



DEBATES
OF THE
LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY
FOR THE
AUSTRALIAN CAPITAL TERRITORY

DAILY HANSARD

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28 November 2018

This is an **EDITED PROOF TRANSCRIPT** of proceedings that is subject to further checking. Members' suggested corrections for the official *Weekly Hansard* should be lodged in writing with the Hansard office (facsimile 02 6205 0025) no later than **Monday, 10 December 2018**. Answers to questions on notice will appear in the *Weekly Hansard*.

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Wednesday, 28 November 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.

Minister for Health and Wellbeing
Motion of censure

MRS DUNNE (Ginninderra) (10.01), by leave: I move the following motion, to censure the Minister for Health and Wellbeing, in accordance with the notice paper:

That this Assembly:

(1) notes:

- (a) systematic bullying, poor culture and poor management in the ACT health system;
- (b) high churn of staff in ACT Health since the announcement in March that the Health Directorate would be split into two directorates;
- (c) worsening elective surgery waiting times and emergency waiting times, despite the assurances of the Minister for Health and Wellbeing that they were improving;
- (d) failures in infrastructure at The Canberra Hospital; and
- (e) delays to the delivery of the Surgical Procedures, Interventional Radiology and Emergency building; and

(2) censures the Minister for Health and Wellbeing for her failures in administration of the Health portfolio.

I am moving this motion because of the failings of the Minister for Health and Wellbeing, including a lack of leadership, a failure to tackle health culture issues, a failure to effectively tackle the need for new infrastructure or to properly look after what we already have, and a failure to tell the community and the Assembly what is actually happening in the health system.

It is clear that the Minister for Health and Wellbeing has failed to show leadership in relation to health. In January this year she said:

... as minister I don't need to know everything that's happening, that is why there are seven and a half thousand people working in health.

I see my role as providing clear priorities for health that reflect what I strongly believe are the priorities of the community.

After a year—

that was last January—

I feel I am across the portfolio.

By these standards, Minister Fitzharris has failed. She has failed her own test. She has failed to set clear priorities for health on issues such as health culture and infrastructure, and she has failed to articulate to the community or to even understand what the community wants from a health system.

What the minister has done, in contrast, is create huge uncertainties within ACT Health and the wider community. Since March ACT Health has seen four bosses: Ms Feely, Mr De'Ath, Ms Anderson for three days, and Ms McDonald. And we know that Ms McDonald will only be here for six months, which means that we really do not have a clear plan for the future of the Canberra Hospital. By this time next year ACT Health and the hospital system will have had a fifth boss, because we will need to have a new CEO for Canberra Health Services, who will have to start from scratch. This is not setting clear priorities for health.

This minister's failure of leadership is reflected in the lack of progress on such key issues as infrastructure, maintenance of existing facilities and, more importantly, health culture. As recently as last Sunday it was revealed that the ACT Health clinical culture committee had not developed a statement of desired culture in ACT Health, three years after a consultant's report recommended that they do so, and even though they had been working on this for three years. The Minister for Health and Wellbeing has failed to show leadership on this issue. She has talked repeatedly about zero tolerance for bullying, and respectful pathways, but she has done little to turn these nice words into deeds. It also shows the problems with reports that are not publicly released. Staff can simply stonewall and wait until a new minister, a new CEO or a new director of ACT Health comes along, and the whole system is shown up again.

That is why the opposition and medical groups such as the AMA and the Australian Salaried Medical Officers called for an inquiry under the Inquiries Act into ACT Health culture. What we have in its place, and what the minister touted, amongst other things, in her press release that she put out yesterday to show how in touch she was, was what she called an independent review of workplace culture. But we have to remember that, first of all, that is not a properly established and independent review. It is a review that she was brought to kicking and screaming, and it is a review that is set up to fail. There are no clear legal mechanisms in place to protect people who would give evidence about bullying and harassment and, as a result, there is a reluctance by people to tell their stories for fear of reprisals. So the government's review will be set up to fail.

What is worse, the staff have been told that the Reid review will do little more than collect information and data in relation to culture. Why would staff risk reprisals by telling their story to a review panel which is only a data-collecting exercise? I fear that the Reid review will end up sitting in a library, gathering dust, because there is no ministerial will or leadership to improve health culture.

Health culture is not only a problem here in the ACT, as recent publications, including articles in the *Medical Journal of Australia*, show, but here in the ACT it is our responsibility, or, more precisely, Minister Fitzharris's responsibility, to ensure that we have a good culture. Workplace bullying in hospitals seems to be rife across the

country, but this is no excuse for Minister Fitzharris to do nothing. What she is currently doing is next to nothing.

The recent MJA survey showed that between a quarter and a half of doctors and nurses in Australia have been bullied or discriminated against at work, or sexually harassed. Workplace bullying in hospitals has been shown to cause depression, anxiety and fatigue and, in the worst and extreme cases, suicide amongst health workers. These symptoms, together with the stress and low levels of satisfaction at work, lead to higher staff absenteeism, which in turn leads to the remaining staff being put under increased pressure.

In the ACT hospital system, for instance, we have seen high levels of unplanned leave in the radiology department, leading to Canberra Health Services having to outsource medical imaging, with costs approaching \$1 million a year. We have seen in the mental health, justice health and drug and alcohol services 122 incidents of mental stress reported between April 2017 and March 2018.

In 2015 a staff survey showed that 54 per cent of staff in ACT Health thought that bullying was present in the workforce, and 46 per cent thought that harassment was present in the workforce. And we know, at least anecdotally, that this situation does not seem to have improved under Minister Fitzharris. A forward-thinking minister would see an opportunity to improve culture and therefore reduce the levels of depression, anxiety and fatigue, and the levels of leave. This would both improve the health system and lower costs. But this would be a minister who had leadership skills, and this minister does not.

It would also mean that we would have more staff working in ACT Health and that ACT Health and Canberra Health Services would be more able to attract staff. Instead, we have seen high levels of churn, both in ACT Health and in Canberra Health Services. In August 2018 the Director-General of Health warned the minister that the target of 14,000 elective surgery procedures was at risk due to current staffing shortfalls. This was less than two months after the strategy had been announced in the budget.

If the minister had taken decisive action on staff culture, the current staffing shortfall for medical staff might have been addressed. Doctors and nurses might want to come and work in the ACT if the culture was better.

In 2015 the AMA warned that the Canberra Hospital was at breaking point. The then president of the ACT AMA, Dr Robson, said:

There's a very rapidly closing window of opportunity ... The current facilities are only just holding and if you delay this sort of infrastructure any longer it may well mean the wheels will come off the cart and the hospital won't cope ...

Move on three years, Madam Speaker, and the wheels are coming off the cart at this moment, and not only in the older buildings. The bill to rectify maintenance issues identified in the AECOM report and funded under UMAHA is in excess of \$40 million, which includes fixing the helipad. The *Canberra Times* reported on

19 November the impact of serious maintenance issues on the hospital campus. We discussed yesterday the closure of theatre 14 for up to 12 weeks because of mould found in the HEPA filter in that theatre, and the impact that had, with the operating theatres not being fully operational.

We have also heard that the whole slew of operating theatres were systematically shut down, one after another, between March and June this year, due to plumbing issues that had to be addressed. None of these things were brought to the attention of the people of the ACT. They had to be winkled out by someone giving me a hint about what sorts of questions to ask, then opening it out more in annual reports, rather than by the minister coming clean with the community and telling the community what they are doing in the hospital.

My colleague Mrs Jones will refer later in the debate on this motion to problems with the maintenance of the Centenary hospital birthing suites. We also need to draw attention to the fact that the paediatric medical unit has been closed, to my knowledge, from 26 August this year, and remains unopen, due to plumbing issues. They could have closed it, stripped the place out, re-plumbed it and put it all back together in that time, but we have not been able to do it. The impact that that has potentially had on infection control in the paediatric ward is serious, because we have had medical patients, who sometimes carry a high burden of infection, being housed in the same ward as surgical patients, which is just bad practice.

In answer to a question on notice, it was revealed that the number of code yellows caused by maintenance issues within the Canberra Hospital is on track to double this year. That is because this minister does not have control over what is going on in the hospital and she is not in control in ensuring that the infrastructure is properly maintained in order to run a 21st century hospital.

In April 2017 the government was advised of the presence of deadly ligature points in the mental health unit. The draft accreditation report identified these ligature points as an extreme risk. The ligature points will not be finally removed until June 2019, more than two years after the risks were identified. Plans to remove the ligature points reduced the availability of beds in the mental health unit, which we already know is running generally at 105 per cent, because not all of the beds were opened when the building was originally opened.

Clearly, the wheels are falling off the cart, and it has become obvious to everyone that our health services infrastructure is unable to cope. On 23 November the *Canberra Times* reported that our population is forecast to grow to half a million over the next decade. Our health system is having trouble coping with the current population, so we desperately need new hospital infrastructure.

The government's policy at the 2016 election was to build a surgical procedures intervention, radiology and emergency, or SPIRE, building. However, this plan was drawn up, as we have come to learn, on the back of a drinks coaster, in response to the Canberra Liberals' election promise, which the government initially pooh-poohed. SPIRE has hardly been an inspiring project.

The *Canberra Times* recently reported that SPIRE may not go ahead on the planned site due to problems with—guess what?—a helipad and a car park being on the site already. It is a little hard to imagine how we came up with a policy to build a new building on top of existing infrastructure without having some plan for relocating that infrastructure in the process. Last year the *Canberra Times* reported that the SPIRE was planned to open in 2022, but tender documents reveal that this date has been put back to late 2024. Given the logistical problems involved with the current site of SPIRE, I am doubtful that we will meet that time frame.

We have a litany of problems in the health system. It is clear that Minister Fitzharris is not across any of the plan. She is not across the plans for SPIRE. She is not able to address the issues in relation to infrastructure. She cannot address the issues in relation to staff culture. All the while, we are bleeding staff or we are unable to recruit staff, in a very difficult environment. The minister did nothing about the issues in relation to hospital pharmacies until the hospital pharmacist threatened to take industrial action. We have had the issue of failing to get training accreditation in the radiology department. And issues were brought to the attention of the hospital as early as February 2017 that the minister, by her own admission, says that she knew nothing about until we had our accreditation downgraded to D grade, from A grade, in May this year.

This says everything about the quality of this minister and the quality of her leadership. She has created an environment where no-one dares to tell her when there is a problem. She wants to be the minister for plausible deniability. She wants to be able to say, “I didn’t know. I wasn’t briefed. It’s not my fault. It’s somebody else’s fault.” But she is the Minister for Health and Wellbeing, the person responsible for the hospital and health care of the people of the ACT, and she has failed. She has failed comprehensively. The litany goes on and on. That is why this minister needs to be censured.

MS FITZHARRIS (Yerrabi—Minister for Health and Wellbeing, Minister for Higher Education, Minister for Medical and Health Research, Minister for Transport and Minister for Vocational Education and Skills) (10.17): I am very pleased to talk about the many achievements of ACT Health and Canberra Health Services under my leadership over the past year that the opposition seem to have missed. It is curious that those opposite take such delight in criticising and denigrating our public health system, yet when we make improvements and changes to ensure that the health system is futureproofed, becomes more sustainable and delivers more health care for patients they seem to want to criticise that too.

It is the same tired, reckless and negative politics we see from the Liberal Party right across the country—no ideas, just negative politics. On this side of the chamber we know the vital importance of a sustainable healthcare system and how much access to health care means for our community. It has been a very busy 12 months for our local public health sector, and I am proud of its many achievements. I remind those opposite that since its last failed attempt in May, Canberra Hospital has passed its accreditation. This was a huge achievement for our health workforce and I am extremely proud to see the way the Health Directorate, led by the director-general, got

the job done. Achieving accreditation was significant, and the final report observed that ACT Health underwent significant transformation to address the improvements required.

It further noted that ACT Health has taken the necessary steps to ensure the implementation of sustainable systems and processes that provide direction and strong governance—again, ignored by the opposition. The surveyors were so impressed by the improvements that they encouraged ACT Health staff to publish and submit the improvement activities for national quarterly improvement reports. Minister Rattenbury and I have both congratulated and thanked ACT Health staff for their enormous effort, professionalism and dedication to this achievement.

Following accreditation, ACT Health got on with the work required to separate into two distinct organisations. On 1 October these two organisations—the ACT Health Directorate and Canberra Health Services—were established. Over the course of this year we have also observed an improvement in how our health system operates. Staff who deliver front-line health services to the Canberra community now work in a dedicated health service delivery organisation—Canberra Health Services. The directorate is responsible for strategic policy, research and planning that will set the strategic direction for the health system and health services across the ACT and region.

The creation of these two organisations has enabled a clearer focus on efficiency and effectiveness for clinical operations and enabled the directorate to undertake core strategy and system stewardship functions, like almost every other jurisdiction. This has been an essential evolution for our growing population and expanding health system and has brought greater clarity about the distinct roles and responsibilities of front line and corporate staff supporting the delivery of health care for our community. It will ensure that as our city continues to grow and age we will keep delivering quality health services into the future.

I have not once shied away from some basic facts: we have a very good public health system in Canberra but we can improve. There have been challenges that require patient and thoughtful leadership and collaboration to put in place the reforms that futureproof our health system. There have been changes that go to the core of good governance, good structure, good culture and good leadership—all the components of a high performing health system that delivers for patients.

I, along with the government, have made record investments in territory-wide health services to deliver better care to the community when and where they need it. All these are things that the opposition have utterly failed to recognise in their year of Liberal negativity and their complete denial of the complexity and scale of delivering public health services. The shadow health spokesperson even said this year that this is not a complicated system. Well, everyone who works in them knows healthcare systems are inherently complex. It is in their nature to be so, in response to the dynamic and variable healthcare needs of our community.

Most of all I am utterly dismayed at the impact that their relentless negativity and pure politics has had on staff. We all accept the role of oppositions to hold governments to account, but this Liberal opposition have thrown out responsibility and leadership in

favour of destructive, negative politics, not once taking a breath to congratulate staff, for example, on achieving full accreditation. As Liberals say, Liberals do, and the Canberra community should be very worried about these Canberra Liberals. After all, it is the opposition's spokeswoman who has said that our popular walk-in centres are a criminal waste of taxpayers' money, has said that I should just sack people and has talked of exorcising the witches.

I have got on with the job. I have not sought to be a health minister who denies that improvements need to be made. I have not sought to be a health minister in a system where nothing goes wrong. That would constitute poor performance. I have been a minister who recognises the complexity of a health system and the essential components of futureproofing that system for our community.

I will address some of the points raised in Mrs Dunne's motion. She claims she has serious concerns about workplace culture, yet she has dismissed our very serious independent review. I remind her that this review is being led by three eminent health professionals who have been to our hospitals and health services and talked directly to staff to try to elicit real change and outcomes.

The panel has called for submissions. They close this Friday, and I encourage anyone who wishes to make a submission to do so. It will be protected, in line with their wishes. The panel has held many forums with the community and with health sector stakeholders. So far more than 150 submissions have been received and I am very pleased to see this work progressing. As the minister for health, I strongly encourage staff who wish to make a submission to do so.

I look forward to seeing the panel's work, and I believe this independent review will be a critical process of learning and healing. It is supported by a wide range of stakeholders. I have asked for findings and recommendations; they will be made public and the government will respond. While Mrs Dunne continues her negative campaign, I am getting on with the job and ensuring that staff have a safe, accessible and private way to share their stories and thoughts on improving workplace culture and putting in place the necessary steps for any of those matters to be referred to appropriate agencies.

Secondly, Mrs Dunne claims there is high churn of staff within ACT Health and Canberra Health Services. With a workforce of more than 7,500 people, from time to time people will move into new positions, retire or seek a new opportunity. I reject outright her claim of high churn.

As I am sure members are aware, we are delivering more elective surgery than ever before but, again, those opposite do not care about the facts. Canberra Health Services is committed to reducing the number of people waiting beyond clinically recommended time frames and performed well in many specialities last year. High rates of timeliness were achieved in cardiac, thoracic, gynaecology, head and neck, obstetrics and vascular surgery. There were zero long waits in paediatric surgery, an important achievement. We will continue to work on improving other surgical areas over the course of this year.

Through extra funding in last year's budget review, Canberra Health Services completed 13,344 surgeries—the second highest on record—and was able to reduce the number of people waiting longer than clinically recommended, from 464 to 406 patients by the end of June 2018. In addition, CHS has decreased the number of people on the wait list by nine per cent, from 5,322 to 4,867 at the end of June 2018.

When it comes to the ED, demand continues to grow each year. The number of presentations to Canberra Hospital increased from 85,093 in 2016-17 to 88,661 in 2017-18. This represents a four per cent increase. Calvary ED saw around 59,000 presentations, a growth of around one per cent. I have acknowledged that from 2016-17 to 2017-18 there was a drop in the proportion of presentations seen on time. In part this was due to one of the worst flu seasons on record, another fact the opposition want to deny. This, among other factors, impacted on the 2017-18 performance. This is not what I want to see nor what I expect as minister. That is why in this year's budget I made sure to deliver funding for additional front-line staff.

