHEN-SMITH: I thank Mr Pettersson for his question. The ACT is, of course, proud to be the first jurisdiction to roll out the national disability insurance scheme to all eligible participants. It is delivering choice and control for thousands of Canberrans living with a disability. In 2018-19 the ACT government will contribute \$137 million towards the scheme.

I would like to acknowledge the activism and advocacy of NDIS participants, carers, families, service providers and representative organisations in raising significant issues and concerns with both the ACT government and through the Standing Committee on Health, Ageing and Community Services inquiry into the implementation, performance and governance of the NDIS in the ACT.

While the Office for Disability within the Community Services Directorate continues to work closely with the National Disability Insurance Agency when issues arise, the government knows more needs to be done. This transition to an entirely new service model is complex. We are committed to ensuring that no-one seeking support gets left behind. That is why we will deliver \$1.8 million for an integrated service response in this budget as we continue to support the transition to the NDIS. This includes \$1.1 million in 2018-19 to purchase necessary supports for people with disability who have high and complex support needs that are not being fully met by the NDIS.

The measure will also fund coordination staff within the Office for Disability to work with the NDIA and the mainstream services to ensure that people with complex support needs receive a coordinated service response. The integrated service response program will monitor service gaps and issues arising from the implementation of the NDIS, and will work with the NDIA and across the ACT government to address these issues.

MR PETTERSSON: Minister, what else is the government doing to support people experiencing difficulty in navigating the NDIS and engaging with the NDIA?

MS STEPHEN-SMITH: I thank Mr Pettersson for his supplementary. It is certainly the case that the ACT government works closely with the NDIA on the implementation of the scheme in the ACT. We also collaborate with the commonwealth, other states and the Northern Territory on ensuring the successful national rollout through the Disability Reform Council and its officials groups.

We know there have been many challenges experienced by participants and we continue to advocate and raise these issues with the NDIA and directly with the commonwealth ministers. The NDIA has responded to the challenges participants have faced in planning and engaging with the NDIS with the development of a new participant pathway which is currently being piloted in Victoria. This pilot is testing administrative improvements to streamline processes and enable a more collaborative planning experience.

It is fair to say, however, as I indicated in my evidence to the Assembly committee inquiry into the implementation, performance and governance of the NDIS in the ACT, that all jurisdictions have expressed a strong desire to see these changes happen—and sooner rather than later.

The NDIA has also recognised that some participant groups require a more tailored pathway to take into account their particular contexts. The ACT government has expressed a strong interest in being involved in the development and delivery of the tailored pathway for psychosocial disability in the ACT. As a jurisdiction we are

already leading the work in developing a better understanding of the interface between the mental health system and the NDIS.

In recognising the challenges experienced by some NDIS participants, the ACT government's budget has also committed \$400,000 over two years as part of the budget for independent individual advocacy for people who require assistance to navigate the NDIS. Ensuring that NDIS participants can get appropriate support in engaging with NDIS decisions, including their rights to review of decisions and, if needed, utilising appeal processes, is absolutely crucial to ensuring that the NDIS enables participants to have real choice and control.

MR STEEL: Minister, what other budget measures will support the inclusion of people with a disability in our community?

MS STEPHEN-SMITH: I thank Mr Steel for the supplementary. The ACT government supports the inclusion and participation of all people with a disability in the Canberra community in a number of ways. The government recognises that many people with disability will not be NDIS participants, and we need to work as a community to ensure their needs are met and that the community as a whole is inclusive of people with disability in all areas, including employment, community engagement and social activities, as well as access to other government services.

The budget includes a doubling of funding for the disability inclusion grants, with the total grant pool increasing from \$50,000 to \$100,000 per year. This grant program provides opportunity for community groups, small businesses and not-for-profit organisations to apply for funds to become more inclusive and welcoming of people with disability.

These grants provide a real opportunity for people with disability to engage with their local community, let the community know how it could be more accessible, and encourage their local businesses and community organisations to apply for funds to remove hurdles to inclusion. This could include physical infrastructure such as hearing loops, adjustable equipment, training for staff and volunteers on disability awareness, the development of a disability action and inclusion plan, or translating information into easy English.

Last year the first round of grants saw an overwhelming response from the community. In the 2017 grant round 44 disability inclusion grant applications were received seeking a total of more than \$550,000 in funding. Eight applications were successful for the \$50,000 grant round. The 2018 disability inclusion grant round opened on 30 April, and we will be keeping the grants open until the end of July to ensure as many organisations and parts of the community as possible can apply for this new larger round. I encourage all members to make this information available to their constituents.

Budget—Canberra Institute of Technology

MR WALL: My question is to the Minister for Higher Education, Training and Research. Minister, this year's budget has indicated that there will be a cut to staffing

numbers at CIT next year. How many staff will be cut in total, and have these staff yet been identified?

MS FITZHARRIS: It is not quite as Mr Wall presents. I understand that this is the normal movement of staff in CIT in response to training needs. It happens in each year in terms of the training needs of the ACT because they bring on temporary staff to undertake particular training activities in each year.

MR WALL: Minister, which CIT campuses will be impacted by the reduction in staffing numbers?

MS FITZHARRIS: I will take that question on notice.

MS LEE: Minister, which courses will be impacted by these staff cuts?

MS FITZHARRIS: As I mentioned, they are not cuts; they are changes in staffing levels at CIT to respond to particular training needs which occur, which are temporary, with staff that are brought on to respond to training needs in every year. I would encourage the opposition to have a look at this over the course of previous years. I will take the specifics of the question on notice.

Ms Lee: Point of order, Madam Speaker.

MADAM SPEAKER: Point of order.

Ms Lee: I did wait until I thought the minister was finishing her answer. The question was actually: which courses will be impacted?

MS FITZHARRIS: I said I would take it on notice.

MADAM SPEAKER: There is no point of order. I think she was explaining the state of the staff and the temporary nature. You have more than a minute to continue to explain to the opposition, minister.

MS FITZHARRIS: I will take it on notice.

Justice—resourcing

MR STEEL: Can the Attorney-General update the Assembly on the government's work to improve access to justice in the ACT?

MR RAMSAY: I thank Mr Steel for the question and his ongoing interest in our justice system. The government recognises that access to justice requires a holistic approach. Legislation, legal services, the courts and community services all play a key role in ensuring that people are able to seek and obtain justice. Our work in each area and new policies, new legislation and funding have focused on ensuring the people who are most vulnerable in our community get the support they need.

In my first ministerial statement of priorities I emphasised that justice is only true justice when it is timely, accessible and transparent. To achieve a justice system that meets that standard requires understanding of how all our decisions as a government in one area affect different parts of the justice system. That understanding has led us to expand the justice system by adding an eighth magistrate; provide Legal Aid, the Director of Public Prosecutions and our community legal centres with additional funding to support their vital roles in the legal system; and introduce a series of bills to improve the way the courts work and to respond to emerging issues.

These measures are making a real difference for vulnerable people in our community. They support our justice system to protect the rights of people who come before the courts.

MR STEEL: Minister, can you give some more detail about how work to change legislation is supporting vulnerable women, families and others?

MR RAMSAY: I thank Mr Steel for the supplementary question. Over the past year our focus on delivering new legislation has been to take action in response to national work on reforming our laws in relation to vulnerable people. This term we have already introduced significant reforms to our criminal laws in response to the Royal Commission into Institutional Responses to Child Sexual Abuse.

A new offence for repeated abuse over time, and a reformed offence for grooming, are now in place to ensure that our laws can be effectively used to hold offenders accountable. We also introduced new legislation on family and personal violence orders. That legislation focused on the experience of people who are seeking protection from the courts. It was designed to ensure that the trauma that can arise from being involved in the court process is minimised and to ensure that vulnerable people are effectively able to seek protection in the courts.

This is an important body of law reform that has followed the ongoing policy work of the Minister for the Prevention of Domestic and Family Violence and it is an example of the changes to legislation that support direct services to people in the community.

MS CHEYNE: Minister, can you illustrate how this government's investment in resources for the courts, for new legislation and for legal services delivers concrete benefits for people in Canberra?

MR RAMSAY: I thank Ms Cheyne for the supplementary question. This government is delivering significant resources to ensure that people who seek access to the justice system are empowered to do so and are supported.

We are providing \$5.3 million for a new magistrate, more Legal Aid staff and more DPP staff. The Magistrates Court provides important justice services to the community, including the granting of domestic and family violence protection orders. Expanding its capabilities will make the courts more accessible to people who are seeking protection.

We are providing almost \$7 million in baseline funding to the Director of Public Prosecutions. This increase comes as the DPP is prosecuting more, and more complicated, cases, including historical sexual assault matters.

Our \$14 million commitment to fund the ACT's participation in the national redress scheme is a central part of providing access to justice. The redress scheme will offer psychological counselling, accountability from institutions for abuse through a direct personal response, and financial payments to help survivors of child sexual abuse rebuild their lives.

This government is committed to ensuring that its policies, its legislation and its resources all support access to justice for the whole community.

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

Papers

Mr Barr presented the following papers:

Economic Development and Tourism—Standing Committee—Report 2—*Report on Annual and Financial Reports 2016-2017*—Government response.

Education, Employment and Youth Affairs—Standing Committee—Report 2—*Report on Annual and Financial Reports 2016-2017 and University of Canberra 2016 Annual Report*—Government response.

Environment and Transport and City Services—Standing Committee—Report 5—*Report on Annual and Financial Reports 2016-2017*—Government response.

Health, Ageing and Community Services—Standing Committee—Report 3—*Report on Annual and Financial Reports 2016-2017*—Government response.

Justice and Community Safety—Standing Committee—Report 2—*Report on Annual and Financial Reports 2016-2017*—Government response.

Planning and Urban Renewal—Standing Committee—Report 5—*Report on Annual and Financial Reports 2016-2017*—Government response.

Public Accounts—Standing Committee—Report 2—*Report on Annual and Financial Reports 2016-2017*—

Government response.

Response to Recommendation 11—Report on the use of Attraction and Retention Incentives, dated June 2018.

Ms Fitzharris presented the following paper:

University of Canberra Act, pursuant to section 36—Annual report 2017—University of Canberra (2 volumes), dated April 2018.

ACT Policing annual report 2016-2017—corrigendum Paper and statement by minister

MR GENTLEMAN (Brindabella—Minister for Police and Emergency Services, Minister for the Environment and Heritage, Minister for Planning and Land Management and Minister for Urban Renewal) (3.27): I present the following paper:

Annual Reports (Government Agencies) Act, pursuant to section 13—Annual report 2016-2017—ACT Policing—Corrigendum.

I seek leave to make a brief statement.

Leave granted.

MR GENTLEMAN: I wish to advise the chamber of a corrigendum to the ACT Policing annual report 2016-17. As a result of an inadvertent administrative error, the independent auditor's letter was excluded from the original published financial statements. The letter should have appeared at page 61 of the ACT Policing annual report of 2016-17.

Planning and Urban Renewal—Standing Committee Report 4—government response

MR GENTLEMAN (Brindabella—Minister for Police and Emergency Services, Minister for the Environment and Heritage, Minister for Planning and Land Management and Minister for Urban Renewal) (3.28): I present the following paper:

Planning and Urban Renewal—Standing Committee—Report 4—Draft Variation to the Territory Plan No 329: Weston Group Centre and Surrounding Community and Leisure and Accommodation Lands: Zone changes and amendments to the Weston Precinct map and code—Government response.

I move:

That the Assembly take note of the paper.

Question resolved in the affirmative.

ACT Children and Young People Death Review Committee— annual report Paper and statement by minister

MS STEPHEN-SMITH (Kurrajong—Minister for Community Services and Social Inclusion, Minister for Disability, Children and Youth, Minister for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Affairs, Minister for Multicultural Affairs and Minister for Workplace Safety and Industrial Relations) (3.29): I present the following paper:

Children and Young People Act, pursuant to subsection 727S(5)—ACT Children and Young People Death Review Committee—Annual Report 2017, dated 30 April 2018.

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

Leave granted.

MS STEPHEN-SMITH: The ACT Children and Young People Death Review Committee annual report provides the community with information each year upon the deaths of children and young people that occur in the ACT, as well as deaths of ACT children and young people that occur outside the ACT. This annual report covers the period from 1 January to 31 December 2017. As well as covering 2017, the annual report provides an overview of data on the deaths of ACT children and young people over a five-year period from 1 January 2013 to 31 December 2017.

The committee, which was established in 2011, has a number of functions, including maintaining a register of deaths of children and young people in the ACT; identifying patterns and trends in relation to the deaths of children and young people; and determining research that would be valuable in this area. The role of the committee is not to apportion blame but to identify what may be learnt from the circumstances of a child's or young person's death. The committee is able to make recommendations about legislation, policies, practices and services for implementation by government and non-government bodies, with the aim of preventing avoidable deaths, reducing the number of deaths of children and young people in the ACT, and improving services.

It is important to note that the Children and Young People Death Review Committee does not investigate individual deaths. Its role is to monitor general trends and inform the public about the number and nature of deaths in age cohorts. For this reason the report does not discuss cases where the death of a child is being investigated by a coroner.

There are currently 15 child death cases being investigated by the Coroner's Court. These matters are particularly complex and sensitive, and require the court to obtain and consider extensive evidence to determine the manner and cause of death. In addition, where the coroner suspects that the death may have been connected to, or the result of, a criminal offence, the coroner must pause their investigation and refer the case to the Director of Public Prosecutions. In these circumstances, the coronial investigation may be paused for a significant period of time while the criminal matter is investigated and prosecuted and charges finally decided.

The government is focused on improving the coronial system to ensure that cases are finalised as quickly and as sensitively as possible and that the benefits to the community of coronial recommendations for public health and safety improvements are realised effectively. The government recently announced that the 2018-19 budget will provide \$3.1 million in funding over the next four years to appoint an eighth full-time resident magistrate. The Chief Magistrate has indicated that she will consider utilising the additional judicial resource to dedicate one magistrate to coronial work part time.

The chapters in this year's report cover a number of specific cohorts, including all children and young people who have died in the ACT in the 12-month period of the report or who normally reside in the ACT but died outside the ACT during the period; ACT residents only over the five-year period; and two chapters on specific populations: neonates and infants, and vulnerable young people.

Sadly, children under one year of age comprise the largest number of deaths across age groups, accounting for 70.4 per cent of all deaths of children and young people for the five-year period. The leading causes of death for infants are medically related and include “‘certain conditions originating in the perinatal period’ ... followed by ‘chromosomal or congenital anomalies’”. The main cause of death listed for the infants who died in the first month of life was prematurity—more often than not, extreme prematurity.

Cases where the cause of death is unascertained continue to present a challenge for the committee, particularly for young children. These deaths can be due to a range of actual causes, but there is insufficient evidence to make an accurate determination. During the five-year period there were eight incidents of deaths in infants where the cause could not be ascertained.

The committee chair, Ms Margaret Carmody PSM, notes in her foreword to the report that the committee is currently conducting a more in-depth review of the deaths of children aged between zero and three years, given the relatively high rates of mortality in this age group. The committee is seeking to identify and consider factors that increase the vulnerability of children and young people. I look forward to receiving the committee’s report on this review.

The death of any child or young person is devastating, and I would like to take this opportunity to extend my condolences, and the condolences of this Assembly, to all families and friends affected by the death of a child or young person.

I commend the ACT Children and Young People Death Review Committee annual report 2017 to the Assembly and thank the committee for their work over the past year.

Municipal services—street sweeping

MS LEE (Kurrajong) (3.34): I move:

That this Assembly:

(1) notes that:

- (a) millions of deciduous trees across the ACT collectively drop thousands of cubic metre of leaves onto Canberra’s roads, footpaths and gutters; and
- (b) insufficient street sweeping of Canberra roads leads to leaf litter entering our storm water system, causing:
 - (i) blockages;
 - (ii) organic material to flow down the drain; and
 - (iii) contributes to blue-green algal blooms in our lakes; and

(2) calls on the ACT Government to, by the end of the first sitting week in October 2018:

- (a) conduct an audit of the timetable for street sweeping in all suburbs and review the requests for street sweeping received via the Fix My Street

portal to better match the schedule to the needs of Canberra seasonal changes; and

- (b) establish a minimum timeframe to respond to street sweeping requests lodged on the Fix My Street website.