Under the leadership of the new CEO, CHS is taking a whole-of-hospital approach to access and patient flow and reviewing our processes in relation to the discharge stream in the ED admission to wards in the hospital and patient discharge from the inpatient hospital setting. This should result in further improvements in ED timeliness and is a high priority for CHS to achieve improvements each quarter.

The budget also delivered nearly \$65 million for more elective and emergency surgeries. This will allow us to deliver around 14,000 elective surgeries each and every year.

The opposition has taken some interest in recent months regarding maintenance at Canberra Hospital. As members know, it is a busy tertiary hospital campus and the largest in our region, providing care to more than 500,000, including acute inpatient day services, outpatient, women's and children's, paediatrics and pathology. It is open 24 hours a day, seven days a week, every day of the year. Of course it will require maintenance from time to time.

Just yesterday the opposition spokeswoman stated that the government does not want to think about hospital infrastructure and certainly does not want to build a new one. Well, with an investment of \$500 billion and over \$400 million already provisioned in our budget for infrastructure, including the commitment to build the new SPIRE centre, this is wrong. There is money in the budget.

There have been two years of intensive planning. The opposition are wrong, and I invite Mrs Dunne to acknowledge that in this place and in public. We are absolutely committed to building and delivering the SPIRE centre and the services it needs to continue to meet the needs of the people of the Canberra region. SPIRE is making very good progress. It is a complex and highly sophisticated expansion of our public hospital to futureproof our health system for many years to come. As members know, SPIRE is due to begin construction in 2020. Important planning work has been undertaken at a territory-wide level with key stakeholders at Canberra Hospital,

Calvary hospital and the Capital Health Network, and I look forward to providing the community with further updates on SPIRE in the coming weeks.

I remind those opposite that there is much more to ACT Health and Canberra Health Services than what they have so negatively sought to portray this year. An extraordinary amount has been achieved. For example, we opened UC hospital this year. Despite relentless negativity from the opposition that we have no interest in hospital infrastructure, this year we opened UC public hospital.

In July we opened the newly refurbished maternity ward at Calvary Public Hospital, offering an excellent option for mums-to-be to deliver their babies in the public health system. We opened the new ACT government-funded theatres at Calvary Public Hospital. We invested in an expansion of the ED at Calvary Public Hospital which will open next year. This year we also released the Chief Health Officer's report, once again showing a range of improvements in the health of our community.

The opening of the UC hospital was a very important moment in public health service delivery in the ACT. UC hospital specialises in care for people recovering from surgery, illness or injury or experiencing mental illness. By being a teaching hospital it will also benefit Canberra students and help bolster the skills of Canberra's future health workforce, particularly in nursing and allied health.

I will list some of the other achievements this year: we opened the new Gungahlin walk-in centre; we announced a site for a new walk-in centre in Weston Creek and progressed planning for a walk-in centre in the inner north; we announced, in partnership with the commonwealth and the Snow Foundation, a major expansion of Clare Holland House; we completed our system-wide data review; we funded meningococcal ACWY vaccinations for Canberra kids; we rolled out grants for more GPs to bulk-bill in Tuggeranong, Weston Creek and Molonglo; we funded an expansion of hospital in the home; and we signed a new MOU with the Australian Nursing and Midwifery Union to develop a ratios framework that will support a strong and sustainable health workforce.

Madam Speaker, I table a list of even more health achievements throughout this year:

Selected ACT Health achievements in 2018.

I am so proud of this work, and I thank the staff who have gone above and beyond to deliver for our community. While those opposite prefer endless politics and negativity, I am out there with my colleagues talking to the community about the importance of public health care—in particular, free, accessible public health care—and talking always to our stakeholders about how we can improve our health system.

It was great to be out on the weekend in Gungahlin talking to locals, hearing how much they love the new walk-in centre. We receive constant positive feedback from the community about the service received in our public hospitals. I am proud of this, the many achievements and the unprecedented level of collaboration with our major partners in the health system—Calvary and the higher education institutions that train our workforce, notably the ANU and UC. Our system is set up for a positive future.

Mrs Dunne has been Liberal health spokesperson for over 700 days and in that time has not presented a single policy idea for the health portfolio. She has questioned my competence many times, but we have delivered in the health portfolio. The Canberra Liberals do not have the confidence to present one single idea for our health system for Canberra. Based on what we have seen in the past, all we will see is the Canberra Liberals shutting down nurse-led walk-in centres, cutting staff and cutting investment—and outcomes for Canberrans would be worse. They have not presented any other plans, so we can only assume that this is what they will do. I am happy for them to keep digging their hole of relentless negative politics. Meanwhile, I will get on with the job. (*Time expired.*)

MRS JONES (Murrumbidgee) (10.32): I take no pleasure in speaking today, but it is our duty as the opposition to ensure that the government cannot just ignore the views of those who speak to us. We are protected when we come into this place, but people in their workplaces are not. The lack of leadership from this minister is astounding. There is a problem of systemic bullying. The directorate has been split, but no-one can quite tell me why or what this is intended to achieve. Infrastructure failures at Canberra Hospital include switchboard combustion, leaks in basic drainage from birth suites and other issues that I will come to. The hospital looks like it is from the Soviet bloc. Delays in delivering new buildings—

Ms Fitzharris interjecting—

MRS JONES: I spent quite a bit of time in that hospital this year, which I will come to in a minute. So I do not think you need to sigh over it. That is a fact. It is elderly, it is horrible and it is a terrible workplace. There is a general unwillingness from the government and from this minister to look at what has happened over many years under Labor ministers, especially in recent years, when things do seem to have gone from bad to worse.

As I mentioned, I had a recent experience in the Canberra Hospital. Earlier this year, I was a patient of the foetal medicine unit at the women's and children's hospital. I now have a very good understanding of what it is like to work in, as well as to be a patient of, that hospital. Apart from my regular appointments with the head of the foetal medicine unit, I was admitted several times with serious complications. When I was delivered of my baby—a seven-hour long experience—I was a patient of the women's and children's hospital for 14 days. That is a very long stay in hospital for a new mum.

During this time, my baby was a patient of the NICU, the neonatal intensive care unit, and then the nursery. For some time I was feeding my baby from a distance and she was finally discharged to my unit. It was very tough for all those around me. My baby was born premature to a mother who had had a significant operation. It is a very complicated business and the system is not designed for cases like mine.

Most post-caesarean mums go home without their babies if they are in the NICU or in the nursery because their health needs are less complicated, but I was in for a very long stay. I woke up after my operation in the ICU to hear a nurse calling for someone

to deal with the ants on the floor. She said to me, “This is a regular occurrence in the ICU.” The minister can try to say the same as she did yesterday: that she does not believe this to be true. I am pretty used to being called a liar, but I think those opposite know that when I bring something to this place I do not make it up. I have never made it up. The staff in that place deserve better working conditions.

The results of my long stay were twofold. I was very well looked after by doctors. The nurses gave me everything they had. But I am here to make absolutely clear to you that the front-line workers, yet again, under this government, are more stressed than they have ever been before. They sat on my bed and they told me that they do not know how they will cope. The minister is neither truly aware of this fact nor sufficiently concerned.

There is a very unhelpful and sinister development in the government’s attitude towards their front-line workers. I have seen it in the firies; I have seen it in the ambos; now I am seeing it here. When asked to face the fact that front-line workers are struggling, are scared to voice their opinions, are suffering the effects of both unhealthy culture and overwork, the answer of those here and those in high places is that what the workers are saying is not true. It is true. It happened with the letter to the press. The answer from the minister that we heard earlier this year was astounding. She said, “We are responding, but there is not a problem.” You cannot have it both ways, minister. The nurses know and the nurses hear this attitude coming from the minister. It is a complete failure of a Labor government that goes around pretending to care about workers.

This government and this minister have become like the worst big business owner. Its response to the workers straining under the weight that this government has put on their shoulders is: “They are lying.” We had the same thing here yesterday. When I was a patient in the women’s and children’s hospital—I will repeat it again today—I was told by one of the very worried nurses, “They got one of the people who wrote the letter to the press. They are on the way out, but they did not get the other one.”

I say to members opposite that every fibre of your being should be deeply ashamed that it has come to this. It is totally unacceptable. It is an absolute disgrace and a judgement on this minister that this is what I was told. What is worse, when I put it to the minister yesterday her answer was: “I do not believe that happened.” I can cope with being called a liar, although most people around me have learned that I do not make things up. The information I bring here is not made up; it is very real. Ultimately, it is generally proven as we go on with our debates.

This is because I listen. I go out into the community, I sit down and I listen. I think the minister is stretching things to say that it is not true. Those people have no reason to lie. They have nothing more but danger and stress to gain by telling me and others what their plight is. These nurses have never been so overworked in their lives and they are full-on not coping with what the government is doing to them. That was my 14-day experience in the hospital this year.

Let us look at the women’s and children’s hospital. It was opened in 2012 but already does not have enough capacity. It is the tertiary hospital in the region, as the minister

constantly says. Almost immediately, it could not meet demand. Two years later, a senior executive told the media, “The hospital has been designed to manage until the early part of next decade, but if demand increases beyond that we will start planning for an expansion.” So its design allowed for enough capacity, even they believed, for only eight years. The minister was not the minister then and now she has promised an extension. I accept that. But the extension delivery date continues to go out into the future. There is some extra capacity at Calvary, but that may not be of much assistance to pregnant women living in Canberra’s far south or, as I have said, women with a high-risk pregnancy.

High-risk pregnancies are on the rise in the ACT. We have more complicated pregnancies; we have older women having babies; we have more complicated situations; we have a lot more older people who are having babies who are seeking intervention. We had a recent case of a doctor wanting an expectant mother who lived in the far south to be admitted for a caesarean. But that woman was told that she could not get in until a week after her due date. It is not on. On top of that, there are continuing maintenance issues at the hospital. There are staff who do an unbelievable job under these stressful conditions. We had a letter from them to explain what the exact problem is.

Let me give you all a little example of what happens in one hour in a maternity unit. Patient one needs to be prepped for surgery. An IV cannula needs to be put in. Their vein is difficult to find. It takes a couple of people to get the cannula in. The bell rings, “I need my urine output measured.” The bell rings, “My baby needs a tube feed.” Two bells ring at once, “My wound dressing is coming off.” “Can you ask the neonatal doctor if my baby can come home with me?” Patient five needs a trace on her stomach to check the baby’s heartbeat is okay. Patient two’s meds need to come from the hospital pharmacy because they are on medications that are not kept in the ward. Patient five and patient six need observations—blood pressure checking, temperature checking, blood oxygenation.

Then three bells rings at once. “I need pain medication.” A nurse goes to get it. Two nurses come back because a witness is needed for pain medication. “What is your name, date of birth, any allergies?” Watch the patient take the meds. “I need my urine output measured again.” “I need help getting my baby to feed.” The trace has lost the baby’s heartbeat and needs to be repositioned. That is just an hour in one of these wards.

These wards were set up to have three midwives on duty overnight. They often have two and a registered nurse. That is not the same. Those poor midwives are straining under the pressure. The shift for, say, a 17-bed unit overnight is three staff—two midwives and a registered nurse. The staffing should be at least three midwives. That is what the facility was designed to have. That is not what they have now. Sometimes the registered nurse they are given is not even somebody with maternity experience, which means everything that they need to do has to be explained to them and shown to them. Telling us that some things are working in health is not an excuse for the many failings in the women’s and children’s hospital and across ACT Health. (*Time expired.*)

MR BARR (Kurrajong—Chief Minister, Treasurer, Minister for Social Inclusion and Equality, Minister for Tourism and Special Events and Minister for Trade, Industry and Investment) (10.42): I think we can all agree that health is a very significant priority for all Canberrans and, indeed, all Australians. People's experiences in the health system in the ACT are generally very positive, and the feedback from members of the community about the hardworking staff within our health system is overwhelmingly positive.

It is interesting in this context that the number one priority of the current federal government when it was first elected and delivered its first budget in 2014 was to slash funding for health services. Its 2014-15 budget lowered rebates and co-payments for people seeking to see a GP, provided higher costs for medications and higher bills for specialists, increased thresholds in relation to the PBS safety net, left big holes in the Medicare safety net, resulted in longer waiting lists for public hospitals, lower rebates for private health insurance premiums and required more people to pay the Medicare levy surcharge.

The history of funding for our health system is one of the Liberal Party, at whichever level of government it happens to be in office, cutting health funding. And the consequence of the Liberal Party's philosophy in action in government is to put less into public health. When the single largest funder of health in this nation, the commonwealth government, vacates the space, as the Liberal government has done consistently over the last three or four years, then there is no doubt that that puts pressure on state and territory governments, whether they are Labor or Liberal. That is why this Liberal Party, at a federal level at least, has managed to get an extraordinary coalition of opposition at a state and territory level, including from their own colleagues, in relation to health funding policy. And this is an important context in this debate in this nation.

There were consequences from the Tony Abbott-Joe Hockey budget of 2014, and those consequences are felt across the Australian health system. This is at the core of what you believe in in relation to properly funding public health, and it is necessarily a partnership in this nation between the commonwealth and state and territory governments. Next year we will have a clear choice, and one party, the Labor Party, will put more funding into our health system, and that is important. That is the context in which we have this debate about health services in the ACT.

I appreciate the opportunity this morning to update the Assembly on the achievements of Minister Fitzharris since the last time our local Liberals, our local branch of the conservative party in this nation, put forward another one of these political stunts. Since that time the minister has continued to actively address issues and to improve health services across our system. Let me be clear: Meegan Fitzharris has the absolute confidence of her colleagues and me as Chief Minister in her diligence, in her hard work and in her determination to grow our health services alongside our growing community. Minister Fitzharris has a strong focus on preventative child and population health. Not only is she building the health system we need now but she is focusing on improving public health outcomes into the future and ensuring that our health system meets the needs of a growing city and meets the needs of coming generations.

In June this year the government invested in further upgrades at Calvary Public Hospital, as have been mentioned, supporting additional treatment spaces, improving access and triage arrangements, enhancing waiting areas and expanding the short-stay unit within that hospital's emergency department. The June budget also saw a \$122 million investment in core hospital services at Canberra Hospital so that more Canberrans can access health care when they need it and access it more quickly. This included more funding for the emergency department, emergency surgery, hospital beds and the intensive care unit, as well as funding for more elective surgeries.

Also in June the minister opened the territory's third public hospital at the University of Canberra, delivering specialised care for people recovering from surgery, from illness, or experiencing mental illness. In July the minister opened the newly refurbished maternity ward at Calvary Public Hospital, offering an excellent option for Canberra mothers-to-be to deliver their babies in the public system. Having these additional facilities and expanded facilities on the north side takes pressure off the facilities on the south side, as people on the north side are less likely to travel to the south side if they have those facilities available on the north of the city.

In September the minister opened our third nurse-led walk-in centre in Gungahlin, and since then, as we have heard, over 3,000 patients have used this free public healthcare facility. This type of investment in free public health care is bitterly opposed by those opposite and has been throughout its history.

We talk about free public health care in this nation. Let us not forget that the Liberal Party opposed Medicare in its creation and through its first decade and a half. It was only when it was clear that they could not be elected to public office in this nation that they reversed their position on Medicare, and yet over the years they have sought to chip away at it, to privatise elements of it. They have form on Medicare; they have form on public health. And it is poor form. They do not in their hearts believe in free public health care. In their hearts they do not, and the Australian people know that, and Canberrans know that. And they know that if they want a serious investment in public health then they need to vote for progressive political parties.

That is demonstrated time and again around this nation. We saw it in Victoria on the weekend; we saw it in the ACT in 2016; and we are certainly going to see it at the federal election next year; and we are certainly going to see it—

Members interjecting—

MR BARR: In South Australia at the moment the South Australian Premier and the South Australian health system are under enormous pressure because of funding cuts, because the Liberals come in and they want to cut funding to public health. That is exactly what is going on, true to form. Just like Michael Kroger said, following the Victorian election debacle, the Liberal Party's task is to come in and cut funding. That is what they are about. They is what this mob are about. It is in their DNA. It is what they will always do, because they do not believe in free public health care. We do and we will continue to invest in important services for our community.

Minister Fitzharris continues to support nurses that support Canberrans. The minister announced that the government has signed a new MOU with the Australian Nursing and Midwifery Association to develop a ratios framework that will support strong and sustainable nursing workforce ratios into the future.

In October the government delivered on our election commitment to increase GP bulk-billing in Canberra's south by supporting a new general practice and the expansion of another in Tuggeranong and a new GP bulk-billing clinic in the Molonglo Valley. We have been out talking to the community about Canberrans' interest in public health care and it is clear that Canberrans value the investment this government is making in free public health care right across our city. I know the opposition do not want to talk about those achievements and accomplishments but they are real and they are being utilised by Canberrans every single day.