Canberra's trees are a big part of what makes our city such a great place to live. My team and I have enjoyed many electorate walks in Kurrajong to admire the autumnal red, orange and yellow leaves from the huge range of trees in our city. However, as sure as autumn follows summer, I know we will inevitably see these leaves turn brown and collect, sometimes knee-deep, in our gutters. As a community that greatly values our bush capital tag and is fiercely protective of our trees, it is important that with the beauty of having lots of trees comes a great responsibility to ensure we are doing the right thing when it comes to the fallen leaves. This is why I bring this motion today, to call on the government to undertake an audit and review its street sweeping schedule and to better inform Canberrans of exactly when their street will be swept so that all Canberrans can have the benefit of tree-lined streets whilst being responsible for what happens to the leaves once they fall to the ground.

The minister claims that every year over 16,000 cubic metres of litter is swept from Canberra's streets. However, despite this, leaves still languish in gutters in many streets of Canberra, particularly in my electorate of Kurrajong, for many weeks and sometimes months. From here they are swept down the drains by rainfall and end up in our stormwater system.

I welcome the government's education campaign to help citizens keep nutrients on their properties and out of the waterways through its H2OK "only rain down the stormwater drain" campaign, with thanks to funding from the federal coalition government. We all know that leaves can be composted and provide a helpful source of mulch. However, many Canberrans either have no need for leaf mulch or find themselves inundated by the sheer quantity that street trees produce in addition to their own garden trees.

The government appears to have published the same media release for many years now asking Canberrans not to sweep their leaves into the gutters. Yet we can all agree that this appears to be not working when the government's street sweeping procedure is inconsistent and jobs logged through the fix my street website are not actioned quickly or residents are not kept in the loop about what is happening.

No doubt the government will be responding to my motion by patting themselves on the back about the rollout of the green bins across Canberra, and indeed this will be helpful to those Canberrans who regularly collect leaves from their own nature strips and gardens. However, when will this government stop dragooning Canberrans into the jobs that they should be doing? The fix my street website is already relied on to highlight areas of Canberra which need repair but now the government will expect Canberrans to sweep the leaves from streets and place them into a green bin rather than admit the current sweeping schedule is lacking.

Leaves in the gutters and across Canberra's streets are often washed down into the stormwater system by rain, where they can cause blockages, flood roads and require

expensive repairs. However, what we have seen this year so far is that, due to limited rain, leaves have sat in street gutters to be broken down into a fine powder. Although this does not risk blockages per se, these fine particles will inevitably end up washing into the creeks and lakes of Canberra.

Once the leaves enter our lakes, they provide a massive influx of nutrients and organic material, which is then a large cause of algal blooms in our lakes. I remember in last year's budget estimates an official from the environment directorate stated that the leaves which enter our lakes from autumn and winter will "be there to haunt us for several summers to come in nutrients". Many of us may remember summers of being able to swim in Lake Burley Griffin but, in no small part due to the nutrients from leaves down the drain, it is becoming increasingly common for blue-green algal blooms to close the lakes.

In 2018, swim guide recounts that 30 per cent to 40 per cent of the time sites in Lake Burley Griffin did not pass the test of water quality. I appreciate the government optimism and dedication to education campaigns but if the same press release telling residents not to sweep leaves into gutters has not reduced leaf litter in our streets, maybe this year the government could do more than just design a glossy pamphlet.

As shadow minister for the environment, I bring this motion because of the environmental concerns a poor street sweeping schedule causes. And as a member for Kurrajong, after whopping rates, street sweeping and cracked footpaths are the issues that find their way to me the most through phone calls, emails and whilst I am doorknocking or at mobile offices—both issues under the watch of the same minister.

There are a number of reasons why my constituents are concerned about the lack of street sweeping of our roads. Leaf litter and acorns on the ground for lengthy periods present a safety concern. When wet, the leaves become slick and difficult to walk on. Also when mounds of leaves collect, they obscure the trip hazards of uneven footpaths, drains, gutters and acorns.

One constituent contacted me after tripping over due to a kerb being hidden by a thick layer of leaves. This particular constituent is in their 20s; so this fall, fortunately, was little more than a bit of an embarrassment. But there would be many residents in the inner south and the inner north for whom a trip on a gutter could lead to serious injuries. Many of Canberra's most leafy streets have limited street lighting and heavily ageing footpaths. To add mounds of leaves into the equation means it does pose a serious trip hazard for many Canberrans to stroll down their streets. Add to this a stroller, a mobility scooter, a skateboard, a bicycle, a wheelchair, a walking frame or those with limited mobility and the safety risks become even greater.

Wearing my other hat of shadow minister for disability, I am well aware that there are enough challenges for our Canberrans with limited mobility when it comes to accessing our public amenities without adding uncleared leaf litter to the mix.

My motion seeks to bring to the attention of the government a number of important issues. The government must audit the street sweeping schedule for all suburbs,

particularly in the inner north and inner south where many deciduous trees are planted and the stormwater system feeds their leaves into Lake Burley Griffin.

I take this opportunity to talk about a streetsweeper that one of my constituents saw by happenstance last week in Downer. According to the street sweeping schedule, Downer streets are to be swept in May. Last week, on 31 May, the streetsweeper was seen in Blacket Street, Downer at 11 am, with much of the suburb still badly needing sweeping—far too much to be done by the end of that day. Yet the most concerning part of this sighting was the fact that the sweeper brushes were circulating and the truck was travelling along the gutters of Blacket Street but no leaves were being sucked up. I assume this is because the truck had already filled to the brim with the substantial leaf litter around that suburb and it would need to return to a depot to empty the carrier.

A more frequent sweeping schedule would allow sweepers to sweep larger areas without having to empty their loads as often. I raise this because it is very emblematic of the problem. The government has adopted an insufficient sweeping schedule such that when the sweepers do come around there is so much leaf litter that it takes many more trips to cover the suburb than if a more frequent schedule were adopted.

The government needs to respond more readily to fix my street requests for street sweeping. Every day that leaves lie unswept in our gutters, the more nutrients make their way into our waterways, leading to more summer days without access to our lakes due to blue-green algal blooms. Not only does this impact our environment and our ability to enjoy natural recreational activities but what is the point of the federal coalition government and the ACT government investing millions and millions of dollars into cleaning up our lakes when, because of a lack of street sweeping, we just dump the leaves and other litter directly into our waterways anyway?

Timely responses to jobs logged on the fix my street website are important because, as the entire point of establishing this website is to hear from Canberrans who have specific details and knowledge of what streets need to be swept, this is only helping the government do its job. But if we are to encourage residents to continue to log these jobs, we need to make sure that the system is one that is able to keep them informed and in the loop—not only that the job has been logged and that it will be actioned but also precisely when and precisely what street is going to be swept.

This can be in any number of ways. Whether it be by more of a detailed schedule specifying which streets will be swept within what week, some ideas which may be letterboxed or even through live tracking, the important fact is that Canberrans deserve to know when their specific street will be swept. This will allow residents to make it easier for the government to do its job, including moving cars from street parking to the driveway to allow easy access for streetsweepers.

There is no doubt that many streets that have the most build-up of fallen leaves are in my electorate of Kurrajong. The irony is also not lost on a number of my constituents who pay some of the highest rates in the territory. In fact a tongue-in-cheek comment was made to me by an inner south resident the other week that it may be more cost

effective and certainly more efficient if the residents in his street kicked in a fraction of what they pay in rates to get their own streetsweeper.

I cannot imagine that there would be any disagreement from the other side of the chamber that my electorate has a high proportion of deciduous trees and I do not think there can be any doubt that we all love having so many trees in our city. But that privilege comes with a responsibility for the government to ensure that fallen leaves are properly dealt with.

What I am calling on the government to do in this motion is really nothing more than what a good local government should be doing for the benefit of all Canberrans who choose this wonderful bush capital city to live in. I commend my motion to the Assembly.

MS FITZHARRIS (Yerrabi—Minister for Health and Wellbeing, Minister for Transport and City Services and Minister for Higher Education, Training and Research) (3.44): I welcome the opportunity to talk about this issue today and thank Ms Lee for bringing forward the motion. TCCS conducts a comprehensive street sweeping program to remove leaves, sediment and debris from gutters along the road network. Streets in Canberra receive at least two sweeps per year, and during May and August TCCS concentrates on the removal of leaf litter from deciduous street trees in the inner north and south suburbs of Canberra, with five to six sweeps each year in those parts of the city. The program delivers livability, safety and sustainability outcomes for the Canberra community and our environment. The program assists to maintain a safe road and functioning drainage network, protects water quality and provides public amenity.

Since self-government was introduced in 1989 the territory's population has grown from 270,000 to over 407,000 residents. The growing street network has placed pressure on the street sweeping program and as a result TCCS recently increased the operations from five street sweeping trucks to six. These operations are supported by six full-time equivalent employees with road workers operating five days per week and covering an 8½ hour shift. TCCS is also increasing capacity by increasing the fleet of sweepers and using local contractors to supplement the current sweeping program. It is also exploring ways to use technology to optimise the street sweeping program to maximise the effect of those resources.

Removing litter from our gutters has multiple benefits, including protection of the environment, avoiding trip hazards and providing preventive maintenance of blockages to our stormwater system. Flooding is a concern across the city, as is the protection of pavements from water, increasing the life of road pavements. TCCS also undertakes street sweeping in city centres, and currently the focus for sweeping is kerbs and gutters in smaller suburban shopping precincts.

TCCS staff also use blowers to remove the debris from footpaths onto the roads so the sweeper can collect the rubbish immediately and so that it does not impact the drainage system. The city centre has a daily program due to the leaf fall and litter around pedestrian areas. City areas include city west, Bunda Street, Garema Place,

City Walk, Civic, territory-owned city carparks and Braddon. Other centres visited once a week include Gungahlin, Dickson, Lyneham, O'Connor, Campbell, Manuka, Kingston, Mawson, Phillip, Tuggeranong and Erindale.

The introduction of green bins is another positive step in reducing leaf litter. Since the start of this program in April 2017, over 2,500 tonnes of organic garden waste has been collected from the pilot area, including the Tuggeranong extension. Green bins are an effective way for residents to remove leaf litter from within their own properties and ensure that leaf litter does not end up down the drain or on the street.

Ms Lee's motion proposes an audit of the current program. Members will be pleased to hear that TCCS has already been undertaking an investigation on ways to optimise the street sweeping program and is already well progressed in doing this review. The street sweeping optimisation project looks at the entire stormwater cycle and the economics of removing and reusing the street sweeping material and gross pollutant trap material that if not captured has the potential to pollute our waterways.

The street sweeping optimisation project has been underway for the past 14 months gathering data in all seasonal conditions. The project focuses on street sweeping optimisation, analysis of gross pollutant trap and street sweeping material, investigation of beneficial reuse opportunities, and cost benefit analysis on the scenarios being developed.

Street sweeping optimisation has looked at the entire road network in the urban catchments of the ACT. The outcome looks at options to optimise the program without significantly increasing costs and estimates the amount of total nitrogen and total phosphorus that could be prevented from entering the ACT's waterways.

The analysis explores the opportunities to maximise the amount of sweepings collected for beneficial reuse and identifies opportunities to reduce greenhouse gas emissions. The study has analysed the physical and chemical composition of materials from gross pollutant traps and street sweeping material at five locations at four seasonal time intervals over the year. The results have provided information to inform research opportunities for beneficial reuse of the material and estimate the volume of material that may be available on an annual basis.

Information from an analysis of lidar technology, a surveying method that uses pulsed laser light, has been used to determine tree canopy, tree species within individual streets and suburbs and leaf density factor. With other inputs this has also determined the potential for and timing of likely leaf fall by location. This evidence is also supported by the pattern of fix my street submissions since 2013.

TCCS already responds to peak leaf fall in the inner north and inner south of Canberra's suburbs by focusing and augmenting street sweeping to remove the bulk leaf litter during late autumn and winter. Additional plant machinery, such as bobcats, are used during these months to assist with bulk removal. This allows for the sweeper trucks to effectively clean the streets. Street sweeping, as I mentioned, is undertaken up to six times during these months in leafier suburbs.

As we know, Canberra consists of a diverse range of environments with many different characteristics along with different street tree species. Sediment from construction, anthropogenic waste such as plastics and cans, and evergreen species that shed all year round can also cause issues in other areas of Canberra and at other times of the year.

A street sweeping program dictated by fix my street submissions alone would not fully optimise the service. It would not provide for improved efficiencies and minimisation of operating costs through travel time management, but an optimised street sweeping program will see greater improvement in the leafier suburbs, in the newer suburbs and in other parts of Canberra. Responding to street sweeping requests is important and all requests are investigated and an appropriate response programmed as soon as possible.

Ms Lee's motion proposes the establishment of a minimum time frame to respond to requests lodged on fix my street. I do not support this proposal as it will cause disruptions to the existing program and to mobilising the new and improved optimised street sweeping program. For example, some flexibility in the program is necessary as there will be times when streetsweepers have to be deployed from their existing program to respond to certain requests, such as traffic accidents. A program based on reactivity will not be sustainable.

A program that involves operators travelling to one street based on an urgent request, then travelling across the city to respond to another request is neither a sustainable program nor a fair and equitable program for the Canberra community. But an optimised street sweeping program which looks at reusing the material currently collected and avoiding downtime and travel time to the waste disposal facility will have multiple benefits for our community. This is a sustainable program.

There are two points I can commit to today: firstly, the government will deliver an improved street sweeping program for the Canberra community; secondly, the government will deliver a stormwater value capture project which will see the optimised street sweeping program collect more street sweeping material and turn this into a reusable material. The program will see material trapped in our waterways via the gross pollutant traps reused, and the program will result in no waste entering landfill.

The work already being undertaken by TCCS to improve and optimise the street sweeping program will ensure a sustainable, efficient and effective program for the community. The government is also developing the better suburbs statement, as I have previously outlined, through a deliberative community panel to consider how Canberra's city services, including street sweeping, can continue to deliver for our community.

These points have been included in an amendment to the motion which was circulated previously. I hope with the measures outlined in my speech that amendment can be supported by the Assembly. I move the amendment circulated in my name:

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

“(1) notes that:

- (a) during Autumn, deciduous street trees across the ACT collectively drop thousands of cubic metres of leaves onto Canberra’s roads, footpaths and gutters;
- (b) the 2018-19 ACT Budget is investing an additional \$19.8 million in city services across our city to help maintain our public realm and meet the needs of our growing population;
- (c) the ACT Government conducts a comprehensive street sweeping program to remove leaves and debris from gutters along our road network;
- (d) every street in Canberra receives at least two sweeps every year, and suburbs in the inner north and south receive five sweeps per year to account for additional leave litter due to the higher number of deciduous street trees;
- (e) Transport Canberra and City Services (TCCS) has recently undertaken a street sweeping optimisation project. The project has looked at ways to optimise the current program utilising the existing fleet and resources to increase street sweeping frequencies in leafier suburbs and areas of Canberra; and
- (f) more information on the street sweeping program can be found on the TCCS website: http://www.tccs.act.gov.au/roads-paths/Road_Infrastructure_and_Maintenance/street-sweeping;

(2) further notes that:

- (a) the ACT government delivers the ACT Healthy Waterways project to improve the quality of water in our lakes and waterways. The project includes the construction of infrastructure like wetlands, ponds and rain gardens as well as research and an important community education campaign which highlights key habits that contribute to poor water quality such as raking or blowing leaves into the drains, over-fertilising and washing cars in driveways; and
- (b) the ACT Government has also delivered green bins to Weston Creek, Kambah and Tuggeranong and is delivering on its election commitment to provide green bins to all suburbs across Canberra; and

(3) calls on the ACT Government to:

- (a) continue to regularly review and monitor the street sweeping program to ensure it is meeting the needs of our growing city; and
- (b) continue to rollout green bins to all suburbs of Canberra by July 2019.”.

MS LE COUTEUR (Murrumbidgee) (3.52): I support Minister Fitzharris’s amendment, and I thank Ms Lee for her motion. Rather than talk about the hows and whys of street sweeping, which Minister Fitzharris has already covered in great detail, I will talk only a little bit about the whys and try to have a slightly different take on it than Ms Lee. Ms Lee talked about the leaf litter of Canberra’s exotic deciduous trees, mainly in the inner city and older suburbs. This runs straight into our waterways and

lakes where the sudden burst of organic nutrients triggers massive algal blooms. These algal blooms, especially the dangerous blue-green algae, for a very long time rendered our waterways unswimmable and had an adverse impact on native ecosystems that relied on those waterways. I thank Ms Lee for noting that. Environmental activists, scientists and the Greens have spent decades trying to convince governments around this country of the need to protect our waterways from more than just litter. We do not just need gross pollutant traps.

Twenty years ago in 1998 environmental activists in Canberra led a campaign to clean up Sullivans Creek. That campaign snowballed into saving our waterways and the lakes all across Canberra. In 2012 the Commissioner for Sustainability and the Environment delivered their Lake Burley Griffin investigation report which detailed a huge number of improvements the ACT government and surrounding jurisdictions could and should take to restore our water ecosystems.

Here in the Legislative Assembly the Greens have advocated for better environmental and municipal practices to improve water quality, culminating in a major item in the 2012 parliamentary agreement to restore the health of Canberra's lakes and catchments, including through the expansion of our suburban wetlands scheme. These essential wetlands continue to be rolled out across our city, and I welcome yesterday's announcement of funding for another wetland in Molonglo Valley. I am very pleased that about 500 metres away from me in Mawson a wetland is being built for the purpose of improving the water quality in the Murrumbidgee River.

The upshot of this is street sweeping is important to preventing algal blooms, but it is part of a much bigger strategy to improve our water ecosystems. Street sweeping is a very visible part of our city services program, much like lawn mowing. I seem to remember a very similar motion from the Canberra Liberals this time last year about that. But street sweeping is only one part of the wider city services program with a limited budget and a lot of competing priorities. That is why I was quite surprised by Ms Lee's motion calling on minimum time frames for responding to fix my street sweeping requests. Generally, I am in favour, of course, of time frames and prompt action in responding to constituent concerns, and there are accountability indicators in the budget on response rates. A binding time frame creates a whole bunch of practical problems.

Leaves largely fall in autumn—most of them in May. The current prioritisation process discussed by Minister Fitzharris aims to sweep every street in Canberra twice a year and five times a year in suburbs with a high proportion of deciduous trees. A binding time frame has two possible outcomes: either it becomes a race to see who can lodge their fix my street request first as soon as autumn hits or TCCS basically drops everything and spends each day in May sweeping streets. That might not even work because I do not know if they will have enough machinery to sweep all the streets in May at the first instance when people put something on fix my street.

Another and I think better approach would be to improve the visibility of the sweeping schedule with an interactive map, like the one the government made for lawn mowing and garbage collection. That having been said, I am not anti-innovation. City services provides important employment opportunities for many Canberrans, but

the future is coming and the oft-touted trumpet of automation is getting louder and louder and closer and closer. I have read a lot about smart cities and future cities initiatives popping up around the world. It is only a matter of time before the ACT, as the country's most advanced and progressive jurisdiction, starts looking seriously at the future of municipal services, particularly maintenance of said services.

A Google search told me Leeds University is developing a fleet of robotic repair workers to identify and patch minor infrastructure problems before they become disruptive, from flying drones which will fix streetlights, to machines that roll along and patch potholes and robots that live in our sewers and stormwater infrastructure to patch cracks and grind up blockages. I imagine a streetsweeper would be like one of those indoor robot vacuum cleaners. I must say, I do not have one of those; it is not one of my big ambitions. But people tell me they work and I can envisage something a little bit larger than that. Leeds researchers are, pretty creepily, calling their little robots white blood cells for a city.

In Sweden, Volvo is developing a public bin system that combines smart bin technology sorting rubbish at point of disposal with robots that track the fullness of these bins, collect the bins and then deliver the waste to the various automated recycling centres. These systems should not be seen as a way of cutting jobs or just dismissed as the future that will never happen. Clearly, TCCS and every jurisdiction find the burden of maintenance for city services overwhelming.

We spend a lot of time in the Assembly talking about city services and maintenance, and the recurring theme is that everybody would like more. If there are ways to alleviate some of the hardest parts of the jobs, our valued public servants could have opportunities to be redeployed to much more enjoyable or complex tasks or maybe get to work four days a week without losing pay. The future might be bright for the robot streetsweepers of the ACT.

MS LAWDER (Brindabella) (4.00): I thank Ms Lee for bringing this motion to the Assembly today. It is quite a simple and straightforward motion about ensuring that our city streets are looked after and, as a consequence, that our waterways are looked after. Street sweeping is an effective and simple way of ensuring that our community looks its best. Street sweeping is vital not only to ensuring that our waterways remain clean; it also helps our local Canberrans feel proud of their community. When you feel proud of where you live, you do more yourself to keep your community looking good.

I think it is a bit of a confusing message that we encourage people to report issues but then do not do something about them. This is the case when we ask them to report street sweeping issues via fix my street. They can see that online. There are a whole range of issues that they can report. However, they are not included in the information you can see about your suburb. That does not make much sense to me either. All that information is collected there but it is not available to the public to see.

To me, it is a little like the accountability indicators that have been removed in this year's budget. When you are getting results that are not very favourable, you make sure that the public does not see those results. It is that same pattern. I receive quite a

few complaints from constituents about street sweeping. It seems to come as a surprise to the government every autumn that the leaves are going to fall off the trees and settle on the ground, in the gutters, on the street and, indeed, on the footpaths.

I think the Attorney-General mentioned the courts project earlier. He said that because of winter there was a delay. Again, that is perhaps no surprise. We all probably know that winter is coming—

Mr Parton: Middle of the year.

MS LAWDER: Indeed! In fact, it is already here. It has been for the past few days. That should not be a surprise to any of us. Autumn comes and winter comes. In fact, the Americans call autumn “fall” for that very reason—because the leaves are going to fall to the ground.

Mr Parton: They’re on to it.

MS LAWDER: They do appear to be on to it. What surprises me is that every year at around this time our inboxes get clogged with emails from people complaining about the street sweeping. In some areas, as Ms Lee has already commented, it is vastly exacerbated because of the types of trees that are planted in those suburbs. It is also worth noting that those particular suburbs, mostly in Kurrajong, where many of the deciduous trees were planted before a different regime came in and we started planting different types of trees, would be the most visited by tourists and visitors to our city.

They see the mess that is created in our streets by the leaves that fall to the ground and then are left there. It does not sound like a lot to ask for additional street sweeping. But it can have a considerable impact and it can make a considerable difference to people’s pride in their communities, their willingness to contribute their own effort to keeping everything looking good, and the way that we view our communities and that other people visiting us view us as well.

Just last week I was down at Lake Tuggeranong, as I often am. There is a pedestrian crossing that goes from the South.Point main shopping centre—it is near the gazebo area, the town square area, the laneway area—through to the lake. Just last night at Tuggeranong Community Council people from the directorate were talking about potential works in that particular area. Most residents are enormously appreciative of, and looking forward to, those changes.

But the point was raised about deciduous trees, as it has been every time there is discussion about the trees down Anketell Street and down the laneway precinct. When I was there just last week there were rafts of leaves lying around against the edges of buildings and in the gutters because of the deciduous trees there right on the edge of the lake. Where are those leaves going to end up? They will blow either directly into the lake, into the water, or be washed down through the stormwater system, also into the lake.

As I hope many of you are aware, Lake Tuggeranong has one of the most significant problems with blue green algae of all of our lakes in the ACT. So we all need to do that we can. But in those town square areas, or whatever you want to call them, it is not the residents who are going to go out and sweep it up. It is a local council, or ACT government, responsibility to ensure those areas are swept clean. I have talked about the leaves. Sadly, there are also other things that are left there—litter and all sorts of other things as well. That is why we pay our rates; it is to see these things done.

Mr Parton: Increasing rates.

MS LAWDER: Increasingly, we pay our rates in increasing amounts. This government spends a lot of money encouraging constituents by advertising not to put things down the drain. That is a good thing. It is a very positive thing. But people are not necessarily putting leaves down the drain. We need to take action on that as a government to ensure that the leaves are not going down the drain.

About two weeks ago the minister went on Tim Shaw's 2CC breakfast show. He talked about the spend in the forthcoming budget. As we all know, the good news was all announced prior to the budget yesterday. What we got in yesterday's budget was mostly the bad news about the increases in fees and charges. But, when asked by Tim Shaw on the radio about TCCS using leaf blowers on windy days, the minister laughed it off. She thought it was a bit funny. She said, "They have a job to do and they have to work with whatever challenges they face."

That is true, but someone in my family is a gardener. They do a lot of leaf blowing as well. They carry around a backpack driven leaf blower because they move around to different sites. It is not an electric plug-in thing. They know that it is next to useless blowing leaves on a windy day. They blow back in your face. In fact, it is almost pointless blowing leaves when someone is mowing on the ride-on mower next to you, because that creates a little breeze of its own.

It is a bit of a wasted effort. It is not a matter of ticking off that the leaves at Tuggeranong town square have been blown today. If you go back an hour later, all those leaves actually will still be there because the wind has blown them back. It is not a case of working no matter what. I thought the minister displayed a bit of a dismissive attitude to the obvious concerns about whether this portfolio area could be working a bit better.

There does not seem to be flexibility allowed in the minister's directorate. That comes down to poor planning and poor direction from this minister. It is clear that if problems like this are a joke to the minister, she is out of touch with what Canberrans really want. Staff in Transport Canberra and City Services should not be made to blow leaves on a windy day. It is pointless. It is a tick-the-box issue. It is not actually achieving the outcomes that we expect from the government. It is a bit like something in *Fawlty Towers*.

Nearly five years ago I made my inaugural speech here in this chamber. In that speech I spoke about the need to get the basics right. I talked about roads, rates, rubbish and

parking—the three Rs and a P; not that kind of “P”. Unfortunately, in the past five years since I have been here, it has become clear that this government does not care about roads, rates, rubbish and parking.

We see it over and over again. There is a lack of care or concern about local services. There is a lack of investment in local services. We have been starving this area, gradually reducing the funding so that we can say in the budget that we are spending more—but only by comparison with last year. It is not the case if you look at it over a number of years.

I am glad to stand here to support Ms Lee’s motion. In fact, two years ago I did my own little experiment. I looked at my street sweeping schedule for the suburb I live in. Every day I wrote the date in chalk on the gutter and took a photo of it. My street was not swept during that month or else the chalk on the gutter would have gone.

I wrote to the minister about it, who said that they were running a bit behind schedule. But why not update the schedule rather than have a fixed schedule that looks like it has not been updated for years? We need to get back to the basics. That is why I applaud Ms Lee on her motion today about providing better local services. I commend her motion to the Assembly.

MS LEE (Kurrajong) (4.10): I thank all members for their contributions to my motion. I think one of the things we can all agree on, on all sides of the chamber, is that we are all very proud of our bush capital city, and no doubt we all love having trees in our streets and in the city. It is disappointing once again not to have the support of the minister for my motion. It is also disappointing, but not at all surprising, not to have Ms Le Couteur’s support for my motion. Given that it is clear that the minister is refusing to listen to my voice as I bring forward the concerns of my constituents, perhaps she may be moved by the direct quotes that I will bring to her. This is from an Ainslie resident:

I was not aware there was a schedule for the sweepers and would love to know if this is indeed a ‘thing’ paying higher rates in the inner north suburbs with yet very little services.

From a Turner resident:

Lots of uncollected leaves often end up on our sloped entrance to underground unit parking. Can often cause difficulties for cars getting up the gradient. Unit body corporate has to collect the leaves themselves.

From a Narrabundah resident:

Needs more regular sweeping.

From a Hackett resident:

They used to sweep the street more regularly. They block gutters when it rains ... guess where they end up. Yep, blocking the drains.

From a Griffith resident:

Extremely disenchanting to find that not only is the advertised sweeping program limited, but it also is not followed. Most areas of the Inner South have not seen a street sweeper this year yet the program suggests the entire area should have been swept in May. There are safety issues with temporary road flooding and build-up of leaves on foot paths, the Inner South is home to many older Canberrans and these conditions are not ideal. You would think that suburbs with deciduous street trees might get more street sweeping and also might one day get a green bin.

From a Forrest resident:

There are leaves everywhere. Some mornings I cannot drive my car out of the driveway because it is so clogged up.

From an O'Connor resident:

I raise the absence of street sweeping in areas like O'Connor where heavy leaf litter from street trees is choking gutters and drains. I suggest a drive down Quandong Street to see the problem. It is beyond the capacity of homeowners to manage, even with the best will in the world. It is no wonder drains are blocked and water quality suffers. There needs to be regular street sweeping in situations like this. It is no good coming once a year in September when the leaves have turned into a soggy mess. I urge you and the Liberals to pursue the government over the completely inadequate services in this regard.

Of course, this does not even include the numerous residents who have approached me at mobile offices, doorknocking or even during random run-ins at the local shops. They have told me about their personal experiences of having tripped, or almost tripped, due to the heavy leaf litter, particularly with uneven and cracked footpaths that remain in disrepair, despite requests through the fix my street website.

There were a number of residents who informed me that they end up sweeping up the leaves themselves. Some of them found good uses for them, either as mulch or for kids to play with, but others were left frustrated. These are some of the comments that were made to me via social media:

Street sweepers do very little good at removing leaves in gutters or over drain covers. This is in summer! In Autumn we have not even seen a street sweeper around our estate.

One commenter agreed:

Yes, they are few and far between.

Another noted:

The leaves just clutter up the storm drains. Then when we do get a downpour, the streets flood. And once the leaves have decomposed, it is not as bad. Fact is it should not be happening in the first place.

And another:

Have not seen a street cleaner in West Belconnen for years. In Holt tree saplings are growing out of the drains in some parts. Suburbs totally neglected.

Another:

Do not want to state the obvious but when you walk through Braddon and the wide footpath is covered in damp leaves, it is slippery.

In terms of the amendment that Minister Fitzharris moved, which was emailed to me earlier today, it is what she always does. It is to hijack private members' day. Madam Speaker, we have one day—one day!—when we can bring to the Assembly matters of importance to our constituents, and she takes this opportunity once again to amend the entire motion, hijack the entire motion, to make it all about her.

The motion calls for a very sensible approach, a common-sense approach, to look at street sweeping, something that all the feedback I have had from my constituents shows clearly needs to be improved. I am confused. The minister's speech, on the one hand, says, "There is nothing wrong. We are doing a great job." On the other hand, she says, "We are improving it."

I hope that the minister will do the right thing and tell my constituents who have come to me with this issue that she does not care about the millions of taxpayer dollars spent on cleaning up the waterways because she cannot be bothered, or does not care, to make sure that street sweeping is adequate.

I hope she will do the right thing and tell them that she does not care that they have tripped or slipped because footpaths have been covered up by a pile of leaf litter that is so bad that they cannot see the uneven footpaths and the cracked footpaths. For that matter, I hope that she will also apologise to them for not fixing the footpaths that they are tripping on in the first place.

In terms of Ms Le Couteur, I do not even know how to respond. You said that you wanted to keep it interesting. I think you certainly did that: from wetlands to robotic maintenance workers and the invention of a street Roomba—I think maybe you should patent that—even to talking about local jobs. It certainly made it interesting. But, of course, once again the Greens are in cahoots with this government.

The Canberra Liberals will not be supporting this self-serving amended motion that hijacks the spirit and intent of my motion. I have some parting words for the minister, through you, Madam Speaker: you have the run of this place. Let private members' business at least be that and make sure you just respond to the issues that we bring to the Assembly. After all, she is the minister for city services for the entire territory, not just her party.

Question put:

That the amendment be agreed to.

The Assembly voted—

Ayes 12

Noes 9

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

Amendment agreed to.

Original question, as amended, resolved in the affirmative.

Education—government investment

MR STEEL (Murrumbidgee) (4.21): I move:

That this Assembly:

- (1) notes the ACT Government’s history of investment to improve access to a quality education for all Canberrans, including:
 - (a) new public schools and investment to expand existing public schools;
 - (b) new infrastructure at our existing schools;
 - (c) more psychologists and secular support for student wellbeing and Safe and Inclusive Schools;
 - (d) providing support and resources for effective teaching and teacher development;
 - (e) preparing children with the skills of the future in science, technology, engineering, and mathematics;
 - (f) improving access to quality early childhood education; and
 - (g) support for greater parental engagement with local school communities;
- (2) further notes new education measures announced by the ACT Government in the 2018-19 ACT Budget; and
- (3) calls on the ACT Government to continue to deliver investment in our nation-leading education system, to grow Canberra’s future prosperity.