I commend Meegan Fitzharris for her leadership, for her advocacy, for her support and investments in public health care. I also thank all the hardworking staff right across the ACT health system for helping the thousands of patients to get the care they need every day. The minister's focus, and the government's focus, remains on what matters most to Canberra families, and that is quality public health care. We reject this political stunt from the opposition, the party that always cuts health spending and does not believe in free public health care.

MR RATTENBURY (Kurrajong—Minister for Climate Change and Sustainability, Minister for Corrections and Justice Health, Minister for Justice, Consumer Affairs and Road Safety and Minister for Mental Health) (10.52): Today we see another motion from Mrs Dunne in which she is seeking to generate a particular political image about the health system to suit her agenda, but the motion is divorced from the reality of the performance of the health system in the ACT.

Minister Fitzharris made this comment in her remarks, and I had prepared similar remarks: neither Minister Fitzharris nor I, with our respective responsibilities in this place, have walked in here at any point this year and said that the health system is perfect. We have been open to acknowledging that in a system as large, as complex, and as busy as this one there will be areas where we must continue to strive for improvement, where there will need to be reform, where there will need to be additional resources, where we will need to consider new approaches, where new issues will emerge.

Neither of us have denied that those challenges are not there, but it is our jobs as the ministers to get on and fix those things. The track record outlined by the minister today of the work that has been done and some comments that I will make in the mental health space demonstrate that we are committed to making our health system as good as it possibly can be, making sure that it delivers for Canberrans and that Canberrans know they will get excellent health care when they need it.

It is a view in the community that most people are very satisfied with the ACT health system, and I meet those people. The Liberal Party are not the only party in this place that talk to people in the community, despite their attempt to generate an image

otherwise. Every single one of us gets consistent community feedback because our community recognise us. They see us in the supermarkets; they see us when we are doing mobile offices; they see us at a range of public events, and people are very forthcoming with their feedback.

We know that people will have different views and that some people's experiences will be different. But I meet a lot of people who say they have very good experiences with ACT Health. I also get letters, as the minister, from constituents who are concerned and feel something has gone wrong. They give feedback on areas that need improvement. I take those matters very seriously. I look at each of them very closely and I frequently seek feedback from Health, and not just to prepare the ministerial response. Those letters frequently lead to a conversation to seek further information and the like. For the opposition to say the minister does not care and that the government does not care and is not listening to the community is simply not true. It suits their political narrative, but it is not the case.

We have seen a series of motions from Mrs Dunne this year, when she has sought to raise a range of issues on occasions. Yesterday she made an observation along the lines of: "It is really urgent that we do this because these matters need to be brought before the Assembly." These matters have been brought before the Assembly frequently by Mrs Dunne this year and she has had plenty of opportunity to raise them. I am very happy to respond to them yet again today.

As has been touched on already in the debate, a range of important reforms are going on in ACT Health. These include things like: the territory-wide health services planning; the data review, which is giving us better data and better capability in this space and which will lead to significant improvements across a range of outcome areas; the independent external culture review; and significant investments in our emergency departments and elective surgery programs, as Minister Fitzharris outlined in her comments earlier.

In the mental health space, we have seen a range of enhancements to existing services, as well as new services coming online. Over the last two budgets there has been increased investment in mental health, more services have been provided, and new and better services are being provided.

In terms of the newer services that have come on stream, there are some excellent examples which I would like to reflect on. The first is the recently launched partnership with the Black Dog Institute on the life span suicide prevention program. The ACT government is investing \$1.5 million in this program, which takes an updated approach to tackling suicide. There are nine components to it, and the Black Dog Institute have been excellent partners on this. I am very pleased to see this program rolling out in the ACT because there is an upward trend in suicide in Australia. This is challenging all governments across the country, and we must be open to taking new approaches to tackling this very difficult issue that is afflicting our community.

The government has supported Menslink to expand their counselling services to 10 to 12-year-old boys. We did this because Menslink told us that this is an area they see as

an emerging problem and they want to get into it early. They wanted to run this program that they believed would work, and the data that has come back from that program shows that it has been well received by the community. A lot of people have come into the program and it is delivering for that age group. A lot of people perhaps think children that age are unlikely to present with suicidal ideation but, sadly, that is what we are seeing in our community. I was very pleased to be able to support Menslink to launch that new initiative to target this emerging problem.

We have funded sessions at headspace to reduce waiting times for young people needing support when they first identify as having mental health problems. That means they can get rapid access for some initial appointments. We do not have full evaluation data yet, but early evidence is indicating that many of the young people coming into that program are getting what they need and do not come back to the service. Others who need more sustained treatment are channelled into the right pathways, but it is improving access for young people to get the support they need in a timely manner.

In the last budget we invested in a significant package of new supported accommodation to allow people with mental health issues to live in the community. This is a new model, a new approach that recognises that some people with a mental health condition will have an enduring need for support; they are able to live in the community but not unsupported. This model looks to fill a gap that has existed previously. They will have access to long-term accommodation, recognising that these can be enduring conditions. It will become their home, where they will not just have the occasional visit; there will be 24-hour support. This will maximise people's opportunities for independence and to live a fulfilling life. They will have the support they need to maximise opportunities

We have also been rolling out the new adult community mental health services model of care to improve access to community services and provide more support to patients when and where they need it. Some elements have just been implemented in the last few weeks and already I am getting feedback from staff that this is resulting in two outcomes: people getting access to the right treatment in the right place at the time that they need it; and it is cutting the workload of some of our staff.

Better operating systems mean that people are getting the treatment they need but staff are getting to do their jobs more effectively. This has been driven by our staff, supported by the government. We have seen pressures come into our mental health system and we have responded to them. We have a new and improved model of care that is tackling those workload issues and at the same time ensuring that our consumers are getting a better quality of care.

These are just a few examples of the positive work that has been happening in mental health. There are a range of other examples, including new consultation liaison services and the expansion of perinatal services in the last 12 months, through the budget process. These are all things the government is working on on a constant basis. It does not suit the narrative of the Liberal Party, but this is the reality on the ground of the improved services that have been delivered in the areas for which I have particular responsibility within the health portfolio, and it is reflective of the constant

effort of ACT Health. Our staff are dedicated; they work hard and the government supports them to do as good a job as they can in the challenging circumstances they often face.

The Greens will not be supporting this motion today. We do not agree with Mrs Dunne's characterisation of the role Minister Fitzharris has been playing. Obviously I deal with Ms Fitzharris frequently, both in cabinet and through our one-on-one meetings where we work together to coordinate the performance of ACT Health, particularly on governance issues such as the recent splitting of the directorate into two separate organisations. I have great confidence that Minister Fitzharris is dedicated to the portfolio and is working hard.

Health a challenging portfolio. Every minister who has ever held it in the time I have been in this place has faced similar criticisms to what Mrs Dunne is putting forward today. That is the nature of health—it is challenging. It is a large, complex system with growing demand on a constant basis. But I am confident that Minister Fitzharris is striving to address those challenges and that we are making progress in ensuring that ACT Health continues to improve.

MRS DUNNE (Ginninderra) (11.02), in reply: Madam Speaker, it is quite typical of the approach that the Labor Party has taken in health in this term that we are in this situation today. Nothing typifies it more than the approach taken in this debate by Mr Barr, who attempted to turn it into a debate on health funding.

This is not the day for the debate on health funding; this is the day on which we have a discussion about whether or not this chamber should censure the minister for health. If the Chief Minister wants to have a debate about health funding, knock yourself out; I will gladly come to the table. And when we do come to the table, we will put forward the Australian approach to health funding, which is a combination of privately provided and publicly provided health services which is unique in the world, excels in the world and is a model which many across the world aspire to.

We have to remember that it is a combination of publicly provided and privately provided services. One of the problems with the bland assertions about free public health services is that they do not take into account that most of us who are able to do so pay some of our own way in the health system, thereby relieving the burden on the tax system so that we can provide free public health services to those who could not otherwise access it.

I will go straight from there to the issue of the nurse-led walk-in centre. I will say it again so that this minister never again misrepresents the Canberra Liberals: my predecessor, Mr Hanson, and I have comprehensively, conclusively and repeatedly said, over nearly 10 years now, that we would not close nurse-led walk-in centres; we would change the model. We would ensure that there were doctors available at walk-in centres. We would do what we could to ensure that there was bulk-billing in nurse-led walk-in centres so that the commonwealth could pay some of the cost, which is currently borne almost entirely by the ACT taxpayer because this government does not know how to cost shift to the commonwealth.

It is a constant complaint that we fail to get proper commonwealth funding for services provided in the hospital, we do not bill Medicare properly and we do not bill the pharmaceutical benefits system properly because we are not signed up to the agreements. Instead of paying out of ACT taxpayer money in excess of \$180 every time someone turns up to the nurse-led walk-in centre, we would be trying to retrieve some of that money from the commonwealth, like every other state does.

It is easy for this government to say, “We provide this free service.” It is difficult to tell the truth. If Joe Public walks up to a nurse-led walk-in centre and someone says to them, “Actually, it is not free; it costs the ACT taxpayer \$188,” he is going to say, “Well, I am doing all right, thank you very much, because I am not paying that out of my pocket. I do not see that coming out of my pocket.” But it comes out of your rates, it comes out of the duties that this government levies, it comes out of the GST that we pay and is brought back to us, it comes out of the parking fines, and it comes out of the parking fees. ACT taxpayers pay that \$188 from all of these things.

The minister put out a press release yesterday extolling the virtues of the health system and how great she has been, and she spoke about it today. I will just touch on half-a-dozen issues that she raised to say how she has been doing a great job.

To say that achieving accreditation is an achievement is really pretty laughable. It is the thing that makes the hospital function, that allows the hospital to function. It is business as usual. If we did not have accreditation, we would have to close the hospital. The fact that we were under pressure for three or four months to achieve accreditation was a real problem. They are sitting there saying “Geez, we achieved accreditation,” with a sigh of relief. They did not have a plan B; they did not know what would happen. They had to achieve accreditation, Madam Speaker, or we would be in a very fine pickle now and this minister would be well and truly gone.

The minister claims that she has announced an expansion of Clare Holland House. It is interesting to note that there is not one dollar of ACT money in that expansion. The minister talked about progress in the delivery of the territory-wide health services planning document, but she failed to say that she abandoned the policy that she talked up for one year or more in relation to virtual centres of medical excellence. She talked about meningococcal vaccination but did not mention that they had not delivered on their commitment to deliver free meningococcal B vaccination for infants, as was promised at the election.

She talked about the bulk-billing clinics. I applaud the bulk-billing grants. What I do not applaud is the fact that the grant application closed in April and it took six months, until October, to decide how to spend some of the money—not all of the money—they had allocated for this. I know that one of the bidders subsequently told me that they had hoped that they would be able to open their clinic in June in the Molonglo Valley in advance of the flu season, and they were not able to do so because of the unconscionable delays in this very small grants program.

The minister talks about the establishment of the independent review into workplace culture. Really, Madam Speaker, it is risible that the minister would consider this an achievement. She resisted. She was dragged, kicking and screaming, to a poor

substitute for a proper workplace culture review. It was risible to talk about developing a nurse safety strategy after we had seen the white hot anger of the ANMF about the failure of the Minister for Mental Health and Minister for Health and Wellbeing to address a work safety strategy and the delays in that. It is risible that they would call this an achievement. It is not an achievement. It is something that they are in the process of doing, and something that has been unconscionably delayed.

These are just some of the things that the minister says are her achievements. The minister says that the Canberra Liberals are denigrating the public health system. Nothing is further from the truth. We believe in the public health system. We believe it needs to be appropriately funded and it needs to be appropriately supported by its political leaders. This minister does not do this.

I refer again to the very first meeting I had with Minister Fitzharris after she became the Minister for Health and I became the shadow minister. It took many months to actually have that meeting. I offered to work with her in a collaborative fashion. Like Mrs Jones, I do not come in here and lie. The offer I made to her on that day was: "I do not need to go to the media with every story. If you have an issue and you want to sort it out with me, pick up the phone, send me an email or come and see me in my office." She has never once done it. This minister does not know how to work collaboratively across the chamber. She was given every opportunity.

What the people on this side of the chamber want is a good public health system and a good hospital system where the staff are appreciated by their managers, by their leaders. They do not have it. I pay tribute to the staff who have to work under these circumstances. It is quite clear from the demeanour of this minister that she should not continue in her job, and it is quite clear from the demeanour of this minister that she should be censured by this parliament.

Question put:

That the motion be agreed to.

The Assembly voted—

Ayes 11

Noes 14

Miss C Burch
Mr Coe
Mrs Dunne
Mr Hanson
Mrs Jones
Mrs Kikkert
Ms Lawder

Ms Lee
Mr Milligan
Mr Parton
Mr Wall

Mr Barr
Ms Berry
Ms J Burch
Ms Cheyne
Ms Cody
Ms Fitzharris
Mr Gentleman

Ms Le Coureur
Ms Orr
Mr Pettersson
Mr Ramsay
Mr Rattenbury
Mr Steel
Ms Stephen-Smith

Question resolved in the negative.

Drugs of Dependence (Personal Cannabis Use) Amendment Bill 2018

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

Title read by Clerk.

MR PETTERSSON (Yerrabi) (11.17): I move:

That this bill be agreed to in principle.

I rise today to introduce the Drugs of Dependence (Personal Cannabis Use) Amendment Bill 2018. This bill will amend the Drugs of Dependence Act 1989, the Medicines, Poisons and Therapeutic Goods Act 2008 and the ACT Criminal Code 2002, with the effect of legalising cannabis for personal use. The bill will allow individual possession of up to 50 grams of cannabis and will also allow for the cultivation of up to four cannabis plants.

Since I tabled this bill two months ago, I have received overwhelming support from the community. Recent government research has found that 54 per cent of Canberrans support legalising cannabis for personal use and only 27 per cent of Canberrans are opposed to this change.

Many of the submissions I received in consultation were from people with chronic health issues who wanted to legally access cannabis to relieve pain but did not meet the criteria for medicinal cannabis. Some wanted to occasionally, recreationally, smoke cannabis without risking fines or prosecution. Many others did not ever plan on using cannabis themselves but wanted to end the criminalisation of cannabis from a policy perspective. Some submissions were from Canberrans who had had issues with excessive cannabis use but who wanted this to be treated as a health problem, not a criminal justice one.

Clearly, there is enormous community support for legalisation. Canberra has always been a progressive city, at the forefront of legal and social reform. Again Canberrans can lead the country and legalise cannabis for personal use. This bill has such widespread community support that it is now time for us members of this place to legislate.

Cannabis is the most commonly used illicit drug in Australia. A 2016 national drug survey found that 35 per cent of Australians have used cannabis and 10 per cent have tried it in the past year. That means one in three Australians will try the drug in their lifetime. Statistically, that means one in three members of this place have tried cannabis. I have my suspicions about some of you, but I will leave it until I am outside the chamber to point the finger.

Decades long policies of criminalisation and education programs based solely on abstinence have failed to stop widespread cannabis usage. The origins of cannabis criminalisation in Australia stem from the moral panic in the 1930s in the United States. Cannabis use was linked to sexist and racist tropes that have since been completely debunked.

At the commonwealth level, section 300 of the Criminal Code makes drug trafficking an offence. However, possession of cannabis remains a matter for the states. In the 1990s several states and territories decriminalised the possession of small amounts of

cannabis, including the ACT in 1992. This was a great first step, but it does not go far enough. Criminalisation still harms our community. With the current model it is up to police discretion if you are caught in possession of cannabis. This has the potential to create unfair situations of a mixed level of enforcement for different members of the community. It is also worth pointing out that for every one consumer—I will say that again: consumer—that receives a fine from the SCON program, we have three arrests of cannabis consumers. Legalising possession of a small amount of cannabis is a positive harm minimisation policy.

Like all drugs, both legal and illegal, cannabis can have an effect on a consumer's health. But when compared to other legal drugs, such as alcohol, tobacco and prescription medication, cannabis is hardly remarkable. According to a report by the Australian Institute of Health and Welfare, alcohol represents 4.6 per cent of the total disease burden, tobacco represents nine per cent, and cannabis represents only 0.1 per cent. Compare this to the misuse of prescription drugs, such as codeine and other opioids, which in 2016 caused more deaths than for all illicit drugs combined. Tobacco and alcohol combined kill around 20,000 Australians every year. These are incredible and shocking numbers.

The health impact of cannabis is far less than for these legal drugs. Not only do these legal drugs place an enormous burden on the health system but they are linked to antisocial behaviour and the criminal justice system. A common argument against cannabis is that it is a gateway drug that will encourage people to try harder substances. This is simply untrue, and a massive simplification of the complex external and internal factors surrounding drug dependency. Most users of cannabis do not go on to try harder drugs. Cannabis is no more a gateway drug than alcohol or tobacco.

I am not saying that cannabis does not have any negative effects. Some people do suffer adverse effects as a result of cannabis use. But when compared to the health impact of other legal drugs, the case for criminalisation does not stack up when it comes to health concerns. In fact, criminalisation can actually discourage those who may have a problem with excessive cannabis use from seeking help. It also creates a stigma that may cause people to not seek help from family or friends for fear of judgement. Excessive cannabis use, like all excessive drug use, should be treated as a health problem, not a criminal justice one.