I seek leave to move the amendment circulated in my name.

Leave granted.

MR STEEL: I move:

Omit paragraph (2), substitute:

“(2) further notes new education measures announced by the ACT Government in the 2018-19 ACT Budget, including:

- (a) \$6.7 million for continued work on an early childhood strategy;
- (b) \$5.2 million to establish a future skills academy;
- (c) \$9.2 million for the Future of Education Strategy;
- (d) \$23.2 million for students with a disability and complex health needs;
- (e) \$7.3 million for 15 additional school psychologists;
- (f) \$600 000 to support parental engagement;
- (g) \$31 million to provide more resources for student growth;
- (h) \$47 million for a new government primary school in the Molonglo Valley, and planning for a 7-10 campus;
- (i) \$18 million to replace roofs at six government schools;
- (j) \$19.8 million to continue to support growth in enrolments across Gungahlin;
- (k) \$18.8 million to modernise Campbell Primary School; and
- (l) \$750 000 to undertake early planning and design for modernisation of Narrabundah College;”.

I want to outline our government’s continued commitment to the importance of education to growing our city’s future prosperity, to provide every child with access to quality learning opportunities. As members know, I previously worked as an advocate for education, with a focus on early childhood, where children’s education begins, advocating to ensure that governments across the country made the best possible return on their investment by providing access to affordable quality education for all children regardless of their background.

I am pleased to be part of an ACT Labor government that is growing access to quality education for all Canberrans. More than any other jurisdiction in Australia, ACT Labor and our government value the importance of delivering better quality education services in order to maintain our nation-leading education system.

Labor values the importance of investing in new public schools and new infrastructure for our existing schools, providing support for all students—secular support—and ensuring we have safe and inclusive schools for all. Our Labor government values our teachers by providing support, resources and development opportunities for those in our schools doing some of the most important work in our community: teaching our future generations. We value a focus on skills that are needed for the future, to prepare children for the jobs of the future and with a focus on science, technology, engineering and mathematics, and the role of quality early childhood education in supporting future prosperity, to ensure that every child attending early childhood education and care receives a quality education. Labor also values our local school communities as well. Parents care about their child’s school, and building strong local school communities is a priority for our government.

This year’s budget is about growing services for our growing city. It is also about growing investment in education. Our city is growing by 7,000 people per year and

we are investing in the services and infrastructure that people need, to ensure that Canberra remains one of the most livable cities in the world.

There is a significant amount of investment in education in the 2018-19 budget, reflecting our government's priority of education and the future of our city. As revealed in the budget yesterday and as reflected in my amendment to the motion, the ACT government is providing more schools and better schools for our growing city. \$1.3 billion will be invested in education, 23 per cent of our budget expenditure.

This builds on a history of investment from our Labor government over our whole period of government since 2001. We have increased overall funding to our public education system from \$548.5 million in 2013-14, six years ago, to \$822.8 million in 2018-19, increasing staffing from 4,946 in 2013 to 5,411 in 2017, an increase of 465 teachers, teacher assistants and other staff.

Our investment in public education has seen more and more Canberrans decide to send their children to our public schools. Public school enrolments have increased from 40,879 students in 2013 to 47,945 in 2018, an increase in proportion of school enrollees in public education from 59.4 per cent to 62.1 per cent of all enrolments. And, as more people choose to use our public education system, we are making sure that our investments are supporting growth as well as growing investment in our existing public school students.

There is no part of this city that is growing quite like Molonglo, in my electorate of Murrumbidgee. This area, which did not exist as a suburb just a few short years ago, will have a population just over two-thirds of the size of Weston Creek's by the end of the forward estimates. And that is before building proposed suburbs like Whitlam and Molonglo.

Recognising this, our government is investing \$47 million to build a new preschool to grade 6 primary school in Denman Prospect, open to students in 2021—a site that will have views of the whole Molonglo Valley. The new school will initially be able to provide for up to 600 school students and 44 full-time equivalent preschool students, with space for future growth. And this includes funding in the budget for early planning for a future high school 7 to 10 campus to be built as the Molonglo Valley's population continues to grow—realising, of course, ACT Labor's commitment to deliver this by 2022. I am also pleased that our government is planning to release land for another public school in Whitlam by 2021 and to release land for the Molonglo Valley's first ever non-government school in Wright by 2022. Our actions taken together will result in a fourfold increase in the number of schools in the Molonglo Valley.

Our investment in new infrastructure is \$80.6 million over the next four years and, if you include all the continuing works, new works and those contained in the infrastructure fund, we are investing some \$284.8 million in the Education Directorate.

In addition to building new schools, our government is investing to improve our existing schools and education facilities, including \$14.6 million in the 2018-19 year for the better infrastructure fund to upgrade and improve schools. In previous years

this fund has provided substantial improvements to schools in Murrumbidgee, like modernised heating and cooling systems at Melrose High School; funding upgrades to the front office and school administration area at Malkara school; and refurbished learning and teaching areas at the Woden School, among others. I look forward to seeing other schools in my electorate and across the ACT getting funding under this infrastructure fund in the budget.

In addition, our government will also be funding \$17.96 million for the roof replacement program. And just the other week I was really pleased to visit Mount Stromlo High School in Weston Creek, Waramanga, to view their recent roof upgrades, which are making a real difference to the temperature and comfort of learning environments in that school. There has been some very interesting qualitative and quantitative data before and after the improvements, and it is proving to make a real difference already.

Our infrastructure investment demonstrates our values as a government, and in every budget we are continuing our commitment to deliver more than the Liberals committed at the last election in school infrastructure.

We are also continuing to provide the support that students need to support their wellbeing in our schools. Last year's budget saw \$2.36 million for five additional school psychologists, and just yesterday we announced an additional \$7.3 million to meet our commitment of 20 additional school psychologists during this term of government. This will make support for children's wellbeing more accessible throughout our schooling system—expert secular student support, not the Liberals' plan for a chaplain at every school gate.

To make our schools more inclusive, our government will also provide additional funding to support students with a disability and complex additional needs. This will make our learning environments fairer and give all children the same learning opportunities and support to learn.

As we are looking after students, we are also looking after our teachers. When teachers get the scaffolding or supports that they need to do their job, teaching is much more effective. Investing in support and resources for teachers to build their expertise and to participate in professional learning provides better outcomes for students. That is why in the budget there will be an investment of \$9.2 million provided over four years to improve teacher capability in literacy and numeracy as well as providing mentorship opportunities. There will also be growth in the amount of on the ground support provided at schools, with the investment of 66 additional learning professionals and support staff for our schools.

We need to continue to look towards the future in improving our education system. We are entering the new machine age, and I am pleased that our government is taking the steps to prepare students with the skills of the future. According to the Deloitte millennial survey 2017, 40 per cent of young people thought automation posed a threat to their jobs and 44 per cent believed that there would be less demand for their skills. More than 50 per cent said that they would have to retrain in order to gain new skills. That is why it is so pleasing to see in this budget that we are investing in

equipping students with skills in science, technology, engineering and mathematics disciplines now.

In the budget \$5.76 million will be invested in a future skills academy in Chisholm, which will deepen education in STEM subjects and spark children's interests in these fields. This is going to be one of two STEM hubs in the ACT. Teachers will also be able to learn skills and access accredited training in the STEM fields at this academy, which will provide benefits across the whole ACT education system.

We are building strong local school communities as well, and that is a priority for our government because we value the role that parents play in children's education. When parents value education, we know that that has a huge impact on children's educational outcomes. We will fund \$600,000 for a dedicated parental engagement officer to help schools and parents to work together to foster positive outcomes for students. Parents care about their child's school, and building strong local communities is a priority for us.

Along with funding for school education, I am particularly pleased to see additional funding for education in the early years: \$6.7 million over four years will go towards a comprehensive early childhood strategy which is under development. The strategy will focus on the promotion of equity in the early childhood education and care sector, and it is also important to note that this strategy will recognise the importance of quality in early childhood education for lifelong learning outcomes. We know that the core benefit from the participation in early childhood education and care is derived from the quality of the education provided. That is what all the research says—trained early childhood professionals interacting with children in quality learning environments, that is what makes a real difference.

At a time when the federal Liberal government is stepping away from quality in education, particularly early childhood education, in the federal budget, our Labor government remains committed to ensuring that quality is at the centre of learning in early childhood, and we are committed to the national quality framework that sets those quality standards and the learning outcomes for all children through our early years learning framework.

As the amendment to my motion and the budget demonstrate, our government is growing education and education infrastructure to ensure our education system keeps on getting even better, reflecting our Labor government's values and priorities. Our ACT Labor government will continue to provide more schools and better schools, with supported teachers and stronger school communities, to deliver an education system that grows Canberra's future prosperity.

Amendment agreed to.

MS LEE (Kurrajong) (4.34): I thank Mr Steel for bringing on this motion for debate, because education is extremely important and should be a top priority for any government and any community. While Mr Steel might have thought a motion on education drafted and submitted before the budget a good idea, he may have cause to

reflect when the devil in the detail is examined. I note that his amendment cherrypicks some numbers while failing to mention some gaps.

Let me say at the outset that education is, and must be, at the forefront of ACT policy settings, and it should not be predicated just on raw dollar costings. This year's education budget of \$1.229 billion is an increase of over \$42 million on last year. As the keepers of ACT taxpayer funds, the government has an obligation to ensure that taxpayers and Canberra families receive the very best value for their investment.

If you read the drip-fed releases distributed in recent weeks by the education minister, you may well have come to the same conclusions as Mr Steel did: that this budget will deliver more schools, more school psychologists, more support for teachers and more support for parents. You would be as disappointed as many Canberra families are, and will be, to learn that it is all on the never-never and into the future.

Let me take school psychologists as an example. The background to this appropriation had its genesis in 2015, when a teacher in a government school was so under-supported and so ill-equipped to utilise any other resource that she was forced to resort to building a cage-like structure to protect a student, other students and herself from physical injury. The result was the Shaddock inquiry and report on students with challenging needs and complex behaviours. A key recommendation was the appointment of 20 psychologists to be placed in schools to assist with the ever-present and growing demands on teachers—many, if not all, of whom were under-trained and under-supported to manage an increasingly diverse range of complex student behaviours. The then education minister immediately agreed to support all 50 of the recommendations.

Slow forward three years, and the first five school psychologists have at least been appointed this calendar year. The Labor Party election commitment costed out the promise at \$4 million, with \$1.3 million committed in 2018-19 and all 20 not later than 30 June 2020. But we saw a mere \$327,000 in last year's budget and a mere \$726,000 in this year's budget. It seems that the high need which was so quickly agreed to by the then education minister has slipped into the category of "whenever we get to it".

By the time in the never-never, when—or if—this government finally gets to delivering the 20 school psychologists, increases in students and schools across the territory will mean that all ACT students, schools and teachers will still be under-supported. Nowhere in this budget can I find any allocation for the additional specialist training that is also required. I hope that the minister will be able to shed some light in the upcoming estimates hearings.

The budget talks about more resources for student growth and has allocated a total of \$31 million over the next four years to deliver the equivalent of 66 full-time learning professionals and support staff to ensure that the needs of Canberra's growing school population are met. But, given that this year is enterprise agreement year for our hardworking government school teachers, how much of that \$7 million will go to pay increases? How many of the additional 66 learning professionals will be employed

this year? And who are the learning professionals that the government will employ—teachers, teacher aides, learning support workers, social workers, people in teaching admin or people in the myriad of other roles that are associated with educating our children? As I said before, the devil is always in the detail. While the minister is quick to spruik this boost, she has conveniently left out the detail.

Mr Steel's motion talks of the history of investment in schools, and it is indeed a history. I am not sure whether I should be sad or glad that for the first time in five years Belconnen High School does not rate a specific line mention as a work in progress. Its latest completion date, February 2019, as listed in the 2017-18 budget, will be no doubt met with great anticipation for the long-suffering students, and parents and families, many of whom have completed their education without ever experiencing the upgrade that was promised time and time again.

Mr Steel's motion talks about investment in new government schools, but again it is in the never-never. The new Molonglo primary school will not be ready till well after the next election, on the most optimistic of estimates. And where is the detail about new investment in our older schools?

Last year there was allocation under the better schools for our kids public school infrastructure upgrades program, with nearly \$6 million last year and a similar amount in the forthcoming financial year. Where is that money this year? Or is this part of the \$31 million the budget suggests is "re-profiled"? I am no economist, nor are the majority of Canberrans, but in layman's terms I think that is making new announcements using previously promised moneys.

On comparing the budget papers for education from last year to this year, there is, cleverly, little continuity in program delivery but consistently slick headings on glossy paper. Last year every budget allocation was branded "better schools". This year it is branded "more schools, better schools". Repeating headlines and a bunch of numbers does not necessarily deliver the results.

Since taking on the education portfolio, I have been constantly amazed at the haphazard approach to so much in the portfolio. We see independent assessments from agencies such as the Auditor-General's that show that our students are tracking okay but going backwards. When the minister is questioned about this, she attacks the testing and suggests that NAPLAN and newspapers are to blame.

The directorate's own census data has shown that there are considerable inconsistencies in school enrolments across Canberra, but when the minister is asked what she would do about it she remains in denial. She was quoted in a recent interview as saying:

... their local school should be incentive enough because every one of our schools is great.

In other words: "Nothing to see here."

If that is the case, why has the directorate, presumably under the leadership of this minister, started reducing priority enrolment areas and forcing Canberra region New South Wales students to schools that have low enrolments, neither of which are long-term solutions? When a school that is designed to cater for over 300 students has an enrolment of only 120, you have a problem. When a school that is designed to cater for 1,000 has an enrolment of 1,120, you also have a problem.

I see very little in the budget to address these structural enrolment issues. Promising to build more capacity now has too long a lag time. Promising to build more capacity now—when the government has been in power for 17 years and has control over new dwellings and major infrastructure projects driving population into certain parts of Canberra, when the government has had no choice but to house students in demountables and use halls, libraries and previously used quiet areas as classrooms—is not just not good enough.

The same haphazard approach appears with the decision to provide laptops to students. We have had much fanfare about laptops in schools, but every time I and my colleague the former shadow minister for education, Mr Wall, have asked about the educational measurement, projection or goal for such an outlay, all we get is the standard response about equity. Educational equity is not whether someone has a specific piece of equipment; it is whether they have the same access to the best education that the ACT has to offer.

Mr Steel's motion refers to improving access to quality early childhood education. I know that he is personally passionate about this issue. The government has allocated \$6 million over four years to "develop a strategy". Actual places might be more relevant. The government's attitude to early childhood education is made very clear in its accountability indicators. It has a target of 4,650 enrolments, which is the same as last year and lower than the actuals. A footnote says:

The indicator data ... should be considered a projection as preschool is not compulsory and is subject to parental choice.

Yes, it is subject to parental choice, but too often that choice is Buckley's and none.

For too many parents, especially in some of our newer suburbs, there are no places in preschool, and the directorate response is to placate parents with the reminder that it is not a compulsory year. This was confirmed to me in an answer to a representation I made to the minister on behalf of a parent who had been sent away from her local preschool because there were no spaces. She responded: "Enrolment in preschool is not compulsory and, as such, if the preschool a student wishes to attend has reached capacity, neighbouring schools are able to offer placements for that year." In other words, "It is not our problem."

If this government truly believes in the value of quality early childhood education, and I know that Mr Steel is passionate about this, it has an odd way of showing it. So much for all their hype and rhetoric about how important it is! Prior to the budget, the minister announced that the government would be investing \$9.2 million over four

years to make an immediate start on providing the best possible teaching in every classroom. Where is the detail and how will this \$2.3 million a year be spread amongst our 3,600 teachers in 87 government schools?

On 24 May, the minister said in a media statement:

With an additional 1,340 students set to join over 47,000 public school students, the Government will invest \$54.3 million to ensure local public schools keep getting better as Canberra grows.

I am curious to know how that figure was arrived at, given that the minister has previously told me, through questions on notice, that no data is public and that there are no reports published on enrolment projections. That aside, do we even know where these students are likely to enrol and whether the schools they will attend have the capacity to take them? Clearly this government has no idea how to plan for the future in education, and this minister has no idea how to plan for the future, so no wonder she has no idea how to respond to questions about what the government is doing to address capacity issues in our schools.

Mr Steel refers to support for greater parental engagement, but I am quite sure that the ACT Council of Parents and Citizens Associations, whose budget submission had sought funding, will be hugely disappointed with the one parental engagement officer to work with schools and parent groups to “support parents to help their kids learn”. We have to take on faith that this will be delivered, as it is to be funded from “within existing sources”. This would be great comfort to the council—I think not.

Let us not even get started on the decline of teacher librarians in our government schools, an issue that I know my former colleague and previous shadow education minister, the late Steve Doszpot, was very passionate about. In answers to questions on notice, the minister confirmed that currently only four out of the 10 government schools have a teacher librarian, robbing our children of valuable research skills to lay the foundation for lifelong learning.

Mr Steel’s motion is yet another attempt by the Labor bench to break their arms patting themselves on the back for a job well done. While they are busy doing that, the Canberra Liberals will continue to advocate for the future of our leaders of tomorrow. The focus of education policy must be on preparing our children for the future, where teachers are respected and supported; where parents are partners in their children’s education and have a choice of the very best schools in the country; where students are in a safe, supported and inspiring community to learn and learn how to learn; and where our community will be proud of the world that our children will be custodians of long after we are gone.

Madam Deputy Speaker, education is a big-ticket item in the ACT budget. It sits third, behind health and the public service, and has a budget of more than \$1 billion. But, as opposition leader Alistair Coe said this morning, “This government is good at spending money but it is not good at getting value for money.” I strongly support strong investment in our schools, in our students and in the future. But spending more

money does not automatically deliver better outcomes. I am not convinced that this government knows the difference.

MRS KIKKERT (Ginninderra) (4.47): I thank Mr Steel for bringing this motion before the Assembly today. I am confident that each of us in this chamber understands the importance of access to a quality education and the role that such access plays in ensuring the growth and development of our children and young people. Mr Steel's motion calls upon the ACT government to continue to invest in our education system. In the spirit of hopefulness, I suggest some areas where we could see future improvements.

As I have done on many previous occasions, I remind this Assembly of the cultural and linguistic diversity that characterises the ACT's residents. According to the latest census figures, 32 per cent of the ACT's residents were born overseas, with another 15 per cent having at least one parent who was born overseas. A non-English language is spoken in nearly 24 per cent of Canberra's households. These figures are naturally reflected in the diversity that we find in our schools and highlight the great need we have to instil cultural sensitivity in our young people and increase the cultural competence of our educators. Without this sensitivity and competence the best schools still throw up barriers that limit the educational access available to students from culturally and linguistically diverse households.

To illustrate, I wish to relate to one example recently shared with me by a Canberra parent. This mother explained to me that in her family's culture children are taught to respect anyone who is older than they are. This includes parents, principal, teachers and so forth. One of the ways that this respect for elders is shown is to never speak whilst standing up, as doing so is considered to be rude. Such children, upon entering the principal's office, will immediately sit down so that they are prepared to speak. Imagine the confusion when they are told by a principal that sitting down before being invited to do so is rude. As this mother explained to me, kids from culturally diverse backgrounds often find themselves struggling to live in two worlds—speaking two different languages and having to learn to navigate two different sets of expectations so often resulting in misunderstandings.

Genuine cultural competence in our schools could alleviate much of the anxiety and tension experienced by these young people. Educators who truly understand the reality of cultural differences are better prepared to expect behaviours and the motivations behind those behaviours to vary from student to student. It seems like a simple thing, but assuming a student is acting in a way that makes sense to her or him is a good place to start. There are, for example, many different ways for a student to show respect to a teacher, and a trained teacher will recognise and respect those differences.

But cultural sensitivity in our schools goes far beyond avoiding such misunderstandings. In fact, research clearly shows that having a strong cultural identity is a necessary prerequisite to making social connections with others and developing a sense of belonging. In turn, belonging builds children's self-esteem and resilience and reduces the likelihood that they will experience depression and anxiety. In other words, our kids need to feel secure in their cultural identities before they feel safe enough to fully engage in the learning process.

As I have sought input from Canberra parents and those who work closely with multicultural communities a number of recommendations have been repeated. I wish to share a few of the most common and important ones. First, an awareness of cultural diversity needs to be explicitly taught. Kids who know that not everyone dresses alike, eats the same foods, speaks the same language at home or believes the same things are better prepared to handle differences when they encounter them. In the absence of such training, young people often resort to embarrassing questions or, worse, may make fun of those who are different.

A retired educator familiar with both independent and public schools has expressed his disappointment to me that the former seem to do a much better job of actively teaching cultural sensitivity than the latter. Too often discussions around cultural diversity seem not to go much past language and appearance to actual cultural practices.

Another area of concern is language learning. Whilst non-English languages are taught in our schools, the number of available languages is still very small, as is the proportion of students studying a non-English language. When one considers the number and diversity of languages spoken around us and the presence of numerous diplomatic missions here in the national capital, it seems we could so easily be doing better.

As has been repeatedly pointed out, the benefits of second language study go far beyond picking up the ability to communicate. Simply studying another language opens people's eyes to ways of doing things that are different to their own, boosting cultural sensitivity and at the same time increasing a person's comfort level when dealing with unfamiliar situations and more generally stimulating a tolerance of ambiguity.

In addition to over 100 diplomatic missions, our city is filled with mosques, churches, temples and other places of worship. What an opportunity. Instead of merely talking about different cultures or different faiths, our kids can be shown such places. I am aware of a Canberra school that is actively doing this, and both students and teachers have reported that it has been helpful in increasing both understanding and tolerance.

Focus also needs to reach beyond students to their families. The more involved in a school that a family is, the less likely it is that a student will feel like she or he has to operate in two disconnected worlds. A number of migrant and refugee families in Canberra, however, have shared their frustrations that they do not understand how the education system works, that they cannot access information in a language they can understand and that they are not provided with interpreters and so forth. As a city that prides itself on being a refugee welcome zone, Canberra's education system can certainly do better to make migrants and refugees genuinely feel welcomed and integrated into their children's educational lives.

As a final point I wish to address a group of culturally and linguistically diverse students that do not have the benefit of enjoying the support of their own families during their studies here. These would be overseas students. Those who volunteer to

help support some of these kids have assured me that the Education Directorate needs to do better in this area. In particular, communication between parents and guardians needs to be improved. Students need to have clearer explanations regarding how to contact and interact with community organisations. Too many of our overseas students who pay fees to attend our schools feel abandoned by the government once they arrive. We can certainly do better.

In conclusion, I wish to voice my full support for the educational enterprise in general and for the good educators who have helped us parents and carers by teaching and training our children at Canberra's schools. At the same time, I do not wish for us to stop striving for excellence. I know from personal experience what it is like to be the non-English-speaking migrant school girl. In supporting Mr Steel's motion, I call upon the government to do more to encourage the development of robust cultural competence and cultural sensitivity in all our schools, for the benefit of all children and young people.

MR RATTENBURY (Kurrajong) (4.56): I thank Mr Steel for bringing this motion to the Assembly today. I am pleased to see the additional investment in education that was announced in the budget this week. The benefits of investing in education are clear. It provides an important foundation for a child's path into adulthood. Investing in education is an investment in our collective futures. High quality, free and equitable education is fundamental to not only Canberra's prosperity but also the prosperity of the nation, not to mention the individual benefits that arise from the personal development coming from education.

A commitment to building new schools in growing areas of Canberra and expanding existing schools is an essential and necessary step to ensure that children across our city have the opportunity for education, which is a cornerstone of our democracy and a basic human right. Investing in school infrastructure is where it starts. From the Greens' perspective, even more importantly, investing in quality education is where it culminates. It is not just about the buildings; it is very much about the staff, the culture and the community involvement. All of these things are what make the whole of our education system richer.

I am pleased to see the funding for upgrades to a number of schools, including Campbell Primary, which addresses the obvious need for ageing infrastructure to be maintained and upgraded to suit the modern era. Infrastructure upgrades are important for remedying heating and cooling, as well as providing modern facilities. It is essential that some of the funds be directed towards improving the energy efficiency of the buildings as this work progresses.

I note that a roof replacement program has been funded to replace roofs at six schools in the ACT, to improve their thermal performance and to investigate additional renewable energy generation options and the introduction of energy storage at public schools. As the minister for climate change, and of course as a Greens member of this place, these initiatives are very welcome. Generating and storing renewable energy are vital components to addressing climate change. The government must continue to demonstrate its commitment to addressing this pressing issue now and into the future.

Equally, I am pleased to see the investment in a new high school in Molonglo, and the expansion of capacity across Gungahlin—at Amaroo, Gold Creek, Neville Bonner and Franklin—and the completion of feasibility and planning for a new school in Gungahlin. I do note the comments that Ms Lee made about the fact that these schools have got very full. I think it is worth reflecting on some of the demographic modelling challenges that have arisen, including the fact that the ABS numbers from the 2016 census revealed a significant underestimation had been occurring in Canberra's population. There are in fact around 10,000 more residents in the city than the ABS had previously been estimating.

There is a detailed reason for this. The difficulty in tracking internal migration within Australia has been the primary problem. It is worth reflecting on the fact that the directorate had been planning on the basis of certain population numbers which need an update at that national level of statistic gathering. There are also some rather interesting demographic factors around the changing patterns of people: how more families are living in apartments. I know from my time as education minister that this had not previously been understood in the demographic modelling. There are some complexities there which I think Ms Lee's comments did not fairly reflect.

The planning for expansion of the school's capacity is a crucial step in ensuring that children and young people can get access to the education that they need. That this money is being put into these schools is a very welcome recognition of the fact that we have seen significant population growth in these areas. The government is moving to ensure that the capacity is there in the schools.

One thing that I want to emphasise—I have certainly already started a conversation with Minister Berry about this—is that new ACT schools, certainly where expansions are going, should be built with our net zero greenhouse gas emissions goals in mind. These school buildings are a long-lived infrastructure project. They should be planned from the beginning to minimise energy use and minimise the creation of carbon pollution.

In fact, new schools have the potential to be zero carbon buildings and, with their large roof spaces available for solar panels, to produce more energy than they use. One of the key areas to tackle in the near future is the use of natural gas, especially for heating. Our new schools can be designed to be all electric and in this way make use of the ACT's 100 per cent renewable electricity rather than continue to use emissions-producing gas.

Investing in the best possible teachers, supporting leadership from our principals and ensuring every student can get the help they need are essentials to the Greens' policy platform on education and central to the items in the parliamentary agreement. We have long identified that mentoring of teachers is an essential step in ensuring that teachers remain resilient, up-to-date and able to deal with the very challenging role that they perform.

Teachers need to be implementing evidence based pedagogical practice. But it is important that teachers get the kind of support that means they can implement

strategies in the classroom, not just attend a personal development event and then go back to the classroom and not be supported to implement what they have learnt or not have the means to implement it. Whole-school approaches to improving and changing pedagogical practices are better. We need to acknowledge that there is not just one type of pedagogy. It is about taking the best and most effective pedagogies and using them at the right time and in the right way to help children learn in the way that is most suitable to that individual child.

We note that there is educational research that points to evidence about what does work with children. As politicians we need to support teachers and educational systems to respond to that research and implement it into teachers' daily practice to ensure we are giving students their best chance at success. That is what this measure is about.

Providing the best possible safe and supportive learning environment is critical to being a truly inclusive school community. Supporting students' mental health and wellbeing is essential to ensuring that every student, no matter which school they go to, can get the help they need. The funding of 15 additional school psychologists is an item that was spoken about extensively in the last election and is reflected in the parliamentary agreement between Labor and the Greens. Certainly, as the mental health minister, I am very pleased to see that this commitment has been funded.

The requirement for school psychologists has been identified by a number of players. It is a vital support for kids who are struggling with a range of mental health concerns. Providing this additional support will enable them to seek that support, to have the courage to come forward, knowing that there is capability within the school environment to support them to overcome their personal challenges so that they can be more focused on their education.

We know that if a child is struggling with mental health conditions they are less capable of learning. If they are distracted, if they are not getting the support they need, they are unlikely to progress as well as they might otherwise with their education. And they will miss out. Having this investment in school psychologists will assist in providing that strong foundation. While this announcement is welcome, I want to reiterate that there is still work to be done to implement a streamlined referral process between schools and community mental health services. This is another item reflected in the parliamentary agreement. A crucial aspect of this additional work will be increasing coordination between staff in health and education directorates.

The minister for education and I will be working, over the coming months, to improve that coordination. We need to make sure that if someone does go to the school psychologist and needs further support it is a seamless transition and that they move between one part of the mental health support system and another with the greatest possible ease. This is an area that I am pleased to work with the minister on.

Madam Deputy Speaker, I welcome the additional funding to support children with a disability and complex health needs in the public school system in this year's budget. This funding is vital to ensuring there is equity of outcome for those students who

have special needs. It will improve their educational outcomes and ensure a student-centred health and high quality school environment.

Their participation and contribution to school and community life is one that encourages us all to respect and value all students in our schools, and one that benefits us all. We are a richer society because of having more inclusive schools and having a deeper understanding of the different types of students that can be in that schooling environment.

In the ACT we have a great public preschool system where children can access high quality early education in the year before school. Our preschool system is well integrated into the community. It is local, and it is free, meaning that we are able to reach those families whose children may have had limited contact with the education system up until they are four.

The 600 hours of preschool in the year before school is currently supported by the national partnership agreement on universal access to early education. I know that the states and territories are considering how to improve and expand that high quality early education to two years before schools starts. Certainly the Greens are very supportive of this, as we know that the early years of a child's life are important in terms of developing both their social and emotional skills, and for laying down the foundations for their lifelong learning.

The Greens and the ACT government are interested in how to improve access for three-year-olds, and also to ensure better access for disadvantaged and vulnerable families. We know that, for socially isolated families, this can be a particularly powerful investment. Also for migrant families, families from a non-English-speaking background, which we heard about earlier in the debate, it is very important for children to be exposed to preschool environments at the earliest possible opportunity.

It is also important that we continue to improve the quality of early childhood education outside the public system in the ACT through the delivery of community run and privately run early education and care services. With so many families returning to the workforce while their children are still young, we are seeing younger children entering early education and care services well before their preschool period.

It is crucial that these facilities not only are up to standard with regard to children's safety and wellbeing but also have the capacity to support children's development in these important first years of life. The research is clear: young children need nurturing and supportive environments; they need warm and engaging interactions; and they need emotionally responsive and aware adults caring for them.

Quality of care in Australia's early childhood services is underpinned by the national quality framework, something I note that the federal government appears to be withdrawing from in its latest budget, as it has cut the funding to states and territories to support the regulation of early education and care services. Yet the national quality framework strengthens Australia's early education system and gives comfort to families. They can rely on the fact that the assessment and rating of services provides

important information about facilities. They know that there is a regulatory system that will support them, should there be any breaches of compliance under that system.

I can only hope that the federal government reconsiders the prospect of reducing resources to the national partnership on quality and reinstates what is actually a small investment from them. It is around \$13 million per year, while \$8 billion is spent on the childcare subsidy. This really gives some context. It is not a significant amount of money, but it is an important amount of money. The commonwealth needs to really play its part in ensuring that the rollout of this national framework is done properly, that it is resourced properly and that it is able to do the job that it was set up to deliver.

I conclude my remarks simply by thanking Mr Steel for bringing on this motion today, for recognising not only the importance of education but also the specific measures in the budget, which the Greens will be very pleased to support when it comes to the appropriation bill debate. I am certainly very pleased to support Mr Steel's motion today. It reflects an important investment in the future of education in this city.

MR PETTERSSON (Yerrabi) (5.09): I rise today to address the issue that is fundamentally important to this side of the chamber—an issue we always have championed and always will champion as part of our core values. I speak, of course, about education. Every child deserves an amazing education, and this government is committed to delivering it. Providing quality education requires good teachers and the right infrastructure. Quality education is a fundamental right for all children; so the funding of these needs is without question. Everyone knows that if you want a government to invest in our schools you need to choose a Labor government.

We took a plan to the last election to deliver for students. We said we would provide them with the best possible facilities, and that is what we are doing—providing more schools and more school places across the north and across Canberra. The 2018-19 budget builds on the great Labor education legacy, and our government seeks to deliver even better education infrastructure and student outcomes for every student.