Legalisation will make it easier for these people to get help. That is a good thing. The classification of cannabis as an illicit drug also creates an unnecessary burden for the criminal justice system. According to the Australian Crime Commission's 2016-17 *Illicit drug data report*, over 50 per cent of arrests in Australia were for cannabis-related drugs, and 91 per cent of those arrests were consumer arrests—in other words, small amounts purely for personal use.

Despite the decade long war on drugs and the billions of dollars spent, illicit drugs are still used by millions of Australians. As Mick Palmer, former AFP Commissioner, notes, "drug law enforcement has had little impact on the Australian drug market". Valuable police resources are tied up prosecuting ordinary cannabis users when they

could instead be used to tackle more harmful illicit substance suppliers or other justice issues.

Here in the ACT, on average, almost one Canberran every day is arrested for cannabis consumption and over 50 per cent of all drug-related arrests are of cannabis consumers. This results in a waste of police resources focusing on recreational cannabis users who are causing no harm to anyone except potentially themselves. If cannabis is legalised, however, we can stop recreational users getting criminal records and allocate police resources so that they focus on dangerous criminals.

As a restorative justice city, we should focus on harm minimisation policies and reducing the excessive criminalisation of certain offences. Once individuals interact with the criminal justice system, it can snowball into more serious offences and penalties—a cycle which can be hard to break. Getting caught with a small amount of cannabis should not ruin someone's life. We need to legalise cannabis.

A further benefit of legalised cannabis from a criminal justice perspective is that it would stop money going into the hands of organised crime. Rather than bkie gangs controlling the sale of cannabis and taking the profits, Canberrans could grow their own plants. This will also, hopefully, limit the interaction that ordinary Canberrans have with organised crime. One gateway theory that I do subscribe to is that the real gateway is the drug dealer. They have a financial incentive to push harder drugs on to consumers. By restricting interaction with these people—drug dealers—we can reduce the revenue of criminal gangs by making them unnecessary. Given the option, recreational users of cannabis would rather act within the law, and this bill will enable that.

This bill will not completely remove restrictions regarding cannabis. Growing more than four plants and artificially growing cannabis will remain illegal. Selling cannabis and supplying cannabis to minors will also remain illegal, as they are under current laws. New offences will need to be introduced to make smoking cannabis in a public place, or within 20 metres of a minor, illegal, and that is what this bill does. Driving under the influence of drugs is illegal now and will remain illegal. My bill will simply allow adult recreational users to naturally grow and consume the substance in a safe way, while not affecting the wider community.

Let me address some of the concerns that were raised with me about this bill during the consultation process. To those who may question whether this change is really necessary, I say yes. As I have shown, criminalisation itself causes harm. The majority of Canberrans support changing the law. There is clear community desire for change. Some people raised concerns about the mental health effects of cannabis. Studies have shown that cannabis can have a negative impact on the mental health of those who have pre-existing mental health conditions or those who are genetically predisposed to having one. The current system is not preventing these people from using cannabis, but the prospect of a criminal record is not going to improve anyone's mental health and, ultimately, it may stop people seeking professional help when they need it.

Excessive cannabis use should always be viewed as a health concern, not dealt with in the criminal justice system. Legalising cannabis will not change other laws associated

with public safety and intoxication. It will, as I have said previously, remain illegal to drive under the influence of cannabis, just as it is illegal to drive while drunk. As with the current drink-driving laws, these penalties dissuade most road users from driving while impaired by a substance. It will remain illegal to consume cannabis in a public place or around children.

On the other side of the argument—and I received a legitimate number of submissions on this; a crazy number, to be honest—some members of the community felt that this bill did not go far enough and wanted no restrictions on the number of plants, or other similar changes. I think that this bill strikes the right balance for the majority of community members. It is sensible and enforceable and will have a positive impact on Canberrans' lives. Most importantly, it is achievable under current federal laws.

Perhaps in the future we could consider setting up a market, like in the US, and directing the taxes from that towards better treatment and awareness programs. This would, however, require changes to federal laws. But for now, in this place and at this time, this bill is appropriate. The proposed bill is not some wacky, untested policy. It is a sensible step forward that has already been implemented in other jurisdictions. Canada has legalised the sale and possession of cannabis and just recently launched its market. New Zealand has also pledged a referendum on this issue for 2020. Currently, 10 states in the United States of America have legalised cannabis and most have gone the step further of setting up a market for this product.

My bill closely aligns with the Vermont model, where sale is illegal. While I have not decided to push for a taxed and regulated market for several reasons, I note that the Colorado market has hit sales of \$1 billion and has raised \$200 million in cannabis taxes. That is \$1 billion taken out of the black market and \$200 million pumped into schools and hospitals. These policies have been successful and they have helped to move states away from the harmful policies of the war on drugs.

It is time for our government to legalise cannabis for personal use. Our current laws are based on historical misinformation, old science and punitive ideas of justice. Sensible policy would treat cannabis like we do tobacco and alcohol, and not criminalise the 35 per cent of Australians that have used this substance. No-one should have their life ruined because they are caught with a small amount of cannabis.

Since I first announced this bill two months ago, I have received an overwhelmingly positive response from the Canberra community, and I thank each and every one of them for that. This is only possible because of your support. Canberrans want the current law to be changed. Let us continue to lead the country in implementing progressive social policy. I urge all members of this place to support this bill. This is a common-sense reform. Let us get it done.

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

Health, Ageing and Community Services—Standing Committee

Proposed reference

MR HANSON (Murrumbidgee) (11.31): Pursuant to standing order 174, I move:

That the Drugs of Dependence (Personal Cannabis Use) Amendment Bill 2018 be referred to the Standing Committee on Health, Ageing and Community Services.

This is an interesting debate. It is one worth examining closely. I think we should always be looking at areas of reform, be it drug reform or other areas where we are principally concerned about the harm that substances cause to people, particularly young people and vulnerable groups.

While this is a multifaceted issue, and Mr Pettersson in his speech talked about a range of issues in relation to criminal justice, organised crime and so on, I think we would agree that the most concerning issues to us are the health issues. Indeed, that is why Minister Fitzharris has adjourned this bill. That is why I think it is important that we—

Government members interjecting—

There is mirth from the other side; I am not quite sure why. There are mixed views on this issue, and there are arguments on both sides. I accept that Mr Pettersson is not trying to liberalise drugs for any improper reason. I think that his view is about trying to improve health outcomes, principally. He has a particular view. I have articulated the Canberra Liberals' view that this is not the way to approach it, that this is not the way to proceed. But I do not think this is an issue that all the evidence is clear on. We need to tread very carefully and fully understand the consequences of what Mr Pettersson has proposed. I do not see any need to rush on this matter.

Medical cannabis, for example, was referred to a committee. The committee system that we have is designed to look at these sorts of areas of complex legislation where there may be significant impacts on the broader community that we do not fully understand, particularly on the health of, as I said, vulnerable people. This is where the committee system can play a role.

As Mr Pettersson has alluded to, there are significant health issues with regard to personal cannabis use. I refer to what the AMA has had to say about Mr Pettersson's proposal. I refer to the submission to Mr Pettersson on his bill, which was also provided to the Greens and to the opposition. These are the words of the AMA:

... as medical professionals, the AMA ACT is concerned that certain groups within the population are more at risk of the deleterious effects of cannabis. The research base on cannabis and psychosis is highly contentious, but despite the limitations, it is worth highlighting the findings presented at last year's International Early Psychosis Association, which is indicative of a link between cannabis use and schizophrenia. In examining a sample of over 3 million people, researchers found that cannabis abuse increased the risk, by five times, of developing schizophrenia.

That is five times.

Concerningly, the same research also showed that maternal and paternal cannabis abuse increased the risk of schizophrenia in offspring. For the mother, it was associated with a sixfold increase and for the father a 5.5 fold increase in risk.

The AMA referred to the federal AMA position statement on cannabis use and health from 2014. They pointed to the relevant part of the position statement on page 9 of that document:

The AMA does not condone the trafficking or recreational use of cannabis. The AMA believes that there should be vigorous law enforcement and strong criminal penalties for the trafficking of cannabis.

But, importantly:

The personal recreational use of cannabis should also be prohibited. However, criminal penalties for personal cannabis use can add to the potential health and other risks to which cannabis users are exposed. The AMA believes that it is consistent with a principle of harm reduction for the possession of cannabis for personal use to attract civil penalties such as court orders requiring counselling and education ...

So real concerns were raised by the AMA about the effects of cannabis on people and the potential consequence of legalising cannabis for personal use. I think we should take a pause to consider what they have said.

The Victorian parliament recently conducted a bipartisan inquiry. I note that they did not recommend removing penalties, which are actually criminal penalties in Victoria. I do not support that. We do have a more liberal regime here in the ACT, which the Canberra Liberals support. The Victorian inquiry said, as recommendation 23, that the government should:

... investigate international developments in the regulated supply of cannabis for adult use, and advise the Victorian Government on policy outcomes in areas such as prevalence rates, public safety, and reducing the scale and scope of the illicit drug market.

What they basically said is, “We need to have a closer look at this. We need to look at it further. We need to gather the evidence base so that the government can make a considered decision.” Something the committee could do is gather that evidence base and listen to people like the AMA to understand the consequences of what this bill proposes.

In the *Canberra Times* today, a headline is: “More detail is needed as ACT moves to legalise cannabis”. I will quote from Dr Caldicott, who you may know. He is a senior lecturer at the ANU College of Health and Medicine. He said:

... the devil would be in the detail.

It is very important what the legislation looks like ...

We don't know whether it has to be 50 grams of certain plants of specific strain, whether or not there's going to be a central seed depository for people who want to grow it. There's none of that detail there, and these are important points that we need to discuss.

I think there are a number of points that we need to discuss. If we do bring this legislation in, and my understanding is that it has the support of the Labor Party and the Greens, are there some consequential effects? Do we need to consider where people are getting their seeds from and so on? I do not know the answer to that. That is why I think it would be useful for a committee to examine those sorts of issues.

When there is an issue on the table that the government is pushing and they get support from a doctors group or individual doctors, and I cite pill testing here, the government tend to hide behind that and say, "The doctors support it; therefore we must do it." We have a situation here where the doctors do not support it, but they are going to ignore that. They are going to ignore that advice. The health minister has indicated her support for the bill despite the fact that that is not what the AMA is supporting. It is difficult for me to understand why the health minister and the Minister for Mental Health, given the advice from the AMA, would not want to hear further from the AMA, would not want to put this to an inquiry to consider in more detail what the AMA has to say.

With no upper house, as we have often heard from the Greens and members of the Labor Party, and certainly we agree, it is useful to have committees. We hear from Ms Le Couteur all the time that this is what the committees are there for. When there is a piece of legislation that a committee could look at to provide further depth of understanding so that we make sure we get the legislation right and the legislation gets up, and to see what other issues we may need to consider, that is what a committee can do. I do not understand, then, why the Greens would not support a committee looking at this, given the potential effects highlighted by the AMA and what the effects on demand and usage will be. I do not know the answer to that.

I suspect, given what happened in Canada recently, although that was a different model, that demand is going to significantly increase. The deterrent has gone, particularly for younger people. I am a parent of a 19-year-old and a 12-year-old. The fact that something is not legal is very useful for a parent to deter kids, younger people, from being influenced into something.

What is the education on the mental health implications? What are we going to do to make sure that that is fully understood? What impact will this have on vulnerable groups? What is the control of seeds? Where are they sourced from? What quality, and what measurement are we going to allow in weight? For THC, quantities can be very different between various forms of marijuana, between leaf and HID. What is the answer to that?

What is the evidence from other jurisdictions? Why would we not want to gather that to understand it better? Mr Pettersson has said that this has been modelled on the Vermont model, but what are the learnings from Vermont? What did they find when this model was introduced?

As I said, I have a 19-year-old and a 12-year-old. When you have kids, you want to make sure that when you are passing legislation in this place you do no harm. I think we would all want to be in a place where, understanding the realities we face of drug

usage and availability, we understand that what we are trying to do is to keep them from harm.

Particularly in an environment where there is enormous temptation and pressure to take drugs, is legalising this, making it more freely available, going to have a positive or a negative effect? My view is that it is not going to have a positive effect. But I do want to listen; I do want to hear. I want to hear what the views are. I want to understand what the AMA's more detailed and nuanced position is. And I see that there is nothing lost in our gaining a better understanding of this issue. There is nothing in terms of timeliness that requires us to smash it through with any degree of urgency.

I do not really want to get into the debate on this issue, but I will just make the point that, while there is harm caused by other substances—cigarettes, prescribed drugs, alcohol—simply saying, “You’ve got a whole bunch of legal products here that cause harm; therefore let’s legalise cannabis,” is a very counterintuitive argument, in my view. If such major harm is being caused by codeine and other legally available products, if a lot of harm is done by cigarettes and alcohol, which are legal products, why on earth would you say, “Let’s make marijuana legal”? If the argument is that the others cause more harm and this illegal product is actually causing less harm, why go down a path of legalisation? I would want to understand the answer to that and put that proposition forward as well.

Government members interjecting—

There is interjection across the table, but these are the issues that could be teased out in committee. It is a debate that we engage in generally, and Mr Pettersson and I have had a number of conversations about this. We will engage on the facts of the issue, the merits of the case. We have our position, but I personally and my team, I am sure, and members of the community feel that this is an area of debate where it would be useful to gain a greater understanding. It seems that what we have here is a situation where we have an ideological viewpoint from the Greens, one being pushed by the Labor Party, and they are not listening anymore. They have stopped listening. They have already made their decision. This is what they are going to do: “Stuff the AMA; stuff the medical advice. We’re going to do this anyway.” That is a very interesting position. I look forward to their trying to backflip on this argument when they get to talking about pill testing in this place.

MR PETTERSSON (Yerrabi) (11.46): Let us call this out for what it is. This is a stalling tactic from the hard right of the Canberra Liberals. They hate progress. They do everything they can to stop, to slow down, to stall any progress in this chamber. This is what this is. This is an attempt to stall this private member’s bill because they do not want to see it passed. They have come out and announced that they are opposed to this legislation, and that is fine. They are allowed to have that view. But what they are trying to do is stop this chamber discussing and debating this private member’s bill.

Canberrans want to see this legislation enacted. There is overwhelming support for legalisation. Those in the Canberra Liberals should really take a moment to stop and

consider whether their actions are in line with the people they claim to represent. Fifty-four per cent of Canberrans support legalisation; 27 per cent oppose it. If you think about how many people voted for the Liberal Party last time, you will have to do some maths to try to get those figures to work.

This bill was first unveiled about two months ago. You have had two months to look over a small document, a tiny document, something like 10 pages. You could read it whilst I am talking now. The idea that you have not had enough time to think about this issue is ludicrous, and the way I know that is by how well spoken Mr Hanson was in his speech just then. He is aware of the facts; he has been researching it; he has been talking about it. He knows his views on cannabis.

We have had two months already, but we are also going to have more time. This would be coming back in February. It is still November. The idea that we do not have enough time in those months to think about this, engage with the community, is ludicrous.

The idea that this should go to a committee is a noble one. I understand it. It is often debated in this place whether or not things should go to a committee. What I would say is this: this is the chamber where every member can engage on this topic. If we send it away to the health committee there will be a few members that will get to consider it, but if we engage with it in this chamber every member will be able to express their opinion. They will be able to consult; they will be able to talk about it. That is why I think this chamber should be at the forefront of dealing with this topic.

Mr Hanson said that he needed more details before we could proceed. If he had bothered to read my private member's bill he would know, answering some of his questions, that no, there is not a central seed supply because that would immediately run afoul of federal drug-trafficking laws. Mr Hanson, no, there are no strains of cannabis identified in the private member's bill, for the very simple reason that that is how our current laws are written. I hope that all members in this place see through the Liberals' transparent stalling tactic and that all members see good sense and come to support the private member's bill.

MR RATTENBURY (Kurrajong) (11.50): The Greens will not be supporting this referral to a committee. We do see it as a delaying tactic on the part of Mr Hanson. I think that for too long people have been criminalised for personal possession of cannabis, marijuana, and I do not think that it is appropriate that that continues to be the case. The Greens will be supporting this legislation. As I publicly commented, we do intend to go through the detail of it.

As Mr Pettersson has rightly just noted, we will not be debating this until February. This is plenty of time to sit down and have a look at the detail of the bill. We intend to do that. If we have any comments we will talk to Mr Pettersson over the summer break. But I think there is plenty of time for people to consider this issue over the summer recess, to form a view on it, to seek expert advice, and when we come back here next February we can debate this. And that is the position we intend to take.

MR HANSON (Murrumbidgee) (11.51), in reply: I am genuinely disappointed. I make the point as well that, as Mr Rattenbury said, for too long people have been criminalised for personal use. In the ACT for a long time now there have been no criminal penalties for personal use of a certain quantity. It has been decriminalised. There are penalties but they are not criminal penalties. I just make that point. It is always important to understand the law, as I know Madam Assistant Speaker does. There is a difference between getting a fine and a summons for a criminal penalty. And that needs to be understood.