Our government will ensure that the 48,000 students in our territory continue to receive a great education. Over the next four years our government is spending \$5 billion in supporting our education system. This budget is a continuation of the promise we made to Canberrans when they elected our government in 2016. In last year's budget our government put aside \$90 million for education infrastructure. This investment was aimed at ensuring that our schools have access to modern facilities and learning environments.

In this year's budget our government is continuing to fund new infrastructure projects for our schools. This includes new facilities in existing schools and building new schools in our city's growth areas, particularly in my electorate of Yerrabi. Gungahlin, the majority of my electorate, grew from 47,000 residents in 2011 to 71,000 residents in 2016. Much of this growth has been young people building homes and starting families. We are preparing for the influx of new students and prioritising their education experience. And we are prepared.

In our 2017-18 budget we pledged over \$32 million to a new primary school in Taylor that we expect to be open in 2019. This new, modern school facility will cater for up to 700 students and give them access to some of the best facilities in Canberra. It will have specific facilities for music, science, technology, engineering, arts and mathematics. We have just opened a consultation period with the community to choose a name, uniform and school logo for the new school. The names will be chosen based on their cultural, historical or geographical significance to the local community. I urge all who are interested in having a say in the identity of the north Gungahlin school to log on to the your say website and submit your proposals.

Ultimately we are getting on with the job of building more schools to cater for our growing population. But there is more to do. In this budget we have made provision for 500 new school places across Amaroo, Gold Creek and Neville Bonner schools. We are cognisant of the fact that Gungahlin schools have high enrolment figures. Overcrowding affects educational outcomes and strains the resources of a school. This expansion will take the pressure off and make sure our kids get the quality education they deserve. To this end, we are also expanding the Franklin Early Childhood School. We will immediately expand the school to accommodate current year 2 students in a new 2019 year 3 class. We have also committed funding to plan and consult on permanent expansion to a full primary school to cater for the anticipated growth in Gungahlin. I look forward to this in the future.

We are delivering education infrastructure across the territory. Our government will invest \$47 million to build a new primary school in another expanding area in the ACT—the Molonglo Valley. There are many similarities between the Molonglo Valley and Gungahlin, including this government's commitment to build quality schools in them. The government will also release land in Wright for the building of a private school. Many parents seek diversity in their choice of school enrolment. This will aid them in that. I do, however, have a natural preference for our local public schools.

Existing schools across the territory will receive upgrades as well. Campbell Primary School will receive nearly \$19 million to build modern learning facilities as well as replace ageing infrastructure, while Narrabundah College will receive \$400,000 to design permanent classrooms. Across the territory, schools will receive \$900,000 to help fix leaky roofs.

We are not just investing in schools. Our government will establish a future skills academy for ACT school leavers to ready themselves for future-oriented industries. The academy will focus on skills relating to the STEM subjects—science, technology, engineering and maths. The skills hub will be based at the University of Canberra Lake Ginninderra Senior Secondary College, as well as the Caroline Chisholm High School, giving our school leavers a valuable path into their future.

Carrying on from this, as part of the 2017-18 budget we committed to ensuring that each and every public school student from year 7 will receive an Acer Chromebook. The rollout of this program will continue this year. This ensures that every student has an equal opportunity to access learning technologies as well as preparing Canberra

students to be technologically liberated for changing jobs in the 21st century. Things like coding will become not just a valuable skill but a necessity. This program ensures that all kids can become efficient regardless of their income. We were the first state or territory government that committed to having these Chromebooks in the hands of every secondary public school student. All students deserve access to important learning tools, and I am proud to be a member of a government that provides this.

Our continual commitment to ACT schools produces results. Currently 85 per cent of ACT students are completing year 12. Around 90 per cent of them go into employment or further study. And the ACT does do very well compared to the rest of Australia on standardised tests such as NAPLAN, although at this point it is probably good to point out that the Assembly is actually inquiring into standardised testing through the EEYA committee. I note that David Gonski said we need to move away from the industrialised model of testing toward tailored individual assessment. If this is the path we are to go down, we will need to change how we teach our kids.

Of course, vital to a strong education system are our wonderful teachers and support staff. They are critical to the success of our children. Too often we hear about kids who are falling behind right across Australia and how teachers are struggling to cope. That is why we have committed to hiring another 66 full-time learning professionals and support staff at a cost of \$31.1 million. Our kids will get the support they deserve and thrive in a school environment as individuals.

There are threats to our schools. The threat comes in the form of a Liberal Party and their commitment to the half-baked education funding they have imposed at a federal level. If we want our schools to continue to excel and have the funds to operate, we need a federal Labor government to implement the full Gonski—no ifs; no buts. Only by implementing the full school resourcing standard will our kids have the best chance to shine. And every minute we waste before that we will fall behind.

Our 2018-19 budget is continuing to invest in Canberra students' education. New infrastructure in schools will encourage better learning outcomes as students utilise modern spaces. We are catering for increased growth in the city's north and west and right across the city. We are investing in teachers and support staff to help our kids reach their full potential. And, as always, our government is putting education first.

MS BERRY (Ginninderra—Deputy Chief Minister, Minister for Education and Early Childhood Development, Minister for Housing and Suburban Development, Minister for the Prevention of Domestic and Family Violence, Minister for Women and Minister for Sport and Recreation) (5.18): I want to thank Mr Steel for bringing on this motion today. The 2018 ACT budget is delivering services that the ACT needs for a growing city, and I am proud to stand with my colleagues, including the Chief Minister and Treasurer, to tell the ACT community a little more about what the government will deliver over the coming years. It is a strong budget which clearly aligns to the government's values and priorities, and the key is providing a high quality education for the ACT's young people.

I welcome Mr Steel's motion and the attention it draws to the many millions of dollars in new education initiatives. The ACT community clearly have faith in the

ACT government school system and are showing their confidence by enrolling their children in one of our excellent government schools. Strong enrolment growth in government schools is a good thing, and the government is responding by providing resources to support schools to deliver the great education that our community is seeking. This budget responds to an expected increase in students of 1,340, with \$31 million for additional learning professionals as well as support staff. The government is ensuring the needs of Canberra's growing school population are being met by deploying more staff in government schools where need is identified.

Our community values the increasingly strong inclusive culture in ACT government schools. It is an area of focus because, of course, all children, regardless of background and circumstances, are entitled to a great education and the life chances that come from it. More significantly, every child can make a valuable contribution to the life of their school community, even if they need a little extra support. The government has allocated \$18.2 million in needs-based funding to support students with a disability so that they have the support to be included in and be a part of school life, and \$5 million to support students with complex health needs.

I am also happy to inform the Assembly that this budget achieves the government's election commitment to add 20 additional school psychologists to the system, with 15 added to the initial five funded in last year's budget. Student wellbeing and mental health is a growing challenge, and the government is responding with the resources that schools need.

The government is also continuing its record of investment in school infrastructure, building on the hundreds of millions of dollars allocated over the past 10 years. The government has allocated \$47 million for a new P-6 school in Mr Steel's electorate of Molonglo and will begin planning for a year 7 to 10 campus there as well so that families in this community can have confidence that high quality public education in modern learning facilities will be available for them. Gungahlin, which is one of the fastest growing regions in Australia, will have 500 new places in schools in that region, and we will start the expansion of Franklin Early Childhood School to a P-6, achieving another election commitment.

Right across the ACT there are ageing schools, some of which are 40, 50 and even 60 years old. The government is investing in the renewal of these schools. On top of the \$85 million investment in last year's budget for public school infrastructure upgrades, the government has allocated \$18 million to replace roofs at six schools. This will improve building comfort and energy efficiency by improving thermal performance and will minimise the facilities damage and disruption caused by leaks. The initiative will also allow the government to investigate additional renewable energy generation and the introduction of energy storage at public schools.

The budget also continues to work towards modernisation of Campbell Primary School and Narrabundah College, refurbishing these buildings to provide better learning environments and modern facilities, with nearly \$20 million combined.

As members will know, over the past 18 months I have been facilitating a big conversation about the future of education in the ACT. I started with the goal that this

conversation would involve genuine dialogue, and I am pleased to say that this has been realised. While the strategy is being settled and will be announced later this year, the conversation provided the government with some clear directions; so the budget also commits funding to early outcomes of the conversation through measures aimed at empowering learning professionals in ACT schools.

After students themselves, the single most significant factor in the outcomes achieved in schools is the expertise and professionalism of the teachers facilitating the learning. The evidence is clear on this point and has been repeated by ACT students, teachers, school leaders, parents and carers and the wider community throughout my conversations with them.

The budget commits \$9.2 million to some key initiatives, including the strengthening of teacher capability in teaching literacy and numeracy and improved collaboration between schools and the University of Canberra on initial teacher education and research-informed professional learning. This funding will also enable further work on the strategy and its outcomes.

In my remarks I have highlighted only some of the education initiatives in this budget, and they have been well canvassed by other members in this place. Yesterday I provided a detailed response to a question on the future skills academy and I draw members' attention to the excellent opportunity that this will provide ACT students and the wider community. The government is also continuing its work on the early childhood strategy, an area that I am particularly passionate about, given my previous work across this sector. I will have more to say about this later this year. Thank you again, Mr Steel, for bringing this motion to the Assembly. I commend the motion to the chamber.

MS ORR (Yerrabi) (5.24): I want to thank Mr Steel for moving this motion today. The 2018-19 ACT budget has a strong focus on investing in education. I have previously moved and spoken on a number of motions in the Assembly relating to the ACT government's commitment to delivering quality education, and I am proud to stand here today as a member of this Labor government that has handed down a budget for 2018-19 that continues to value and invest in quality education for all Canberrans.

Gungahlin is Australia's second fastest growing region, and it is critical that we increase and improve access to public education for the local community. Our population has been growing exponentially in recent years, and will continue to do so as our town centre and surrounding suburbs evolve. With these key factors in mind, it is imperative that we invest in better education infrastructure. This government recognises the need for further education investment, which is why we are investing in local schools, particularly in my electorate of Yerrabi.

In Franklin, we are expanding the early childhood school to deliver year 3 classes for students in 2019, with a further commitment to begin planning and consultation to grow the school into a full preschool to year 6 school. The government will be working closely with the school community to make sure everything that families

love about Franklin school is maintained as it grows to cater for new students in the area.

In north Gungahlin, we are building a new public school which will provide primary school education to a rapidly growing area. The new preschool to year 6 school in Taylor will initially cater to 176 preschool students and 600 primary school students, with capacity for further places as the school community grows. This includes planning for an additional 150 primary students and the potential for a year 7 to 10 expansion.

I was in Moncrieff over the weekend talking to people about the new north Gungahlin school. For new suburbs like Moncrieff, public schools play an incredibly important role in fostering our communities, not just in terms of education but also as a cultural and community hub. The new public school in Taylor is an active recognition of this integral role. The Taylor school will offer facilities for the local community to use, such as access to indoor areas for sport and recreation activities and space for community groups and organisations to hold meetings and events.

It is not just about making schools accessible to our communities; it is also about improving the accessibility of our schools to our students. Canberra is all about inclusiveness. We thrive on being Australia's most inclusive city, and we show it time and time again, through our strong yes vote in the marriage equality postal survey; by hosting Australia's first Reconciliation Day public holiday; and by being a refugee welcome zone. These are not just gestures; these are values that form our culture, a culture that flows through everything we do here in the ACT, right down to helping shape the way we design and plan our schools to ensure they are accessible to all students.

In this budget, we are supporting students with disability and complex health needs in our ACT public schools by investing \$23.2 million through the needs-based funding model. We are increasing access to school psychologists by investing \$7.3 million to employ 15 additional full-time psychologists, to support student wellbeing and mental health outcomes for students, parents and carers in our school communities. We are increasing the number of spaces in our schooling system, while at the same time delivering high quality learning spaces for our children to learn in. We are delivering 500 more student places in Gungahlin by expanding Amaroo, Gold Creek and Neville Bonner schools.

We make these significant investments at the same time as remembering we are in a transitioning economy. The future jobs of our children are likely to be starkly different from the jobs of today. We must continue to give students every opportunity possible to develop the skills that will be necessary for them to achieve in the modern world, while also valuing the difference and talents of every child.

Daniel Pink's aptly named book *A Whole New Mind: Why Right-brainers Will Rule The Future* contends that the future belongs to the more creative minded as the more routine jobs in our society are overtaken by automation. Within this theme is recognition that while we are all predisposed towards particular skills, every skill is a

muscle we must exercise. Our schooling system must evolve to enable this type of creative and analytical strength for students.

It is therefore incredibly important that our education system offers the building blocks upon which children can learn to problem solve. This is why we are focused on students participating in STEM—also known as science, technology, engineering and mathematics—subjects. Along with STEM, there must be a focus on creativity. Giralang Primary School is a fantastic example of a school in my electorate offering a STEAM academy, with the “A” standing for architecture. This addition recognises the need for students to be provided with the capacity to develop their skills in a more creative way, in this case through design. That is why the 2018-19 budget will invest \$5.6 million to establish a future skills academy that will support Canberra students to build their competency in STEM, preparing them for the jobs of the future.

I would like to echo the views put forward by the Minister for Education and Early Childhood Development when it comes to the future of education in the ACT. The future of education consultation considers themes such as individualised learning, real-life skills, and opportunities and pathways for all, as well as collaboration and support to meet individual need.

In our current transition, we cannot simply assume a child will fit the box we design for them in our education system. We must do everything we can to tailor schooling to the needs of each and every student as best we can. The future of education consultation is working towards this goal, with the 2018-19 budget investing \$2.9 million to progress measures that have arisen from the community conversation.

In all of this, we can never forget the role our teachers play in supporting and enriching the development of our children. We should always seek to acknowledge and celebrate the contributions our educators make in their profession and to the community more broadly.

Our teachers play an important role in supporting our inclusive culture. Joe Chapman-Freeman was recognised for the Australian Education Union ACT branch reconciliation award this year. Joe was recognised for going well beyond what was expected in his role as an Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander education officer working closely with the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students at his school. Joe has implemented coordinated strategies involving the students, their families, and teaching staff. He is a strong advocate for his students, supporting their involvement in class with additional tutorials and personalised pathways. Joe has worked with teachers from the school to increase their cultural competencies as well as empowering cultural identity within Aboriginal and Indigenous students.

Joe takes a team of high school students to visit local primary schools on three mornings a week. They deliver breakfast clubs and literacy mentoring programs to at-risk primary school students. Over the last four years, Joe has worked closely with the directorate to deliver territory-wide sporting competitions involving all sectors of the school system. He has also created links to schools in Sydney to host interschool activities.

Our school principals also play an integral role in enabling both our students and our teachers to achieve in their roles within schools. Shane Gorman won the Australian Education Union ACT branch public education award, having been nominated by two of his colleagues who were impressed by the calm, dignified and matter-of-fact way that he advocates for public education. A long-serving member of the union, he fought for union rights, Gonski reforms, and freedom for refugees.

He has also championed the need for principal wellbeing at a national level. Despite being dedicated to their schools, principals often find themselves in a difficult position balancing the needs of their teachers. Shane demonstrates a commitment to finding the balance between workload, administrative support, and coaching and mentoring, to ensure teachers can focus on their core responsibilities as educators. His nominators state that even strong unionists may sometimes question whether they should have taken the easier, less selfless road. However, Shane's dedication to public education has had a significant impact on those who have not even worked with him, and he has had a significant positive impact on the ACT school system as a whole.

The benefit teachers provide society through the assistance they offer our children as they grow into adults can never be underestimated, and this government will never underestimate their value.

The 2018-19 budget is a budget that is focused on delivering quality education for Canberrans. It will deliver new and expanded schools for Gungahlin and across Canberra, as well as hiring more teachers who will help provide a world-class education to each and every Canberra student. This budget is focused on delivering more and better local schools for our kids. I commend Mr Steel's motion to the Assembly.

MR STEEL (Murrumbidgee) (5.33): I would like to thank members for their contributions in the debate on this motion today, recognising the real importance of our education investments in the 2018-19 budget. I would like to respond to a few comments that were made during the debate.

I firstly recognise the comments made by Mrs Kikkert, and the importance of recognising and celebrating diversity in our education system. I was involved in working with the Australian Human Rights Commission in reviewing some resources that were being developed around building children's belonging, particularly resources for early childhood services, looking to do that in the education system, something that we need to continue to make sure occurs throughout our education system from early childhood right through our school education system.