On the view that this is an attempt to stall, I think this legislation will get up. I think it is pretty clear from the public statements and what has been said in this chamber that this will get up. Whether it gets up in February next year or later next year, it is not going to have the implications that the Labor Party expects. What is the urgency? Why is it that we have to rush this through? I genuinely am struggling to understand that. Why would we not need to wait perhaps six months so that when we do debate this issue we have the benefit of a committee report to do that? I simply do not understand what the urgency is to have this legislation passed. On many issues there is an urgency, there is a degree of urgency. In this case there is not.

Mr Pettersson says also it is a simple piece of legislation; it is quite brief. And I would agree with that. But often it is the more simple pieces of legislation that have the more significant consequences. There are SLAB bills. There are huge bills that sometimes we get through with technical amendments that actually do not have a lot of policy effect. There can be very simple bills that have a massive policy effect—things like the same-sex marriage bill. The federal bill—I do not think it was a change to more than a couple of lines—had massive changes, in my view for the better.

Simply arguing that it is not a big piece of paper, a lot of pieces of paper, is not a coherent argument, because it is the effect of that legislation. I have not seen all the submissions. Mr Pettersson has said, “You have had that draft exposure bill for a long time.” What I have not seen is all the submissions that have come in—those that support, those that oppose—so that I can go through those and explore them in much more detail.

Mr Pettersson says he has had dozens, hundreds of responses. What is the ability, then, to go through those, talk and inquire, investigate what are the issues raised by each of those people that submitted to Mr Pettersson? What I would say is that there is often a difference between the submissions that you get to a bill from a member of this place and those that go to a committee. If I put out a bill it is just the nature of it that I am going to get many more people on my side of politics and of my view responding, because you put it out through your networks, whereas a committee is much more apolitical and you are much more likely to get engagement from people on both sides of the debate, not just those supporting it.

Mr Barr: Except when you try to manipulate the process of submissions, say.

MR HANSON: Well done; good contribution to the debate, Mr Barr. I am disappointed. There is no political gain for me in referring this to a committee. My

positions are established. I do not think that my narrative is changing, other than perhaps a softening. I have already articulated the Canberra Liberals' position.

It is likely, therefore, that evidence presented, if Mr Pettersson is so sure of his case, to a committee is only likely to soften our position as a greater understanding occurs. If he is so confident that he is on the right side of this debate, if Mr Rattenbury is so confident that they are on the right side of this debate, and the evidence is so compelling, then surely exposing that through a committee process—it gets put through a committee process and we have a look at what the evidence is—would be a compelling argument then to do that.

The interjections from Mr Barr and others are: “No-one is going to change their mind.” Why do we refer any bill to a committee? That is a nonsense argument. Why did we refer medical cannabis? Why do we refer any other bill, if the view is: “It isn't going to make any difference sending it to a committee”? I think that is very disparaging of the committee process, and I do not think that is true. I would like to understand this issue more by listening to the experts and getting the evidence from other jurisdictions and so on.

I express my disappointment. I think that this is a very odd decision from the Greens and the Labor Party, to be frank, because it is very difficult on one side to argue, “We have got the evidence, the experts call for this, and it works in other jurisdictions,” and then say, “We want to hide from scrutiny. We want to hide this bill from scrutiny; we don't want to be exposed.” And based on what they are saying, urgency is the issue for them.

It sounds to me as if it is a bill that really does not need to be debated for a period—it could receive scrutiny—but it is not going to be because the Greens and the Labor Party want to ram this through. Let me say, that only hardens my view on this. If they are not prepared to—

Mr Steel: On a point of order, Madam Assistant Speaker, I would ask your guidance as to whether Mr Hanson is in fact allowed to provide a right of reply to what is a procedural motion, not a substantive motion.

Mrs Dunne: The standard form in this place is that, when there is a question before the chair, the person who initiates the motion has the right to close. It is quite simple.

MADAM ASSISTANT SPEAKER (Ms Cody): Mr Hanson, can you continue to close the debate, noting there are three minutes left.

MR HANSON: That is a very odd position of the Labor Party. Now we have a situation where the Labor Party not only want to shut down any scrutiny of this bill but they want to shut down the debate on referring it to a committee. They do not even want the debate to continue on referring it to a committee. I can only assume that some of the points I was making were hitting home. Otherwise I cannot understand why Mr Steel is—

Mrs Dunne: He does not know his standing orders.

MR HANSON: He does not know his standing orders; he has no clue about his standing orders. But that is not the debate before us.

This, sadly I think, will only lock people into their positions, rather than potentially tease out some more nuanced understanding of this issue. What we all want to do in this place is make sure that we are keeping people safe in our community, particularly younger people, particularly vulnerable groups, and I think we had an opportunity to do that by putting it to a committee to get a better understanding of this bill. That opportunity is lost basically because Mr Pettersson and the Greens want to ram it through with as little scrutiny as it can get.

Question put:

That the motion be agreed to.

The Assembly voted—

Ayes 11

Noes 14

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

Question resolved in the negative.

Domestic Animals (Dangerous Dogs) Amendment Bill 2018

Ms Lawder, pursuant to notice, presented the bill and its explanatory statement.

Title read by Clerk.

MS LAWDER (Brindabella) (12.03): I move:

That this bill be agreed to in principle.

The Domestic Animals (Dangerous Dogs) Amendment Bill 2018 is the second tranche in a series of legislative changes designed to address the growing issues of dangerous dogs and responsible dog ownership. It is a continuing attempt by the Canberra Liberals to address this crisis in dog management. We have been consulting widely. We have been using the government's own reports, which have not been implemented as yet by the government. The Maxwell review, which the government received in April 2018 and released over five months later, made 33 recommendations.

In the bill I present today we are delivering on two specific Maxwell review recommendations. One is the third point in recommendation 11, that fees should be reduced if dogs are trained. The government's response to this recommendation was

to note it. Recommendation 28 was to remove barriers—for example, costs—to relinquish dogs. The government's response was to agree to this recommendation.

The bill I am presenting today encourages responsible dog ownership, responsible management of dogs, and good behaviour of dog owners and dogs. It does three things. There are the two I have mentioned, and we are encouraging dog owners to ensure that their dogs are well trained. When you go to dog training, you are often told that it is more a matter of training the owners than training the dogs. It is important that dog owners understand the principles of responsible dog ownership, the ways to allow your dogs to approach other dogs and people.

One of the things we are including in the legislation today is training to encourage responsible dog ownership. What is in the bill today is that no dog registration fee will be payable if the owner has successfully completed approved training with the dog. That means that each dog must be trained. If the owner gets a second dog, that should also be trained. It is a carrot approach.

We will also encourage people to deal with unwanted dogs. Sometimes people get a dog and it is not quite the temperament that they were looking for or it does not fit into their family lifestyle. For some families, having to pay a fee to relinquish that dog could be a barrier. In those instances, people might keep the dog in their backyard unwanted, unloved and untrained. Potentially, that dog could become a dangerous dog through lack of attention and lack of training. By encouraging people to relinquish those dogs without a fee being payable, especially if those dogs are dangerous or have the temperament to be dangerous, we are discouraging families and people from keeping those dogs. We are removing the barriers.

At the other end of the spectrum, this bill proposes to double the fee for dangerous dog licences. Under the current legislation, people can keep dogs that are deemed to be dangerous under certain conditions. We want to make sure that people consider that very carefully. This is an example of a stick approach, as opposed to the carrot approach. The bill doubles the fee to keep or retain a dangerous dog. This may be a deterrent for some owners to take that dog back to their home, back into the community and, potentially, it being a danger to other members of the community.

Last year there were 485 reports of dog attacks, an increase of 25 per cent from the previous year. Over the past five years we have seen, on average, a 30 per cent increase year on year of reported dog attacks. This is an increase in Canberra residents being injured by dogs, being frightened and terrorised by dogs. It also means that other dogs are attacked, maimed or killed by dogs. It is not only dogs. It is also cats and other domestic pets that can be terrorised, injured or killed by roaming dogs.

I ask members to look at the comparison in two sets of figures. We have had a 30 per cent increase year on year over five years, or a 422 per cent increase from five years ago. Comparatively, over five years we have seen a slight decrease in the number of fines for dog offences in public places. We are seeing a crisis on one hand and a lack of response on the other.

Accordingly, it would appear that more needs to be done to keep Canberrans safe. This is a basic duty of government. This is one of the things that this bill is trying to

address today, because we do care about the safety of Canberrans. It is a core responsibility of government to keep its citizens safe. So we are not looking the other way while dog attacks in Canberra skyrocket. We are not sitting back and doing nothing while dog attacks in Canberra skyrocket. We are looking at ways to reduce the number of dog attacks and to encourage responsible dog ownership but doing this in a way that does not penalise the vast majority of Canberrans, because the vast majority Canberrans are doing the right things.

They are responsible dog owners and we need to ensure that that continues. We need to specifically target those people who are doing the wrong thing, not adopt a broadbrush approach that reaches everyone. Those people already doing the right thing need to be rewarded and encouraged and that group of people doing the right thing needs to grow. The small group of people doing the wrong thing needs to decrease. It needs to diminish.

Less than two weeks ago we saw an article in the *Canberra Times* about a dog attack, where a Canberra woman said that she frantically tried to save her cavoodle as it was being mauled by a stray dog in Ngunnawal. She said, “I was the most traumatised I have ever been in my life.” These are the types of phrases that I have heard over and over again from people who have been the subject of these dog attacks.

I would like to acknowledge the hard and difficult work of the staff at domestic animal services. I have said it before and I will say it again: it is a difficult job. Most of us would not want to do that job. It involves going to reports of dog attacks where you might find people or dogs with horrific injuries. You potentially have to deal with a vicious dog on the loose. It has to be managed. You have to deal with very upset people—the dog owners, witnesses, anyone nearby. It is a really tough job. They need legislative support to do their job well. They need the tools to do their job.

I am sure I am not exaggerating when I say that we all love our dogs. We want the best for our dogs and our other pets. That is why dealing with dog attacks properly and appropriately is so important. It is a safety and health issue for Canberra residents but it is also an animal welfare issue for those animals—especially dogs, but not only dogs—that are attacked and have horrific injuries. It is an animal welfare issue as well as a personal health and safety issue.

We have to be responsible and respectful of other people and their pets. That is why we are looking at this legislation today as one more step on the way to addressing the issue of dangerous dogs and to encourage responsible dog management. Removing registration fees for people who have completed approved training with their dog, removing barriers to relinquish dogs, and doubling the charge to keep a dangerous dog are ways that we can help, encourage and support Canberrans in the journey towards better dog management.

We have consulted widely on these changes, as well as other changes that we have proposed. We will continue to do that and we will continue to bring more legislation to this Assembly to ensure that Canberrans and their pets are safe when walking the streets. While the government appears to remain reluctant to address the growing issue of dangerous dogs, we are happy to bring forward this legislation today as yet

one more example of the way that we can encourage Canberrans. We do not want to deal with the tragic consequences of neglecting this and allowing things to continue as they are.

With the support of my colleagues, I present the Domestic Animals (Dangerous Dogs) Amendment Bill 2018 to the Assembly. I encourage other members of the Assembly to consider very carefully public opinion about dog control and dog management, the need to protect Canberrans and the need to bring in more and better measures to encourage responsible dog ownership and to discourage irresponsible dog owners. I commend the bill to the Assembly.

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

Income support

MS LE COUTEUR (Murrumbidgee) (12.16): I move:

That this Assembly:

(1) notes that:

- (a) while Canberra is a high income community with a growing economy, a substantial number of Canberrans struggle financially, for example people on low wages and many people that rely on Federal Government assistance payments;
- (b) the ACT Government provides many services that are crucial supports for lower income Canberrans, including the public health system, public transport and public housing, as well as providing funding for financial counselling for people who fall into hardship;
- (c) the ACT Government provides concessions to lower income households such as the utilities concessions and free off-peak public transport fares for pensioners – however, the ACT Government’s ability to target everyone who needs help is limited because Australia’s income tax and means-testing systems are operated by the Federal Government; and
- (d) the ACT taxation system has existing policies and programs that can help people on lower incomes, such as rates deferrals and concessions for pensioners;

(2) further notes that:

- (a) people struggling with their daily expenses can reach crisis point when bills like electricity, phone and rates arrive; and
- (b) the ACT Revenue Office maintains a call centre for people with rates and other tax inquiries, and can be the first point of contact with the ACT Government for people facing financial hardship;

(3) further notes that:

- (a) fines in the ACT such as parking tickets and lower level traffic infringements are a fixed amount regardless of income, which means they have a disproportionate financial impact on people who are on lower incomes and means they are disproportionately punished for the infringement;

- (b) the ACT Government has put in place a work and development program, so that those who may not be able to pay a fine are able to undertake activities such as community service, financial counselling or drug and alcohol treatment in lieu of paying their fine – however, low income workers without a Federal Government concession card can miss out;
 - (c) several countries internationally are investigating or introducing income-based fines, for example:
 - (i) the United Kingdom allows judges’ discretion to adjust fines for traffic matters that go to court based on income; and
 - (ii) Finland charges traffic fines using a formula based on the person’s daily disposable income; and
 - (d) the Australia Institute has investigated how this principle could be applied in Australia and has identified that it would be a fairer approach; and
- (4) calls on the ACT Government to expand and improve its support for low income Canberrans by:
- (a) investigating the potential of income-based fines for the ACT, including consultation with stakeholders such as community legal services;
 - (b) helping low income property owners by:
 - (i) writing to all residential rate payers who get a concession by 28 February 2019 to advise them of the rates deferrals available;
 - (ii) including information about rates concessions, deferrals and hardship arrangements on all residential rates notices issued after 30 June 2019;
 - (iii) redesigning the rates notice to ensure people understand that they can still pay quarterly;
 - (iv) providing training for Revenue Office call centre staff by 30 June 2019 in how to recognise customers suffering from financial hardship, what help they may be eligible for, and who they can be referred to for further support – with other staff that support customers to be trained subsequently; and
 - (v) publishing the criteria used by the Revenue Office to determine who is eligible for hardship assistance, including providing easy-to-read material on the relevant Government website, by 28 February 2019;
 - (c) helping organisations that advocate for lower income Canberrans by improving the cost of living statement in future Budget Papers by including a broader range of vulnerable households and providing time series data similar to the 2018-19 Budget’s “Socio Economic Analysis on Taxation and Concessions Policy”;
 - (d) approaching the Federal Government and other states and territories, for example through the Council of Australian Governments, about opportunities for states and territories to access Federal Government information to help with providing concessions to people on lower incomes; and
 - (e) reporting back on these issues by the last sitting day in August 2019.

As we know, Canberra has a high average income but unfortunately a substantial number of Canberrans struggle financially. In 2017 the National Centre for Social and Economic Modelling found that around 37,000 Canberrans were living in low income households. My motion is about fairness for people in this situation. The motion proposes a range of measures targeted at helping people at the point of crisis where they move from being financially stretched to being in financial hardship.

I start by highlighting three groups in our community who can be under that sort of pressure. First, of course, are people who rely on federal government assistance payments. Members will be aware that the Greens are deeply concerned about the level of some of these payments. Newstart in particular is far too low to live on for any period of time. This is not a fringe leftist view. An article in the *Sydney Morning Herald* of 9 May stated:

Former Prime Minister John Howard has joined leading business figures in calling for Newstart payments to be increased.

The second group is the working poor. Their financial struggles are often a combination of a low hourly wage rate and low or unreliable work hours. The minimum wage is currently \$18.93 an hour before tax. If you are working, say, 30 hours a week in a minimum wage job, you would be earning just over \$560 per week or \$29,000 per year. It is very hard to pay for housing and transport from that. You will not have any spare, particularly if you have dependants, and that is increasingly so for single mothers.

The third group are people on fixed income pensions, often superannuation pensions. It is easy to assume that these people are well off. Of course, if you did 40 years in the public service and ended up at a senior level you probably are very well off. But there are many people who work for years and never rise far through the ranks—as is the case for many women of my generation—and their pension can be small.

Women of my age quite often stopped work to have kids. They had the kids and were off for many years. No super. They then got divorced. Their partner got all the super—in those days you could not split it up—so the amount of superannuation is very small. My office was recently contacted by someone who had a superannuation pension of around \$40,000 per year, which might be possible to live on except for the fact they also have two dependent children.

Not everyone in Canberra is well off; a lot of people who have worked and are still working hard are not well off. The ACT government provides many services that are good supports for people in these sorts of situations, including general services such as the public health system and public transport. For the most desperate there are targeted services and concessions like public housing, utilities and rates concessions and free financial counselling. However, there are significant gaps and more can be done.

The calls in this motion deal particularly with the gaps at the point of crisis where people move from being financially stretched to financial hardship. A major trigger of

these crises is the arrival of a bill—it could be an electricity bill or a fridge breakdown or it could be a government bill like a parking fine or a rates notice.