In relation to Ms Lee's comments, Ms Lee seemed to suggest at the end of her speech that extra investment in education was not important. Actually, it is very important. She may want to come in here and outline what measures, particularly infrastructure measures, she does not support in the ACT budget. I believe all of the infrastructure measures that we announced in the budget yesterday are critically important, particularly in planning.

She took another shot at the government for failing to plan, yet that is exactly what we are doing in the budget: investing in the school infrastructure that is needed, with new schools and more and upgraded school facilities across the ACT, particularly in the Molonglo Valley. The current school is not actually at capacity, but we are already starting to invest in new schools, particularly the new school at Denman Prospect and the new high school campus out there. We are also looking to the future with a non-government school and another school in the newly gazetted suburb of Whitlam.

This budget demonstrates that we are planning for the future, and we are making investments. It is great to see many of our schools being utilised, and we will continue to grow the infrastructure investment in that.

The continued work on an early childhood strategy is really important. While I think we all recognise, as Mrs Kikkert says, the importance of education, actions are far more important than words. What we have seen from the Liberals federally is that they are withdrawing from the quality aspects of early childhood education through the national partnership or the national quality agenda, the national quality framework, and that is really disappointing. The Liberals really need to demonstrate in actions that they actually support that national partnership continuing. We need a contribution from the commonwealth to ensure that the national quality agenda continues and every child in the ACT can get access to a quality education from the earliest years.

The future of skills is so important. We have to prepare children now with the skills they will need for the future, to be able to have greater skills in the areas of the STEM disciplines, particularly thinking not just about coding and what will be the future language in the jobs of the future, but also dealing with computational thinking and how that code can be applied for uses across a whole range of disciplines, not just in the STEM areas but in a whole range of other disciplines in the jobs of the future. The two STEM hubs will play a major role in that. The budget has demonstrated that with our investment in the future skills academy in Chisholm and our second hub on the way.

Of course, that school education strategy is continuing to be developed, and I am really looking forward to seeing the outcomes there. It has been a long process but it has been an important process to engage with local school communities. We will continue to engage with those local school communities through our investment in parental engagement in the budget and also making sure that we are supporting our most vulnerable students, those with disabilities and complex health needs, through the budget, particularly with our important investment of \$23.2 million there.

I thank members for their contributions today. I look forward to hearing the opposition leader's budget in reply tomorrow. I am sure he will be outlining the vision of the Canberra Liberals for education. I did not hear that today from Ms Lee; all I heard was criticism of the extra investment and planning that we are putting into education, without any alternative vision being presented. If Mr Coe does not think that extra education funding is important or does not support that, he should outline what he is going to cut in tomorrow's budget reply.

Original question, as amended, resolved in the affirmative

Chief Engineer—proposed appointment

MS LAWDER (Brindabella) (5.39): I move:

That this Assembly:

(1) notes:

- (a) the vital roles that engineers play at all stages of project development, including conceptualisation, planning, approval, construction, testing, acceptance and maintenance;
- (b) both the Liberal and Labor parties committed to the establishment of a Chief Engineer during the 2016 election;
- (c) despite a commitment in the 2017-18 budget, the ACT is still without a Chief Engineer; and

(2) calls on the Government to appoint a Chief Engineer for the ACT.

I rise to speak to this motion today and what I think is a very important matter for the ACT. It is not one of those flashy, shiny, moveable parts issues that people get all excited about; what it does is ensure integrity and scrutiny of projects in the ACT. It is not going to get anyone's face on the front cover of the *Canberra Times* tomorrow morning. Potentially, that is why nothing has been done by the government in this regard. They have not appeared to progress the matter, whereas they are happy to go to the opening of an envelope anywhere else throughout the ACT. But despite their unwillingness to progress this matter and even talk about the matter, I want to bring this forward today.

During the 2016 election the Liberals promised the implementation of a chief engineer, in fact, and an engineer's panel. The Labor Party joined the Liberals in promising that implementation. That was 18 months or so ago. Almost exactly a year ago—12 months ago—on 4 June 2017 the Chief Minister put out a press release which stated:

The ACT Government will introduce a position of Chief Engineer to lead the territory's engineering and infrastructure projects.

We had the announcement of the promise during the election. Twelve months ago we had a media release about introducing the position. Twelve months down the track, where are we? What do we have? I will tell you what we have. We have nothing, zip, nada, absolutely nothing in this space.

Let us remember, though, that this media release from the Chief Minister only came out after Engineers Australia came out saying that this was a forgotten election promise and the ACT government was not advancing the cause. We had a promise, a media release in response to someone else raising the issue, and still we have nothing. That is why I brought the motion today calling on the government to progress their promise and their announcements. For the past 12 months all they have been able to do is put out a press release on it.

I find it a bit sad that we have to remind the government and drag them kicking and screaming to try to implement their own promises, their own policies. It has similarities to some of the government's other areas where they talk the big talk but really drag their feet when it comes to the implementation of ICAC or ACIC, as one example.

This is an important motion because a chief engineer would play a vital role in ensuring that infrastructure in the ACT is world class and of sound quality. By having a chief engineer the government is ensuring that value is achieved in infrastructure projects. It ensures we have expert advice to the government on engineering, science, planning and safety. The outcomes for the community will be best served by having a chief engineer. It is a long-overdue appointment. And the chief engineer can play a role in ensuring that projects are delivered on time, on budget and to the highest standard possible, which is in direct contrast to the appointment of the engineer itself, which has not been on time or of the highest standard and has no funding allocated to it.

The role of a chief engineer is so vital in ensuring the safety of our infrastructure builds. This city has seen what poor engineering expertise on major projects can lead to. For example, in August 2010 the city came to a standstill after the GDE that was in the process of being built collapsed onto the Barton Highway. Ten people were taken to hospital. We were so very lucky that no-one was killed in that accident. As a city, we promised we would not allow this to happen again and we would learn from our experiences.

More recently we have had the issue of replacing cladding on the Centenary Hospital for Women and Children that was flammable, a cladding that was known by the industry to be flammable when it was put on the hospital. It begs the question: would a chief engineer have advised against the installation of that cladding? I guess we will never know. But we do now have the opportunity to learn from these mistakes and appoint a chief engineer.

We do have infrastructure projects being built in the ACT—buildings, roads and light rail, for example, as well as other infrastructure projects. But we have to ensure we are getting value and good quality from those projects, including light rail. That is the type of thing that a chief engineer would look at. There may have been further scrutiny about whether Mitchell would get a light rail stop if the ACT had a chief engineer.

But while the government are willing to tax us more and more, more than ever before, they are not willing to spend that money to ensure the safety and the future of Canberra through good engineering. If they are, perhaps they could hurry up and employ the chief engineer that they promised 18 months ago and again 12 months ago. If it was such a good idea in 2016 that they went to the election promising it, if it was such a good idea on 4 June 2017 that they put out a press release about it, why has it not happened?

This is quite a simple motion. It does not need to be amended. Mr Gentleman has, I think, had something distributed while I am speaking. I have not had the opportunity to look at it. Whilst I can do many things at the same time, Madam Speaker, I am not really capable of standing up and addressing you and reading Mr Gentleman's amendment at precisely the same time.

Mr Rattenbury: There is something to work on.

MS LAWDER: And I am also capable of ignoring interjections from Mr Rattenbury—unlike some people, including Mr Rattenbury, who does not like interjections.

Yesterday we had the budget handed down by the Chief Minister and Treasurer, and it included, towards a position of a chief engineer this year and in the forward estimates, a doughnut—nothing, zero, zero, zero, zero. That is how much the government are willing to put forward for a chief engineer position that they promised in the election and that they put out a press release about exactly a year ago. I ask this government to put their money where their mouth is and appoint a chief engineer.

I have my doubts that this will happen, even without reading Mr Gentleman's amendment, because we have a government that is hell-bent on looking good, putting up a building here, there, a rail stop over there, but without vision and independent advice. We have a chief minister who is more interested in announcing increases in areas that have actually been cut over a period of years, of having consultative sessions when they already ignore the consultation and the input from the community that they get.

They love to announce policy but they are not good at implementing it. They love to produce glossy brochures and have lots of consultations. But where is the Australia forum? Where is the stadium in the city? Where is the city to the lake project? Where are the state-of-the-art detention facilities for youth in Bimberi up to? How is the state of our mental health facilities going, the state of affordable housing, ever-increasing stamp duty? They like to announce bright, shiny, flashy things but they are not actually addressing the issues that need addressing in our community. It is all talk and no action.

Unfortunately for the people of Canberra, the employment of a chief engineer seems to be another one of those promises that do not eventuate, another one of those things that are worthy of media when media is looking for something to fill their air time or their pages. But it is all froth and bubble. There is nothing actually underneath it.

I call upon the government to appoint the chief engineer so that there can be certainty in future developments and that the people of the ACT can be reassured that they are getting independent advice, integrity in that advice, that they are getting value for money and that things are done to the highest possible standard, including safety of the workers on those projects. I commend the motion to the Assembly.

MR GENTLEMAN (Brindabella—Minister for Police and Emergency Services, Minister for the Environment and Heritage, Minister for Planning and Land

Management and Minister for Urban Renewal) (5.49): I thank the member for Brindabella for the motion she has moved in the Assembly and for the opportunity to talk on this issue. I also note the mutual interest our parties have shown on the issue. I am pleased that yesterday's budget officially created the role of the chief engineer for the ACT. In noting that, I will move the amendments circulated in my name. They will bring this motion to currency after that budget announcement. I seek leave to move the amendments circulated in my name together.

Leave granted.

MR GENTLEMAN: I move:

(1) Omit paragraph (1)(c), substitute:

“(c) the Government has been engaging with key stakeholders on the establishment and appointment of a Chief Engineer; and”.

(2) Omit paragraph (2), substitute:

“(2) further notes:

- (a) the 2018-19 Budget establishes the role of a Chief Engineer for the ACT to improve the quality and efficiency of ACT Government infrastructure delivery; and
- (b) the Government will shortly make an announcement about the appointment of a Chief Engineer.”.

This new position in the ACT public service will meet the needs of a growing and evolving city. The establishment of the position recognises the important role that engineers engage in at all stages of project development—from conceptualisation through to planning, regulation, construction, asset management and operation.

Canberra has a strong engineering heritage, with investments in significant infrastructure dating back to the foundation of the nation's capital in 1913. Early work included establishing roads, suburbs, water supplies and other key infrastructure. Significant investment in infrastructure continues, with an estimated \$2.8 billion of government investment over the next four years, including the city's largest project, the transformative Canberra light rail network. The establishment of a chief engineer is thus timely and welcome.

Engineering turns science and technology into something tangible and useful to society by taking a concept to delivery. Engineering is a key driver of innovation and prosperity. There is a role here for government and for the private sector. A clear question for any government is: how can engineering best contribute to decisions of government and community more broadly? The creation of this new role of chief engineer will go part-way to addressing these broader urban issues and support decision-making in government related to infrastructure and engineering.

As we heard during the 2016 ACT Legislative Assembly election, the Chief Minister committed to appoint a chief engineer for the ACT who would provide strategic oversight for projects and deliver an enduring workforce plan. I was subsequently asked to take responsibility for this important role.

Key tasks to be undertaken by the chief engineer will include providing strategic and independent advice to government on a range of capital works, infrastructure and engineering issues; advising on infrastructure policy, significant projects and procurement matters; managing the preparation of an engineering workforce plan for the ACT government; and ongoing consultation with peak engineering industry associations and the industry more broadly.

The chief engineer will provide important advice to government as Canberra continues to grow as a vibrant, modern city. The role will predominantly provide strategic overview and independent advice relating to significant public sector engineering projects and the engineering aspects of urban development proposals within Canberra. The chief engineer will be a member of the recently established infrastructure planning and advisory committee, IPAC, which enhances the cooperation and strategic approach to infrastructure planning.

The chief engineer will also liaise closely with the government architect, various industry peak bodies including Consult Australia, Engineers Australia and Professionals Australia, and engineering and construction professionals. As with any new role, it will be refined over time, but there is plenty to focus on at the outset.

The new role will be funded through existing resources. Hence it does not need to involve additional cost to the government or to the ACT community, but it will bring considerable value by overseeing the engineering realm across Canberra. We have consulted and met with engineering industry groups on the creation of the position. These meetings have been encouraging and they have provided positive suggestions on how the chief engineer can add value. I look forward to working with industry as the role develops over the coming year.

I want to thank Engineers Australia, Consult Australia and Professionals Australia for their interest in this new role and for their continuing contribution to the establishment of the role. In particular, I appreciate the preparation of the joint document titled “Shaping a better Canberra, the Office of the Chief Engineer”, October 2017, which has provided valuable input. I will be making an announcement in the near future on the appointment of the chief engineer.

MR RATTENBURY (Kurrajong) (5.54): I will speak only briefly on this motion as it seems we are all in furious agreement that there should be a chief engineer. Certainly, the Greens are supportive of this approach. I will be supporting Mr Gentleman’s amendments. They correct Ms Lawder’s motion to note that the funding is in this year’s budget. It did seem sort of amusing that we almost had a pre-budget announcement coming from Ms Lawder. There she was on Monday calling for it. “Ta-da!” in Tuesday’s budget, there it was. That has all worked very well.

I look forward to seeing the appointment of a chief engineer in the ACT. I think the position can provide a valuable contribution to work going on here in the territory. I certainly know it has been a significant point of contact from Engineers Australia over recent years to say they feel this can really add value to the development of capital works projects in the ACT. I hope that it will deliver what everyone believes it will.

MS LAWDER (Brindabella) (5.55): I thank all members for their contributions today. It is lovely to see that we are in furious agreement that there should be a chief engineer coming up very shortly. But, Madam Speaker, I would like to remind you of the wording of the Chief Minister's media release on 4 June, a year ago. He said:

I have asked Minister for Planning and Land Management Mick Gentleman to take responsibility for the development of the Chief Engineer position. As I committed during the election process, this position will be filled in the next financial year.

So either the Chief Minister was unduly optimistic or Mr Gentleman has been tardy, but neither of them have actually achieved what the Chief Minister outlined. It is good to know that it is going to happen shortly but unless it is going to be announced in the next couple of weeks before the end of June—

Mr Barr: You never know your luck in a medium-sized city, do you?

MS LAWDER: You never know your luck. I look forward to that because it is the end result that matters here. It is interesting that Mr Gentleman mentioned he has been engaging with key stakeholders, as have I. I have received comments from some of the stakeholders, including from the ACT manager for Consult Australia, who says:

This position is not about a ship's engine room: it is about seeing the horizon, maintaining direction amidst short-term pressures and political storms, while being able to tweak the engine room if need be. It is strategic and she or he—

that is, the chief engineer—

must do as all great cities do: think in decades and plan for the future.

And from another of the peak bodies that was in the consultation process, the quote is as follows:

Concerned that without clear additional funding the role of Chief Engineer will be unlikely to deliver the benefits that are possible if there was an appropriately funded Chief Engineer position.

I do not think everything is necessarily as well settled as it could be with the position of the chief engineer. At this point I will take in good faith Mr Gentleman's assurance that the position is going to be filled soon, despite the fact that it has been quite some time in the making—18 months or more since the election promise and 12 months since the Chief Minister made the announcement and asked Mr Gentleman to fill the position within the year.

Hopefully, that will be done in the next couple of weeks and hopefully we, as a city, will gain the benefits of that appointment of the chief engineer. It is something that we all agree is important. It is something that will bring benefits to the ACT community. It is a pity that it has taken this long for the relevant minister to put the rubber on the road and actually get on with the appointment.

It is something that has been a long time in the making. Apparently, according to the minister's points today, he has had a number of meetings with stakeholders over that time. I look forward to learning more about that process, how many meetings there have been and how long they have taken. I will leave it there. I thank all members for their commitment. I look forward to the appointment of the chief engineer.

Amendments agreed to.

Original question, as amended, resolved in the affirmative.

At 6 pm, in accordance with standing order 34, the motion for the adjournment of the Assembly was put and negatived.