Starting with fines, their primary purpose is to encourage compliance with the law. On the face of it having a system of set fines results in the law being applied equally to all citizens. But the reality is that a system of set fines does not recognise the unequal capacity of people to pay. People on higher incomes are able to pay fines without much impact on their finances, whereas people on low incomes are disproportionately affected.

It is not just the immediate financial impact of a fine on someone struggling financially that is the issue; fines can lead to a negative cycle, with long-term consequences for a whole family. Last year 12 per cent of traffic fines were not paid on time but 87 per cent of people charged with driving an unregistered vehicle did not pay those fines on time. This suggests that people who cannot afford to pay their rego then get hit with a fine they cannot pay. This then leads to a drivers licence being cancelled.

Currently 81 per cent of drivers licence removals are the result of unpaid fines. It is not because you did not drive safely—it is because of unpaid fines. It is likely this punishment is being shouldered disproportionately by people who have low incomes or who are otherwise disadvantaged. We must remember that removing licences mean people often cannot hold down a job, do the shopping or pick up their kids from school. These are serious consequences with long-term impacts.

Currently two programs assist low income Canberrans to pay their traffic and parking fines. The first allows people to pay in instalments. This was introduced by my former colleague Amanda Bresnan in the Seventh Assembly. The second, the work development program, allows people to work off a fine by making an alternative contribution to the community or getting help with the problems in their life that may have led to the fine. They can work at not-for-profits such as Ted Noffs or Vinnies, attend workshops run by Care Financial Counselling Service, or participate in a residential drug and alcohol program.

As I said, these were the idea of former Greens MLA Amanda Bresnan. They are a great start but we need to go further. I am calling on the government to investigate another alternative to our current system. In Finland, for example, speeding fines are linked to wages. A day fine system is used based on an offender's capacity to pay—generally about half their daily income. Then based on the severity of the offence a fine is issued in days.

There are options which are administratively simpler but which are an improvement over the current approach. For example, the government could set a fine for a particular offence but then give people the opportunity to present their most recent tax statement in order to claim a concessional rate. In the UK a three-tier system was adopted last year for fines for serious traffic offences where an offender must attend court.

We are not suggesting for one moment that there should not be a system of fines; there should be and they should serve to encourage compliance. But our concern relates to proportionality and the disproportionate impact fines can have on low income Canberrans.

The government's Revenue Office is another entry point at which people struggling financially come into contact with the government. Sadly, my constituent work has shown me there are many problems in this system for people with financial issues, including the low community awareness of the rates deferral system for the over 65s, pensioner cardholders and some people in hardship and the frankly awful redesign of rates notices this financial year. That led many people to think the quarterly payment system had been withdrawn or, even worse than that, that the full-year amount was the quarterly amount and that their rates had suddenly gone up four times. There is also a lack of any information about deferrals or concessions on the rates notices.

People who ring the Revenue Office to ask about rates deferrals are being told they do not exist. People who ring the Revenue Office in clear financial hardship are not being referred to the financial counselling service the government funds to help people like that. If you are struggling financially you have to work hard to get access to the limited options in place to help you. The mindset of the government needs to shift to one where people are helped to access their entitlements as a step along the way to getting back on their feet financially.

My motion puts in place an action plan for the Revenue Office to shift its approach. Firstly, when people get their rates notices they should see the information they need. My motion will ensure that the notice for the next financial year includes information about concessions, deferments and hardship arrangements that can support low income people. It will restore the quarterly payment option to an obvious place on the front of the bill.

Secondly, people who reach out for information through the call centre or the website should be helped to understand their options and be linked to the supports already available. My motion calls for training for Revenue Office staff in how to recognise whether a customer is suffering from financial hardship, what help they may be eligible for and where they can be referred to for further support. It also calls for the hardship criteria currently not available to the community—I do not really know what they are—to be put on the Revenue Office website so that you can see if you are eligible.

Thirdly, the government needs to reach out proactively. My motion will see the government write to all concession ratepayers to let them know about deferrals. You would assume almost all concession ratepayers would be eligible.

My motion includes two other measures, but I want to focus on one that is particularly important. The ACT government's concessions are generally limited to people with a federal government concession card; for example, people on the full-aged pension or Newstart. This is a great benefit for those who can get those concessions, but it misses two of the groups I highlighted earlier—that is, people on low wages and people on

low fixed-income pensions. They are the people just above the commonwealth government's cut-off level for concession cards.

We are in this position because Australia's income tax and means testing systems are operated by the federal government. The only verified information the ACT government has to work with are the federal government's pensioner concession card and tax assessments. Of course, tax assessments are a record of income of 12 months ago, and as a result every state and territory is in the same boat as the ACT—we are very limited as to how we can means test concessions.

I understand it costs the commonwealth government in the order of \$100 million a year to do their income testing to work out who gets a concession. I am not for one minute suggesting we should be duplicating that, but I am saying that in 2018 we should be able to do better than this. A few things are relevant to this: firstly, currency of information. The federal government gets pay-as-you-earn tax information every payslip. People have to regularly update their income details with Centrelink for things like the childcare subsidy. It must be possible to introduce some system for states and territories to get timely and sufficient information to enable them to look at the income of people who say they need support.

My motion calls on the ACT government to work with the federal government and other states and territories to pursue this. That would be positive for all low income Australians and not just those who are fortunate enough to live in the ACT. The end result—it will take some while—could be an ability to deliver a much fairer set of rates and utilities concessions and true income-based fines, as per the Finnish model that I mentioned earlier.

In conclusion, my motion hopefully will be one of the many steps this Assembly will take towards creating fairness for people who are struggling financially. Everyone here is concerned that, while as a whole Canberrans are well off, some of us are not. My motion proposes a range of measures targeted at helping people at the point of crisis where they are moving from being financially stretched and not doing that well to being in outright financial hardship and having to choose between food, rent and paying the charges our government asks of them. I urge all members to vote for this important motion.

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

Sitting suspended from 12.30 to 2.30 pm.

Questions without notice

Education—community schools

MR COE: My question is to the Minister for Education and Early Childhood Development. Minister, in your future of education statement, you said that the government will look to bring community school approaches to the ACT education

system. Minister, what will a community school model look like for the ACT and where might these schools be located?

MS BERRY: The strategy talks about schools as communities as a broad concept that schools are more than just places for education. The ACT government has been discussing this policy or principle with school principals and school communities, including P & Cs: what school communities would look like to bring in more opportunities for people within our community to engage with the school communities. One way that we have already been implementing that kind of concept is by ensuring that our school sports facilities can be shared by the broader community as well. So now our sports clubs and organisations, as well as multicultural groups and other community groups, can access school facilities and engage with those school communities in that way.

MR COE: Minister, aside from the use of facilities, what changes to governance or decision-making might be features of a community school?

MS BERRY: The strategy talks about making sure that we have strong communities for learning in our schools, which engages broadly other parts of the community to support education in our schools but also to provide other opportunities for our schools to be opened up to the broader community. We will be developing work around how we engage more services—support services and others—in our schools to provide those better communities for learning.

Mr Coe: On a point of order of relevance, the specific question was about governance and decision-making, not about facilities or resources and I ask that she be directly relevant.

MADAM SPEAKER: Minister, if you could go to the point of governance.

MS BERRY: I have completed my answer.

MS LEE: Minister, what impact would the adoption of your government's vision for a community school model have on funding for other ACT government schools?

MS BERRY: There will be a whole lot of changes occurring in our schools similar to the ones that have already been announced by the ACT government to provide supports to teachers to provide the best educational outcomes for our students. So as decisions are made about spending in schools, those will be made by budgets, as all decisions about spending across the ACT community are made during the budget processes.

Canberra—population projection

MS LE COUTEUR: My question is to the Chief Minister and relates to the ACT's population projections, which can be found on the government's website. The population for Tuggeranong is projected to fall 29 per cent from 85,000 in 2015 to 61,000 in 2040 while Weston Creek is expected to fall 42 per cent from 22,000 in

2015 to 13,000 in 2040. Is the government taking action to stem these very large population declines?

MR BARR: The projections that Ms Le Couteur refers to were issued on 13 March 2017 and I believe are now already out of date as in what was projected to occur was based on data prior to the August 2016 census. New information is available and the projections will be updated, Ms Le Couteur.

If you go to the detail of the projections they indicate, effectively, a compound year-on-year population reduction in Tuggeranong and Weston Creek of between one and two per cent each year. That appears to be at the outer end of what would be a more natural decline in population as a particular region ages.

Across the territory the number of births exceed the number of deaths each year in the order of about 3,500 to 4,000, although it is clear that, as has been the case throughout the history of Canberra, newly established areas go through an initial population boom and particularly attract younger families.

As to what the government can do, as an entity the government is obviously not in the business of making babies but people certainly are, and that would be one way of addressing that question. I also indicate that we will be looking through the COAG process to put our hand up to take more international migrants through both skilled programs and refugee programs, and we certainly encourage Australians to move to Canberra. In combination that ought to see our population increase. (*Time expired.*)

MS LE COUTEUR: Is the government considering, say, scaling back greenfield development and redirecting the ACT's population growth to support these declining areas?

MR BARR: Yes, certainly there are opportunities for increased housing density in certain locations. The Tuggeranong town centre and around Greenway are examples of such development that is occurring right now that would be addressing some of that population decline. Another factor that will come into play is the life cycle. As the inevitable happens to people in some parts of the city and they move out of housing for whatever reason, one of which would be, of course, the end of life, new people move into that housing. But I think it is fair to observe that the number of people per household continues to reduce, so the only way to address population decline in some areas will be to increase the volume of housing. That is occurring and it will continue to occur. The obvious debate, a perennial in our city, is over the pace of that change.

MS CHEYNE: Chief Minister, how is the government catering for a growing population across the entirety of Canberra?

MR BARR: It is very important that we continue to invest in infrastructure to meet the needs of our growing population. At the 2016 election there was a very clear choice between our side of politics and those opposite on major transport infrastructure projects, just as there has been on major health, education, community

services and emergency services, infrastructure and facilities that will continue to need to be built and augmented as our city grows.

A challenge for us, clearly, is that the city's urban boundaries are constrained—rightly so. We do not support development in our water catchment or in our national parks, and it will be the case that Canberra's next 100 years will not see the urban sprawl that the first 100 years have seen. That is a fact. We will need to see more population accommodated within the existing city footprint.

Of course, the rate of population growth is impacted by the rate of natural increase, the rate of international migration and the rate of interstate migration. Interstate migration is very strongly linked to the strength of our labour market. Natural increase continues to occur because it would be fair to say that the making of babies will not go out of fashion anytime soon.

Animals—off-leash areas

MS LAWDER: My question is to the Minister for City Services. Minister, the have your say on city services for better suburbs pack 1 map has information for Canberrans to use so they can provide feedback to the government regarding responsible dog ownership. Under the heading “Walking your dog”, the map says “all dogs in public areas (except dedicated off-leash dog parks) must be on a leash”. I repeat: “all dogs in public areas (except dedicated off-leash dog parks) must be on a leash”. Yet the TCCS website identifies a wide range of other “off-leash areas” which are not dedicated off-leash parks. Some of these are shared spaces such as community paths. Minister, which is wrong: the better suburbs map or the TCCs website?

MR STEEL: I thank the member for her question. I am happy to check the TCCS website and make sure that it is in fact showing the correct areas for off-leash dog parks.

MS LAWDER: Minister, following your checking of the website, if my information is correct will you correct the wrong information and apologise for misleading the public?

MR STEEL: I have already said that I will check the website to make sure that the information on there is correct.

MR PARTON: Minister, how can anyone comply if the message is not clear and accurate?

MR STEEL: I thank the member for his question. As I said, we will check the website to make sure that it is correct. Whether the information is factually correct or not is not yet known. We will have to check that and find out whether that is the case. But it sounds like it is a fairly minor error, if there is an error at all.

Aboriginals and Torres Strait Islanders—NAIDOC Week

MR PETTERSSON: My question is to the Minister for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Affairs. Minister, as Canberra is hosting national NAIDOC Week

celebrations in 2019, could the minister please inform the Assembly about the NAIDOC Committee's recent announcement?

MS STEPHEN-SMITH: I thank Mr Pettersson for his question. I am very pleased that Canberra will host the national NAIDOC Week celebrations in 2019. The National NAIDOC Committee recently announced the theme for next year's NAIDOC celebrations. It will be "Voice, treaty, truth—let's work together for a shared future". This theme will bring focus to topics of great importance to the local Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community and the ACT government, as well as Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities around the country.

NAIDOC Week 2019 will be marked from 7 to 14 July. At the very heart of NAIDOC Week is the spirit of self-determination: a recognition that Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people have the answers.

The impact of this year's NAIDOC Week theme is still being felt. The theme "Because of her, we can" resonated throughout communities here and across the nation.

Witnessing the profound impact of this year's NAIDOC Week theme has made the response from some regarding next year's theme even more disappointing. As Australians have come to expect from the reactionary federal Liberal Party, members of that party have called the 2019 theme divisive. I say to the national NAIDOC Committee: You are welcome in Canberra. Your theme is important to us, and we will listen to and engage with you. We will continue to advocate for the Uluru statement from the heart to be respected and to be acted upon.

The ACT is unique in having an Indigenous voice to parliament, through the ACT Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Elected Body. Australia has much to learn from our experience of an Indigenous voice. I will do what I can to demonstrate how important that voice is to the Assembly and the ACT government, including during NAIDOC Week next year. I look forward to further announcements from the national and ACT NAIDOC committees in relation to next year's activities.

MR PETTERSSON: Minister, how do this event and theme tie in to the government's ongoing work with Canberra's Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community?

MS STEPHEN-SMITH: I thank Mr Pettersson for his supplementary. The government is embedding Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander-led solutions into policy and services across the board. One example of this is the new ACT Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander agreement. Self-determination is the underlying principle of the current agreement and, based on community feedback, will be even more prominent in the new agreement to be established early next year.

For those who are interested in the progress made in developing the new agreement, I would like to take this opportunity to inform both Assembly members and members of the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community that members of the elected body and ACT government officials will be at the AIATSIS market day on 7 and

8 December to meet with the community to discuss the new agreement before it is finalised in the new year.

The theme for next year is “Voice, treaty and truth”. We have a voice and, as I have said before in this place, the ACT government is open to considering a treaty for the ACT. I have discussed this possibility with the United Ngunnawal Elders Council, and the ACT government has been observing treaty-making processes for some time in Victoria and the Northern Territory, and in South Australia prior to the change of government.

The final part of the theme is “truth”. Reconciliation Day, the first celebrated in this jurisdiction this year, and the community events that support it are an important opportunity for truth telling. Reconciliation Day is a way for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people in the ACT to tell the true history of their people and this land. It is also an opportunity for non-Indigenous Canberrans to ask questions and learn more about the Indigenous history of our region and our nation.

I am sure that NAIDOC Week 2019 will be an opportunity for conversations on voice, treaty and truth, to continue at both a local and national level.

MS ORR: Minister, what else is the ACT government doing to support and celebrate the contribution of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people in our community?

MS STEPHEN-SMITH: I thank Ms Orr for her supplementary question. I was pleased recently to open the latest round of ACT Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultural, leadership and scholarship grant programs. A total of \$215,000 is available for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people in the ACT to undertake study or leadership training and to celebrate and share their cultures.

This year a number of changes were made to the grant programs to make them more accessible and to better meet the needs of the community. The changes are a result of feedback from past grant recipients and community discussions and will mean that the grants are open all year until grant funds are allocated to the end of the financial year. An assessment panel will convene monthly to assess applications for scholarship and leadership grants and grant recipients can apply for grants in successive years. This responds to feedback that scholarship grants should be open all year so that people can plan for their future study with confidence.

Scholarship grant rounds have previously assisted Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Canberrans in studying courses from certificate IV up to masters degrees as well as in attending conferences and study tours and providing cultural education to the wider community. Changes to the cultural grants mean that they will now be available for some months before culturally significant events such as NAIDOC Week, Sorry Day and Mabo Day. This means that community groups will also be able to plan better for events and other activities.

I encourage members of the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community to check out the refreshed grant programs via the strong families website. The ACT government knows that creating environments where Aboriginal and Torres

Strait Islander people can be proud of their identity and access further education will lead to better outcomes for the entire community, and I look forward to following the progress of future grant recipients.

Waste—bulk collection

MR MILLIGAN: My question is to the Minister for City Services. Minister, there was an election promise made during the 2016 election campaign that a free bulk waste collection would be rolled out to all Canberra suburbs. When is that to be introduced?

MR STEEL: I thank the member for his question. Of course, we already have the bulky waste collection service for certain residents in the ACT who are eligible. We committed in the election campaign to deliver bulky waste collection. That will be considered over the next two years of the term.

MR MILLIGAN: Minister, when will the Labor-Greens government follow through on its 2016 election promise to deliver this free bulk waste collection across all suburbs in the ACT?

MR STEEL: I thank the member for his question and refer him to my previous answer. I note that our government has delivered on a whole range of different commitments and, just over two years into our parliamentary term, we continue to deliver on the commitments we have made. Rolling out the green bin program through the whole of Canberra is something that we committed to before the last election and something we will continue to do. We will certainly look at further measures like bulky waste to make sure we can recover resources before they go to landfill.

MR WALL: Minister, is it the government's intention still to make available the bulky waste collection service to operators of trash pack businesses? If so, why is it going to take more than two years from the time the government destroyed their business?

MR STEEL: I thank the member for his question. We have not considered the implementation of the plan. That is something that will be looked at over the next two years.

Education—disruptive students

MS LEE: My question is to the Minister for Education and Early Childhood Development. Minister, during annual reports hearings, I asked what the process was for a teacher to report an injury from a student in the classroom and was told that the incident goes to the supervisor and is logged on Riskman. When I asked what happens when the same thing happens a second time, the answer was the same. When I asked what happens when the same thing happens a third time, the answer was: "Well, it is the same scenario." Minister, despite the managing occupational violence policy having been in place since July 2017, and the findings of the WorkSafe investigation,

why does your directorate still not have a clear and adequate process to deal with multiple incidents of violence in our schools?

MS BERRY: As I understand it, those questions were asked and responded to in estimates. The Education Directorate is working very closely with our school communities to instil a cultural change within our schools that accepts that our teachers have a sometimes very challenging but very rewarding job and sometimes, as a result of that—of the challenges that some students come to school with, and the behaviour of some parents and others in the community as well—it means that they can be exposed to occupational violence. The changes that are required in schools are to ensure that teachers understand that they have the right, the same right as any other worker, to go home safely from school. It is not a judgement on their ability to teach and include students who have challenges in their lives that lead to behaviour in schools that can lead to violence against teachers. It is saying to teachers that we need them to report, and that all school communities need to encourage all school staff to report, any injuries or any incidents that occur in schools so that the government—

Ms Lee: Point of order, Madam Speaker.

MADAM SPEAKER: Resume your seat, please, minister.

Ms Lee: Madam Speaker, my question was specifically about why her directorate still does not have a clear and adequate procedure. It was not about encouraging teachers to report. I acknowledged that in my question; I would prefer the minister to actually answer the question I asked.

MADAM SPEAKER: I think that she made reference to the education department working on it, but you do have 20-odd seconds left, minister.

MS BERRY: Thank you, Madam Speaker. What we will be seeing for a little while as we change the culture in our schools, not just here in the ACT but across the country, is an increase in the number of reports, which will tell us that we are making a difference within our school communities. *(Time expired.)*

MS LEE: Minister, I again ask: why does your directorate still not have a clear and adequate procedure to deal with multiple incidences of violence, and what training has been provided to directorate staff to raise awareness about the new policy?

MS BERRY: I am aware that Ms Lee referred to a number of these questions during the estimates hearings, about training that was provided, and will continue to be provided, as we roll through a significant cultural change that needs to occur in our schools. That training will continue.

Mr Coe interjecting—

MS BERRY: Well, it is a cultural change. It is not just limited to here in the ACT. The ACT government led the nation in ensuring that we have a plan in place and a policy in place to address what is a very complex issue.

Mr Coe interjecting—

MS BERRY: You can laugh about it all you like, Mr Coe, but this government is about ensuring that our schools are inclusive places for all of our students, our children, regardless of what they come to school with, as far as their backgrounds or circumstances are concerned, and that our teachers and school staff have every right to return home safely from their place of work. The ACT government has led the nation on this work, and we will continue to lead the nation on this work. It is a very complicated and complex issue, but we are getting on with the job of ensuring that both of those rights are assured.

MISS C BURCH: Minister, why did the 2012 ACT public service-wide policy on managing occupational violence not provide adequate direction for education staff?

MS BERRY: I have spoken a number of times—and I am happy to continue to speak—about the complications of a human services workforce that is sometimes required to deal with issues that can lead to exposure to occupational violence. Our schools are inclusive environments and that means that sometimes people will come into our schools with behaviours that expose some people to violence in the workplace.

Unfortunately that has led to a culture within human services systems, like schools, where staff feel that they might be letting somebody down if they report an incident that might have occurred. The government is changing the culture within that environment to say that it is okay because part of their job is to ask for help. It is not a judgement on their ability or their profession to ask for help to ensure that every child gets the support they need and for teachers to be provided with the training and support they need to support every child in our schools.

Education—community schools

MRS KIKKERT: My question is to the Minister for Education and Early Childhood Development. Minister, regarding the proposal for community schools mentioned in your future of education statement, how will community schools differ from current ACT public schools?

MS BERRY: Our ACT government public schools are already very inclusive places and already have a number of partnerships with communities, businesses and sporting organisations. What this strategy will look at is what are the best kinds of community school models that currently exist in our schools, programs that we could pilot in our schools to strengthen these relationships that lead to better outcomes, particularly for those students who are disadvantaged or who come from vulnerable backgrounds.

MRS KIKKERT: Minister, will your proposed community schools have more of a say about the curriculum, subjects and associated activities than existing schools?

MS BERRY: I think that there is an assumption that there will be some new schools created as a result of this strategy. What this strategy is creating are opportunities to

look at the best and most innovative teaching and community school models that could exist in the ACT to support our students to be even better, to provide environments for our teachers that are even better, to provide supports to our students and to have really strong partnerships with community support organisations, with sports groups, with businesses, with employers and with mental health organisations for psychological and other welfare supports. Those are the kinds of things that make up a strong school community and those are the sorts of things that the government is investigating as part of this strategy, to ensure that our schools are—

Mr Coe: Madam Speaker, I raise a point of order. Mrs Kikkert's question was specifically about whether school communities, as a defined term in the report, will have more of a say about curriculum subjects and associated activities. I ask that the minister be directly relevant.

MADAM SPEAKER: Could you go to those points, Minister.

MS BERRY: Madam Speaker, I must have misunderstood the question. I assumed that the question was about some schools being different to our public schools that exist right now in the ACT. I tried to clarify at the start of my answer that that is not the case. It is about investigating models existing already in our school systems, and other models that might not exist already, to build strong partnerships and build strong school communities.

MS LEE: Minister, again aside from external users who are going to be using the school facilities or buildings, what are the features of what you propose as a community school for the ACT and what decisions will the community be able to take for those schools?

MS BERRY: This is about building strong partnerships with lots of different organisations across the ACT community. I am not sure what is so confusing about that. Those relationships already exist in some of our schools.

Opposition members interjecting—

MS BERRY: I do not think it is very funny. I think it is a very important thing for our schools to be strong community partners and not just places of education; places where everybody can come together and contribute to the best possible outcomes for our students and for our teaching staff and for all our staff in our schools, particularly for volunteers and for our parents and citizens associations to be engaged in how we can strengthen our school communities to be even more inclusive and supportive, and to focus on that principle of equity to ensure that those children in our community who do not have the same chances as everyone else get the same opportunities to lift and broaden their horizons through those strong supports.

Arts—funding

MS ORR: My question is to the Minister for the Arts and Cultural Events. Minister, I note that you have made a number of announcements on the arts in recent months

around grants, boards and councils in the ACT. Can you please update the Assembly on the outcome of the latest round of arts activity funding?

MR RAMSAY: I thank Ms Orr for the question. I was pleased in May this year to announce a new, more flexible and frequent approach to funding arts projects which has been very well received across the arts community.

This year's advertised pool of \$775,000 in project funding, which is now called arts activity funding, is delivered in two major rounds each year of grants of up to \$50,000, as well as a rolling program of grants of up to \$5,000. On 31 October I announced the first recipients of the \$5,000 to \$50,000 funding round, which resulted in 16 projects being funded, to a total of \$303,000, with a further \$300,000 available in the next round, which opens on 1 December.

The quality of applications, not surprisingly, was very high. Successful projects included the recording, mixing and mastering of an EP of new hip hop music by artist KG, a visual arts project pairing seven community artists who live with disability from Hands On Studio with seven working Canberra artists, and the BOLD II Festival, which celebrates the legacy and impact of professional and community dance across all ages and cultures.

Unsuccessful applicants in this round are welcome to apply again for the next round. The up to \$5,000 funding is available all year round. To date 17 successful applications have received total funding of over \$62,000 of the \$175,000 that is available for this financial year.

There is a full list of the funding recipients on the artsACT website. The variety and strength of these successful projects further showcase the vibrancy of the Canberra arts sector and its strong contribution to the social, cultural and economic life of this city.

MS ORR: Can the minister outline what the recent grants for capacity building in the arts sector are achieving?

MR RAMSAY: I thank Ms Orr for the supplementary question. The arts capacity building funding I announced earlier this year was in response to feedback I received from the arts and is being delivered in a number of ways. The Ainslie and Gorman arts centres have been granted funding of \$25,000 for capacity building for ACT artists in 2018 and 2019 for the design and delivery of free assistance to ACT artists to conceptualise and develop arts projects and to develop funding applications, including to the ACT government.

MusicACT has been granted funding of \$108,000 for capacity building for the live music sector in 2018 and 2019 to deliver a program of workshops and seminars on professional skills development; working with promoters, event managers and record companies; staging performance; self-promotion; the impact of digital technology; and support for all-ages concerts.

MusicACT launched the new program at Smith's Alternative on 24 October to a packed audience, and the government is committed to supporting Canberra's live music sector to enliven our city and support the night-time economy.

ArtsACT has awarded a contract to Lighthouse Business Innovation Centre for capacity building services to ACT arts organisations to increase their skills and knowledge in governance, strategic planning, risk management, sponsorship and marketing. The service will assist to build capacity, sustainability and professionalism in ACT arts organisation, and that will commence shortly.

MS CHEYNE: Can the minister update the Assembly on the recent board and council appointments?

MR RAMSAY: I thank Ms Cheyne for the supplementary question. Earlier this month I was delighted to announce the formation of the Minister's Creative Council and appoint its inaugural 11 members. The role of the council will be to advise the ACT government on arts and cultural sector issues to inform future policy development. The purpose and the nature of the council were determined after extensive sector consultation and it has been very warmly welcomed by the arts community.

There were 87 high calibre applications. The successful people on this council now bring to the table strong connections to the arts community, as well as collective diverse arts practice. The members of the council have among them experience in visual arts, music, dance, theatre and performing arts, literature, film, festival curation, the media, arts administration, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander arts and cultures, and social inclusion, including working with seniors, culturally and linguistically diverse communities and people with a disability.

The council's combined diverse experience and ties will deliver great outcomes for Canberra's arts sector. The first meeting of the council will be before the end of this calendar year. I look forward to meeting with them. I also recently announced a number of new appointments to the board of the Cultural Facilities Corporation, including a former Supreme Court judge, a former director of the British Council Australia, a former Queensland MP and the new chair of the creative council.

This esteemed group of people will be very well placed to help steer the CFC through the next exciting phase of consideration of a new theatre for Canberra and the revitalisation of the Civic Square cultural precinct.

Canberra Hospital—asbestos

MRS DUNNE: My question is to the Minister for Health and Wellbeing. Yesterday, Minister, you told the Assembly, "I was advised about asbestos removal works in July 2017 in ward 11A. It was being refurbished at the time." Minister, has the refurbishment of ward 11A been completed? If not, when will it be completed?

MS FITZHARRIS: Yes. I believe that I also indicated in my comment yesterday that the acute aged care ward was completed and that I was very pleased to attend the opening of that in around February of this year.

MRS DUNNE: Minister, are there any wards at the Canberra Hospital which are currently closed for any reason?

MS FITZHARRIS: I am sorry; I missed the last part of Mrs Dunne's question.

MRS DUNNE: Are there any wards at the Canberra Hospital closed at the moment for any reason?

MS FITZHARRIS: I know that the oncology ward is being upgraded, but I do not believe, in terms of wards being closed and beds not being available, that that is the case. Of course, there is the ongoing upgrade of the oncology ward; I do not know precisely where that is up to. But the fundamental issue is: are beds open in certain wards? Yes, they are.

MRS JONES: Minister, how many wards on the Canberra Hospital campus are partly closed or in any way have beds taken out at the moment or are not being used because of reduced capacity for this type of matter, for refurbishments and so on?

MS FITZHARRIS: There are a number of beds open at any given point, I believe around 670 at the moment. In some instances they will be shifted around different locations in the hospital, particularly for important matters like upgrades, which we did with the acute aged care ward and which we will do with the cancer ward as well. Certainly in terms of Mrs Jones's question, none that I am aware of.

Alexander Maconochie Centre—duress alarms

MRS JONES: My question is to the Minister for Corrections and Justice Health. Minister, I refer to the minutes of an occupational health and safety meeting for mental health, justice health and alcohol and other drug services held on 23 August 2018. It referred to a duress alarm at the AMC not working. Minister, what were the problems with the duress alarm at the AMC in August and have they been fixed?

MR RATTENBURY: I will provide the specifics of that matter on notice to Mrs Jones.

MRS JONES: Are all the duress alarms in the justice health system currently in good working order?

MR RATTENBURY: To the best of my knowledge. Again, I will check that and if there is anything different I will let Mrs Jones know.

MRS DUNNE: Minister, are all the duress alarms in the justice health system currently accounted for, and what actions are taken to ensure that all systems are in place to protect staff, clients and visitors in the justice health system?

MR RATTENBURY: In regard to the first half of Mrs Dunne's question, I will check that. I cannot tell whether Mrs Dunne thinks that there is a problem or if she just wants to know, but I will make sure that I have a fully factual answer for her.

In terms of the second half of the question, we have discussed this many times. We have an extensive range of protections in place for staff, ranging from training and clinical techniques through to physical security responses.

ACT Supreme Court—coat of arms

MR HANSON: My question is to the Attorney-General: it has been reported in the *Canberra Times* that the Chief Justice of the Supreme Court has decided not to include the Canberra coat of arms in the new Supreme Court building and is considering creating a new insignia. I have been approached by many in the legal profession who have expressed outrage at the decision not to include the coat of arms and who have apparently taken to refusing to bow when entering the courtroom. When did you first become aware that the Chief Justice had decided not to include the existing coat of arms in the new courtrooms?

MR RAMSAY: I thank Mr Hanson for the question. There has been some consideration around a new coat of arms. In terms of the particular date, I will take that on notice. It was several months before the opening of the new building.

MR HANSON: Minister, whose decision is it to place or not place a coat of arms in the court buildings and court rooms? Is that the government's decision or is it the judiciary's decision?

MR RAMSAY: It is a matter that we have worked very closely on with the judiciary and that is certainly something that we take very seriously not only in terms of the working of the court but also the separation of powers and the rightful place of the judiciary—

Mr Hanson: On a point of order, I fear that you may not get to the direct answer before sitting down. If I could, on a point of order of relevance—and I appreciate he has only just started—the question is: in law, whose decision is it? Is it the judiciary or is it the government that makes these decisions?

MADAM SPEAKER: Attorney-General to the point, you have most of your two minutes left.

MR RAMSAY: Thank you very much. It is a matter that we believe is important for us to work together with the judiciary on. In terms of the decision within the court building, the judiciary has made clear that they would prefer not to have the current Canberra coat of arms.

One of the things that we will continue to do is invest in the best access to justice. Our investment in—

Mr Hanson: On a point of order, as I feared, he did not get to it. The question was quite clear. Whose decision is it? I appreciate that he works collaboratively with the judiciary but whose decision is it when it relates to court buildings?

MADAM SPEAKER: Mr Hanson, I cannot direct the minister other than to ask him to be relevant to the question. Mr Hanson is proposing he wants a simple answer: you have more than a minute, Mr Ramsay.

MR RAMSAY: There are no current plans for the ACT government to install a coat of arms in the building and we believe that it is best determined in consultation with the judiciary, as we have done with all of the new court building.

Let me say again: the government's investment has been very significant. We believe that the most important investment that we have in this building is the additional jury rooms, the strong support for our juries to make sure that we have good access to great technology which is leading technology. We believe that that is the key thing for the government to be investing in. We have invested in that and we will continue to concentrate on access to timely and transparent justice.

MR WALL: Attorney, will you table in the Assembly all correspondence between the government and the Chief Justice relating to the use of a coat of arms in the new court buildings, given that these documents would not constitute legal advice and therefore not be privileged?

MR RAMSAY: I will take that on notice.

Roads—traffic management

MISS C BURCH: My question is to the Minister for the Arts and Cultural Events. On Saturday, 17 November, the Anthems event was held at the National Arboretum. Patrons report that it took over an hour to get from the city to the arboretum, that they waited for over 1½ hours to get on a bus at the conclusion of the event, and that it took over 1½ hours to get from the arboretum back to the city. Minister, what traffic management plans were in place to ensure that people could get to and from the Anthems event at the arboretum quickly and safely?

MR BARR: Madam Speaker, the arboretum falls under my responsibility for territory venues. The event was a private event, organised by a private events company. So all of those questions are in fact ones best directed to that company. However, I am happy to assist Miss C Burch in seeking that information and providing it to the Assembly.

MISS C BURCH: Chief Minister, what oversight did the government have of crowd management and traffic management plans at the event and at the shuttle locations in city west car park and Lake Tuggeranong College to ensure the safety of people waiting for buses?