Senator for the Australian Capital Territory—casual vacancy

MRS DUNNE (Ginninderra) (6.00): I move:

That this Assembly:

(1) notes:

- (a) the ruling of the High Court of Australia that Ms Katy Gallagher was ineligible under the Australian Constitution to stand as a candidate for election to the Australian Senate at the 2016 Federal election;
- (b) the Chief Minister's motion presented to and passed by the Assembly on 25 March 2015, calling on the Assembly to choose Ms Gallagher to fill a casual vacancy in the Australian Senate;
- (c) the statement made in the Chief Minister's motion that Ms Gallagher was, "a person who is eligible to be a senator";
- (d) in light of the High Court's ruling, it appears the Chief Minister inadvertently misled the Assembly; and
- (e) it follows that the Assembly, through the Chief Minister, inadvertently misled the Governor-General of the Commonwealth of Australia and, thus, the Australian Parliament as to Ms Gallagher's eligibility to fill the casual vacancy; and

(2) calls on the Chief Minister to:

- (a) correct the Assembly's record; and
- (b) write to the Governor-General, apologising for the Assembly's inadvertent mislead.

The Chief Minister may roll his eyes, but this is a very simple and straightforward motion. I know that the matter of Ms Gallagher's citizenship has been ventilated in this place on a number of occasions. I note the Chief Minister's amendment. I thank him for the courtesy of having it circulated before I got up to speak so that I had some time to consider it.

Madam Speaker, I want to put on the record something that I have raised before. This motion is brought forward because of my concern that, in March 2015, the ACT Legislative Assembly was misled by the provision of a statutory declaration that

has turned out to be incorrect. The Assembly was then led to make a decision based on erroneous information. In addition to that, in making that decision, the Assembly has gone on to mislead the Governor-General in his process of making an appointment to fill a casual vacancy in the Australian Senate.

On 25 March 2015 the Chief Minister, Mr Barr, advised the Assembly that there was a vacancy in the Senate caused by the retirement of Senator Kate Lundy. In accordance with continuing resolution 9, the Chief Minister, Mr Barr, presented a statutory declaration made by Ms Gallagher, the former Chief Minister, and the former senator, stating that she was eligible to be chosen as a senator.

The Chief Minister then moved this motion:

That Katy Gallagher, a person who is eligible to be a senator and is of the same party of the Hon Kate Lundy whose place has become vacant, be chosen to fill the casual vacancy for senator for the Australian Capital Territory until the expiration of the term of the outgoing senator.

That question was put and passed. I had to seek advice from the Clerk about what happened next because to this day I do not have a clear view. The Clerk advised me that on the same day I wrote to the Chief Minister—I was the Speaker at the time—confirming the resolution, which I have just read out, and asking the Chief Minister to convey the determination of the Assembly to the Governor-General. Ms Gallagher was sworn in to the Senate the following day, on 26 March.

We have all become wise with hindsight, Madam Speaker. I do not want this to escalate into some partisan thing. This is not about the citizenship issue. It is not about former Senator Gallagher. It is about the processes in this place.

I do note that we have continuing resolution No 9. And I note that there has been some inquiry into this by the administration and procedure committee. I acknowledge that the administration and procedure committee in its report came to the conclusion that continuing resolution No 9 was more robust than any other system that exists in any other parliament filling a casual vacancy, because in many cases they have no system.

It is a credit to this Assembly and to the Clerk of the Assembly that, when the issue of a casual vacancy first arose in 2002 or early 2003, when Senator Reid vacated the Senate, the clerks and the Speaker at the time went about creating a process which has been pretty robust. The trouble is that it is not robust enough.

We made an appointment which the High Court has found was erroneous. This is not the place for putting forward recommendations for fixing that. I do acknowledge that. The Assembly has agreed to the fact that this matter would be looked at in the context of reviewing the standing orders. I think that some things can be done to make that process even more robust than it currently is.

My concerns here today are—and my concerns from the outset have been—that through inadvertence this Assembly and the Governor-General were misled. I repeat

again—no, that is tautology. I repeat: through inadvertence—I do not believe that anyone set out to mislead the Assembly; I do not believe that anyone set out to mislead the Governor-General—both this Assembly and the Governor-General were misled. It is incumbent upon us as legislators that, when we become aware that the Assembly has been misled, we come in and correct the record.

It should be incumbent upon us, when we realise that we have misled the Governor-General, that we correct the record. We cannot take anything back. We cannot undo any of this. I am not making any proposition in that regard. I am simply calling for us to do what is required under the standing orders, what is required by form and practice. We all know that the Assembly was misled, and the record should be corrected.

However, if the record is not corrected by the person who misled the Assembly, we have a problem. It is possibly just stubbornness. There are some people who do not like to admit that they have made mistakes. We all make mistakes. That is why we have the form that we do that allows us to come in and correct the record if we have made a mistake, if we have misled the Assembly.

There have been plenty of opportunities for the Chief Minister to come in and correct the record. But he has not done so. That is why we need to have this motion today.

Madam Speaker, this motion is simple, uncomplicated and straightforward. It calls for a formal recognition that the Assembly was misled. We all understand that it was inadvertent. There is no sanction against anyone who has misled. There certainly is no criticism of the Chief Minister. He was working on the information that he had at the time. But it is incumbent upon us, when we realise that the information we were working on at the time was wrong, to correct the record.

The thing that really occupies my mind about this is that we have also misled the Governor-General. It is incumbent upon the Chief Minister, on behalf of the Assembly, to apologise to the Governor-General for that inadvertent mislead. Put it to bed, once and for all. We were all acting on information that was imprecise and incomplete. We need to face up to the fact that we were doing this and correct the record. I commend the motion, as simple as it is, calling on the Chief Minister to correct the record and to apologise to the Governor-General.

MR BARR (Kurrajong—Chief Minister, Treasurer, Minister for Economic Development and Minister for Tourism and Major Events) (6.08): The government will not be supporting Mrs Dunne’s motion today. I move the following amendment:

Omit all words after (1), substitute:

“(1) notes:

- (a) the High Court of Australia, acting as the Court of Disputed Returns, ruled on 8 May 2018 that Ms Katy Gallagher was ineligible to stand as a Senate candidate for the 2016 Federal election, after Ms Gallagher referred herself to the Court for consideration of her eligibility; and
- (b) following a resolution of the Legislative Assembly of 30 November 2017, the Administration and Procedure Committee report tabled on 15 February 2018 found that the ACT Legislative Assembly has one of the

more robust procedures to select a Senator when compared to practices in other State and Territory legislatures; and

(2) recognises that:

- (a) the High Court of Australia, in its decision of 8 May 2018, has now provided further guidance on eligibility that will assist potential candidates and political parties for their candidate selection in the future; and
- (b) the High Court decision will be considered in the context of the current review of standing orders.”.

This is the third time that former Senator Gallagher’s eligibility for nomination has been raised via a motion in this place. There is no doubt that each of these motions has led to debate on the subject despite what would appear to be fairly clear findings by our own administration and procedure committee in February on the relative strength of the ACT’s nomination process. To be frank, it does feel like groundhog day all over again, and that—

Mrs Dunne: That is a tautology as well.

MR BARR: I am allowed one if you are. If we are revisiting this issue, let me reiterate what I have previously said on the matter. In November 2017 the Assembly determined to refer the matter to the administration and procedure committee, which found, as Mrs Dunne has indicated, that the Assembly has one of the more robust procedures to select a senator when compared to other practices across the states and territories.

It is a fact that the High Court of Australia has ruled that former Senator Katy Gallagher was ineligible to stand as a candidate in the 2016 federal election. In that decision the High Court has provided some guidance on eligibility requirements that will, I am sure, be taken into account by all political parties when selecting future candidates.

As Mrs Dunne has indicated, the decision will also be considered in the context of the current review of standing orders, which is the appropriate process. I am pleased that we have that acknowledgement today to consider any amendments to our own standing orders.

As I have said previously, it is not the role of the Assembly or, indeed, of any parliament to usurp the role of the High Court in determining an individual’s eligibility to sit either as a commonwealth senator or indeed as a member of the House of Representatives.

The amendment that I have moved recognises, acknowledges and puts formally on the record in this place that the High Court of Australia, in its decision of 8 May 2018, has provided further guidance on eligibility that will assist potential candidates and political parties with candidate selection in the future; and that the High Court, acting in its role as the Court of Disputed Returns, ruled on 8 May that Ms Katy Gallagher

was ineligible to stand as a Senate candidate for the 2016 federal election after Ms Gallagher referred herself to the court for consideration of her eligibility.

The record is corrected. The High Court of Australia, acting as the Court of Disputed Returns, has ruled on this matter. I acknowledge the High Court's ruling and place that formally on the record today as a substantive motion in this place. That ought to address Mrs Dunne's concern in relation to the official record of this place with this amendment. It acknowledges the High Court's ruling.

In relation to the question of the Governor-General, if it assists that we no longer have to debate this matter anymore, I apologise to the Governor-General formally this evening. This motion and the record of this will be forwarded to the Governor-General.

We acknowledge in this place in the Assembly this evening that the High Court of Australia, acting as the Court of Disputed Returns, ruled on 8 May 2018 that Ms Katy Gallagher was ineligible to stand as a Senate candidate for the 2016 federal election. This Assembly, through its review of standing orders, will be considering its procedures in relation to the process of filling any casual vacancies. That is recognised in paragraph (2)(b) of my amendment. I hope, Madam Speaker, that this will finally put an end to the matter.

MR RATTENBURY (Kurrajong) (6.13): Given the Chief Minister's remarks, I do not believe there is a whole lot I need to add to the debate. The Greens will be supporting the Chief Minister's amendment. I think it is a fair and accurate account of what has taken place. I certainly invite those members who remain affected by this to reflect, as we go through the review of standing orders, what different process we might put in place that does not interfere with the relative positions of the two parliaments and the role of the High Court.

Having been on the previous committee that reflected on this, I am not sure what this Assembly would do differently. I think we all now have the benefit of hindsight. I know people are thinking about their own citizenship status very carefully at the moment as they contemplate coming elections.

Everybody will be a lot wiser after this process. Whether that means the Assembly should change its processes is a different question and one that I would welcome members contributing their thoughts to as the administration and procedure committee reviews the standing orders.

MRS DUNNE (Ginninderra) (6.14): I thank the Chief Minister for his statement this evening and his undertaking to ensure that the acknowledgement is transmitted to the Governor-General. These issues in relation to standing orders should exercise our minds. The Chief Minister began his comments in a way that indicated that this is in some way about Ms Gallagher. It is not about Ms Gallagher; it is about the mistakes that we all made in relation to her appointment. I do not want in any way to reflect upon Ms Gallagher.

I thank the Chief Minister for the comments that he has made. From the opposition's point of view, it resolves the issue in relation to setting the record straight and conveying that to the Governor-General. I do take the points raised by Mr Rattenbury. I thank the administration and procedures committee for the work that they have already done on this matter. But I do think that it will exercise our thoughts a bit more in the coming days. I think that this matter has been satisfactorily resolved for the benefit of everyone. I thank members for their participation.

Amendment agreed to.

Original question, as amended, resolved in the affirmative.

Adjournment

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

That the Assembly do now adjourn.

Samoan Independence Day

MRS KIKKERT (Ginninderra) (6.16): Earlier this week I had the honour of joining the Samoan community in the ACT in celebrating Samoan Independence Day. This year marks the 56th anniversary since Samoa achieved independence from New Zealand. I would like to express my sincere thanks to the community for their invitation to attend the lotu, a devotional service recognising this meaningful occasion. On 1 January 1962 Samoa became the first small island country in the Pacific region to achieve its independence. Samoan Independence Day, however, is observed on 1 June each year, with a Sunday devotional service near that day forming an essential part of the celebrations.

The Samoan community in the ACT is very active and works hard to forge community connections as well as to preserve and share their unique culture. They sponsor events throughout the year, both big and small, and always play a visible role in the National Multicultural Festival.

History plays a big part in making up who we are. Our traditions, our languages and our identities are all shaped significantly by our histories. At the event last Sunday I was humbled to see that the local Samoan community chose a place of worship to gather together in honour of celebrating their independence day. At this event people of different faiths came together to acknowledge the special day and sing praises to God and everyone was welcomed with hospitality and graciousness. Following the worship, attendees were invited into the hall to continue the celebration through a feast of delicious Pacific Islander food.

There was a lot of happy discussion in the Samoan language, and I was grateful to be able to engage in these conversations with the help of a translator by my side. I wish the Samoan community in the ACT and worldwide a happy independence day.

I would also like to take this opportunity to again urge all the members of this Assembly to personally engage with our multicultural communities. I encourage each of us to increase our curiosity and compassion so that they can get to know and understand our migrant and refugee communities better than ever before. There is much to learn from those who have roots in cultures that are different to our own and who have a desire to share the best of these as they continue to make significant contributions to our city and this nation.

In conclusion, I once again wish to express my best wishes to the Samoan community in the ACT, including those volunteers who sacrificed many hours of their lives to plan and execute events and serve community members. I look forward to learning from their example of generosity and kindness and being included as part of their community as they grow and continue to bless and help their community members and neighbours in this territory.

Schools—Taylor

MS ORR (Yerrabi) (6.19): I rise to speak about the new public primary school in the north Gungahlin suburb of Taylor. The school is currently under construction and residents are, as you can imagine, quite interested to hear when it will be completed and what it will be like. So I would like to take the time this evening to update the local community.

The school will be a modern school facility that will cater to 176 preschool and 600 primary school students and will open in term 1 2019. Planning for the school also allows for accommodation of an additional 150 primary students and the potential for a years 7 to 10 expansion if required to cater for future growth.

The new school will also include a resource centre, canteen, out of school hours care facilities and a great outdoor learning and play area. The school will be the first community facility provided in Taylor, including two playing fields, and the wider community will be able to hire the school hall, oval and meeting rooms for a range of activities and gatherings. There will even be storage facilities for community groups to store their equipment and resources.

Like all ACT public schools, the new school will deliver the Australian curriculum with specific facilities to enrich learning in the arts, music, and science and technology, engineering, and mathematics—STEM—to ensure we are equipping students for the best possible future.

The priority enrolment area for the new school includes the suburbs of Moncrieff and Taylor, with Casey included as a shared PEA zone with Gold Creek School. The construction is well underway, and the school will be opened from the start of term 1 2019, but the school needs a name, a logo and a uniform.

Consideration was given to naming the school after Florence Taylor, the person who the suburb of Taylor is named after. However, the name Florence Taylor primary school was considered to be too similar to the existing Taylor Primary School located in Kambah, as well as Florence Taylor Street in Greenway, and there was concern the

similarities may cause issues for the ACT emergency services. The place names committee has put forward three possible names, and we are asking members of the community to vote on these. The three names are George Kinlyside, Marion Mahony Griffin, and Margaret Hendry.

Kinlyside was gazetted in 1991 as a suburb name in Gungahlin to commemorate local Ginninderra Hall pioneer George Kendall Kinlyside, a well-known wheelwright, coachbuilder and blacksmith who served the Hall community for many years and was active in the local community in the early 20th century. The name has a long association with the Gungahlin district and would help to locate the school given the nature reserve near Taylor is identified as the Kinlyside nature reserve.

Marion Mahony Griffin was an American architect and artist. She was one of the first licensed female architects in the world, and during her life she produced some of the best architectural drawing in America and was instrumental in envisioning the design plans for the new capital city of Australia, Canberra. Marion's contribution to Canberra was not as a commissioned architect but as a visionary with an ability to inspire, an attribute also found in the best of teachers.

Dr Margaret Hendry was a landscape architect and Canberra resident, passionate about community services and women's affairs. She directed her professional career to landscape design and teaching and was a fellow of both the Australian and the UK institutes of landscape architects. Margaret was a landscape architect for the National Capital Development Commission from 1963 to 1974, the first woman appointed and one of only five in Australia at that time. She played a significant role in shaping the landscape in the national capital, including the Cotter Dam recreational reserve, Gungahlin Cemetery and Belconnen town centre, and many playing fields, housing areas and shopping centres were wholly or partly designed by her.

While people are voting on those three options for a name, they can also vote on three options for the school uniform and a range of logos. I encourage everyone living in north Gungahlin to visit yoursay.act.gov.au to vote for their preferred name, uniform and logo for north Gungahlin's new primary school. I have already cast my votes. In the interest of not influencing the poll I will not say what they were. However, I am very glad the construction of the school is underway and that the community can get involved in the shaping of this vital piece of community infrastructure for Canberra's fastest growing region.

Question resolved in the affirmative.

The Assembly adjourned at 6.24 pm.