MR BARR: As I indicated, this was not a government event. It was held at a venue that the ACT government owns, but the responsibility for the event management sits

with the private event management company. I will get that information. It was not an ACT government event but it was held at an ACT government venue. Obviously there is some confusion, including with Miss C Burch, as to whether we have responsibility for that. We do not. We were not the event organiser. We simply allowed our venue to be utilised for a private event.

MR WALL: Chief Minister, was a traffic management plan required for the Anthems event staged at the arboretum? Likewise, what additional safety or traffic management precautions or procedures were put in place in the ACT over that weekend, given that there were three major events?

MR BARR: There are traffic management plans required to stage major events in the territory. The location of those events will, of course, determine which government agency is responsible for the regulatory approvals.

In relation to the other events that Mr Wall refers to, one was held on National Capital Authority land, and they would have been the responsible agency in relation to that matter. Certainly, the street party in Lonsdale Street required street closure and road traffic management plans. Similarly, events at the arboretum would require that, but they are the responsibility of the event organiser, a private events company.

Waste—recycling

MS CHEYNE: My question is to the Minister for City Services: noting that Recycling Week ran from 12 to 18 November, can you update us on what activities the ACT government undertook to support this important initiative?

MR STEEL: I thank Ms Cheyne for her question. National Recycling Week was an important opportunity to educate the community about the environmental benefits of recycling and how we can all minimise waste and better manage these important resources.

As part of Recycling Week Canberrans were given the opportunity to go behind the scenes to see firsthand how recycling and resource recovery processes work in the ACT. Information sessions were held on how people can reduce their household food waste. A free composting and worm farming workshop was on offer for those with gardens. Behind the scenes tours were offered at Soft Landing to see how mattresses are recycled, a really great example of how we can create jobs in a new circular economy. Tours were provided through the Corkhill Bros facility to see how green waste is recycled. The community were shown through the Fyshwick container deposit scheme collection point, including the state-of-the-art sorting machinery.

The Green Shed in Mitchell showed off its upcycling skills of turning junk into art and furniture. And I was pleased to visit our recycling discovery hub at the materials recovery facility as ABC Canberra explored what you should and should not be putting into your recycling. Here in the Assembly, Zero Waste Revolution hosted a waste management best practice showcase as we continue our efforts to recover as many resources as possible before they go into landfill.

There were many more events during the week, and congratulations to Planet Ark in particular on the week. The ACT government looks forward to supporting the initiative in the future.

MS CHEYNE: Minister, how is the rollout of green bins supporting better waste recovery? Importantly, how is Belconnen faring?

MR STEEL: I thank Ms Cheyne for her supplementary. The ACT government continues to deliver on our agenda and our election commitment to grow services for the community, including green bins, which are helping to reduce the amount of garden organic waste being sent to landfill. 15,735 Belconnen households are utilising the service since collections commenced at the beginning of September. In Belconnen, that represents just over 40 per cent of all households signing up for the service in the first two months of operation.

In total, 38,294 households across Weston Creek, Tuggeranong and Belconnen have green bins, with 41 per cent being concession cardholders; 4,733 tonnes of organic waste has been collected from green bins, with an exceptional contamination rate of just 0.01 per cent; 2,746 tonnes of green waste has been collected in the Kambah and Weston Creek pilot areas since April 2017; 1,570 tonnes have been collected in the remainder of Tuggeranong since January of this year; and 417 tonnes have been collected from Belconnen so far.

Awareness is growing of the program. 2019 will be an exciting time for the remainder of Canberra, with the ACT government extending green bin services to remaining suburbs next year, ahead of schedule.

MS CODY: Minister, what impact is the container deposit scheme having on recycling?

MR STEEL: I thank Ms Cody for her supplementary. The container deposit scheme continues to be embraced by the Canberra community, helping to reduce the number of containers going to landfill. From 30 June to 18 November, more than 5.7 million containers had been returned to one of nine collection points across the city. We are working with operator Re.Group to see how we can expand the number of collection points across Canberra, and make it even easier for people to deposit their containers so that we can grow the number of containers being recycled.

As we improve recycling, we are also seeing the social benefits of the scheme, particularly through community groups and schools supporting the scheme. Just a few weeks ago, I visited Daramalan College where the school has teamed up with St Vincent de Paul to provide collection points around the school. Students are encouraged to recycle their containers properly, with the proceeds going to Vinnies. This approach has also been taken up by hotels like the Mantra on MacArthur Avenue and Gungahlin Lakes Golf Club. As a result of the CDS, St Vincent de Paul is receiving a significant revenue source to support their important work in our community.

As the container deposit scheme continues to grow, I am sure that we will continue to see the social benefits of even more containers being recycled here in Canberra.

Public housing—Chapman

MR PARTON: My question is to the Minister for Housing and Suburban Development. Minister, recent media reports indicate that work has started on the Chapman public housing site before ACAT has released reasons for rejecting a resident's appeal against this proposal. Minister, why have you allowed work to commence before publication of ACAT's rationale for their decision?

MS BERRY: I thank Mr Parton for this question. I have been advised that the decision ACAT made was delivered verbally to the applicant and to the ACT government, and that barristers for the ACT government and a barrister for the applicant were present during the decision.

After a decision was made, there is a 28-day time frame when an applicant can make an appeal on the decision of ACAT. I understand that that has not occurred but that there are still opportunities, should people want to make a submission—

Mr Parton: But they have not seen the reasons.

MS BERRY: They were both told and there were barristers in the room. Both barristers were there, including the barrister of the applicant. The reason why a verbal decision was made at that point in time, I am advised, is that considerable time had passed since the time when the original ACTPLA decision was made.

Presidential Member McCarthy noted during his verbal decision, which is available on transcript, I understand, that the need for the community and industry to have confidence in the planning process and to ensure development is not delayed any longer than required was the reason why he made a verbal decision prior to putting out a written decision.

The verbal decision stands and is available, I understand, on transcript. That is the recollection that has been provided to me on what happened during that ACAT hearing.

MR PARTON: Minister, will you stop this work and allow Chapman residents, who do not believe that they have access to the reasons for this ACAT decision—they do not believe that they have the reasons in front of them—a fair go at an appeals process?

MS BERRY: As I said, the advice that I have is that the residents or the applicants to ACAT were provided with a verbal decision by Presidential Member McCarthy and were advised, I understand, with their barrister present, that they could appeal that decision if they would like. So all of that information has been provided. They had legal support, I understand, with them during that verbal decision that was made, and the appeal process was available to them should they decide to do that. So no; the process has been gone through. ACAT has made its decision and the government is able to go ahead and continue to develop public housing for some of the most vulnerable people in our community in Chapman.

MRS JONES: Why did you not inform the Chapman residents back in 2017 of intentions to sell part of the block for another use?

MS BERRY: That was a decision of government.

Government—procurement policies

MR WALL: My question is to the Minister for Government Services and Procurement. Minister, I refer to reports in the media of 4 October that EventsACT staff signed \$550,000 of contracts without the correct authority. Staff also gave out nearly \$700,000 of work without a contract and failed to get the minimum three quotes for about \$160,000 worth of work. When did the ACT government first become aware that EventsACT was not following the proper procurement processes in relation to the event?

MADAM SPEAKER: Chief Minister, you are taking that?

MR BARR: I will take that question. Yes, it has obviously been the subject of previous questioning and I will take that date on notice.

MR WALL: I ask either the Minister for Government Services and Procurement or the Chief Minister: what have you done to satisfy yourself that EventsACT has followed the correct procurement processes in relation to other events such as the Enlighten Festival?

MR BARR: Yes, following those particular issues there has been a series of training courses for staff in that area. The details of that were provided to the opposition, I believe, through a question on notice in the past week or so.

MR COE: Chief Minister, what changes to processes have you put in place to ensure that your directorate is using the correct procurement process?

MR BARR: The directorate is aware that they failed in this particular instance. As I mentioned in my response to the previous answer, they have put in place a range of training mechanisms and processes to address that.

Mr Coe: It's your success but their failures.

MR BARR: Ministers do not participate in the procurement process. Mr Coe knows that. That is rightly handled independently by the public service. In this instance there was a failure of process. It has been addressed, and training has been provided for staff who undertake procurement activities.

Sport—government support

MS CODY: My question is to the Minister for Sport and Recreation: how do recent announcements in the sport and recreation portfolio show the confidence of sports to invest in elite content and facilities in Canberra?

MS BERRY: I thank Ms Cody for the question. As the calendar year draws to a close a steady flow of announcements continues to build on Canberra's place as a sporting capital. This is elite sporting codes wanting a clear presence not only in our strong community but also in our high performing economy.

The \$19 million Canberra District Rugby League Centre of Excellence and Community Hub represents a significant investment into the sport by the ACT government in partnership with the Canberra Raiders and the New South Wales government. Drawing this cross-border investment is a huge vote of confidence for Canberra's place in the region, and it is great that both governments and the Raiders have been able to come together in this way. This new facility will give the Canberra Raiders access to a state-of-the-art high performance training venue.

Elsewhere, in elite basketball the NBL has sought to explore opportunities to return elite men's basketball content to the ACT market. Earlier this month I announced that the Illawarra Hawks will play a home game at the AIS Arena on 26 January 2019. While it is a single-year agreement, the Hawks are enthusiastic to maximise their engagement with the community and Basketball ACT in 2018-19 to demonstrate the potential participation, visitation and high performance value of a long-term engagement with the ACT beyond the current year. That includes working with the Canberra Capitals, which I absolutely encourage and applaud.

The Football Federation Australia has confirmed that the Canberra region's bid is one of six remaining bids vying for two new competition licences in an expanded A-League. The A-League team have also engaged with Canberra United, our elite women's team, and I am very happy that they have decided that is a good and successful path for them to be on.

In cricket, Manuka is of course getting ready for the historic first test this summer. *(Time expired.)*

MS CODY: Minister, what broader community benefits will the Rugby League centre of excellence have for the city and the region?

MS BERRY: In addition to providing top-level training facilities for the Raiders, the centre of excellence and community hub will significantly enhance and support the delivery of community Rugby League programs, including female, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander and junior programs, in the ACT and across southern New South Wales. The community programs the facility will be used for include grassroots Rugby League programs, school coaching clinics, ACT and school touch football competitions, community coaching programs and Indigenous programs.

Not only will this facility become the home of our current crop of Raiders players, it will also play an important role in developing future Raiders players. I particularly want to thank the Raiders for working with the ACT government to adjust their designs to be more gender neutral. Again, despite what was said in this place yesterday, old-school sports pavilions with stand-up urinals are not inclusive of women. It turns out that it is quite a challenge for female athletes to use these. I know that I will have Mrs Jones's back as I implement this policy.

MR PETTERSSON: Minister, how do the CBR Sport Awards help to capitalise on these milestones and further grow our sporting community?

MS BERRY: The awards, which will be held this week on Friday, are another example of how far sport has come in a few years. The annual CBR Sport Awards are an opportunity for the sector to come together and publicly acknowledge some of the great achievements that occur each year. This includes not only athletic performance but also organisational excellence through the three minister's awards: innovation, event excellence and inclusion.

Often sporting clubs and organisations and event teams and individual athletes are consumed by their own busy-ness. So much time, effort and focus can be on personal performance or on our own club competition or project that we do not have time to pause and reflect and to learn from others around us. Awards processes can provide this opportunity. They can provide the opportunity to see what others are doing and how they have done it, how they got the results, and what partnerships helped them achieve a particular win, whether it was a win on or off the park.

Since the relaunch of the CBR Sport Awards in 2016, the number of nominations has more than doubled. Nearly 100 nominations were received in 2018. The CBR Sport Awards bring together an industry that has tremendous value to the community and to our economy. It enhances community health. It builds the social fabric and volunteerism. It is great to be able to celebrate these qualities at the end of this year.

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

Income support

Debate resumed.

MR BARR (Kurrajong—Chief Minister, Treasurer, Minister for Social Inclusion and Equality, Minister for Tourism and Special Events and Minister for Trade, Industry and Investment) (3.34): I thank Ms Le Couteur for her motion and I am very pleased to indicate that the government is happy to support it.

We believe in an inclusive Canberra where the benefits of our city's prosperity are shared. In the past few years we have maintained a very strong focus on ensuring that the essentials of a good life are readily available for Canberrans: safe, affordable and suitable places to live; decent and secure jobs; access to free quality health care when and where it is needed; and good education and other reliable local services.

In a city where many are doing extremely well, we also have to be up-front about focusing our efforts on those who are not. In this financial year, our concessions program will provide an estimated \$75 million in assistance to low and fixed income Canberra households. These concessions help with a range of living expenses such as rates, utility bills, drivers licence fees, motor vehicle registration fees, public transport fares, taxi transport for people with limited mobility, buying glasses, and travelling interstate for medical treatment, amongst other things.

Around one in five Canberra households currently benefit from at least one of these programs. They are targeted to Canberrans who are both income and asset poor, because we know that people who are renting or who have very low incomes face the biggest challenges in meeting their daily needs and staying clear of financial crisis.

In addition to these programs, which are linked to commonwealth concession eligibility, we provide programs targeted to Canberrans who are on fixed incomes, to assist with their daily cost of living. Home owners over the age of 65, as well as those suffering significant financial hardship, have the option of deferring their rates indefinitely or until they sell their property. The deferral scheme has been designed to ensure that no-one is worse off by deferring their rates bill, and eligibility for the scheme was expanded in this year's budget so that more Canberrans can now take advantage of it.

On the question of fines, which Ms Le Couteur focused most of her discussion on, the government has taken steps to better manage the payment of fines, fees and penalties to assist people in our community who may be having difficulty making payments.

In particular, I draw the Assembly's attention to the recently made amendments to the road transport act so that, in addition to paying fines up-front, Canberra motorists can manage vehicle-related infringement notices by entering into a payment plan; undertaking community work or a social development plan; or, in exceptional circumstances, even seeking a waiver of the infringement notice penalty.

I am advised that as of this month there have been almost 33,000 instances—32,800—of someone accessing an infringement notice management plan. Of these, over 31,740 entered into a payment plan; 570 participated in a social development program; and 485 participated in a community work program. This, I am told, means that over \$1 million in penalties have been offset by people participating in community work or social development programs. One great example of this is the workshops that have been run by Care financial services, which give people a chance to reduce their debts by participating in sessions that are aimed at improving financial literacy and dealing with issues like household budget management and debt.

Following discussions with Ms Le Couteur and her office, and contact by constituents, I am aware of issues about notification. I have already asked the ACT Revenue Office to provide better notification of what concessions Canberrans may be eligible for and how they can access these. There was a piece of work undertaken a few years ago to consolidate information about all of those concessions into one website, one portal, so that there was one central location where you could go to find out where all of those concessions were available.

We have also committed, though, to continuing to improve the information available on ACT government websites and publications, including, as Ms Le Couteur has called for, in annual rates notices, so that people who may be experiencing financial hardship know where they can go for assistance. The government remains committed to delivering fair, accessible and sustainable concessions. Our program will continue to target support to those in our community who most need that helping hand.

If there are more things that we can do, or groups emerging within our community who have new or changing needs, we will continue to adapt and modify programs to reflect those changing circumstances. The usual process for that would be through the annual budget process, but from time to time we have had periodic reviews of concession programs—one recently conducted—and we will continue to closely monitor both changes in commonwealth concessions, and structures and programs, and the extent to which the ACT can utilise any new information, new eligibility or changes in requirements that occur at the commonwealth level.

Mr Coe: You are not trying to cost shift, are you, Andrew? You are not trying to cost shift?

MR BARR: To the extent that there would be new information available, Madam Assistant Speaker, particularly as it relates to eligibility for programs to address the issues that Ms Le Couteur raised—which Mr Coe would not be aware of because he was not here when she was delivering her speech prior to lunch—yes, we certainly are aware of the opportunities to share more data, and this is something that we intend to do where possible, subject to the relevant privacy protocols.

State and territory revenue offices are working more closely together in a number of areas, and there may be potential for information to be shared in that regard, but equally, between the states and territories and the commonwealth, I acknowledge that there is potential here. Of course, these things are subject to the vagaries of the COAG process and intergovernmental agreements. Right at the moment, between one COAG meeting and the next, there tends to be a change in commonwealth personnel. From the Prime Minister to the Treasurer to the social security minister, there has not been the same person in that role even over the course of this year. And undoubtedly all of those roles will change again, quite emphatically, in May of next year. That might provide the best opportunity to see some serious progress on these issues and perhaps also to address the range of issues that still lie at the commonwealth level, most particularly, as I have publicly called for, an increase in the Newstart allowance.

Having said all of that, I thank Ms Le Couteur for raising these issues today. We look forward to undertaking the work that is required by the action items within the motion and further progressing our efforts as a government and as a community to support the most vulnerable.

MR COE (Yerrabi—Leader of the Opposition) (3.42): The Canberra Liberals believe that the cost of living in our city is just too high. I note that Ms Le Couteur's motion makes the point that Canberra is a high income community, and this may well be the fact by way of the mean or the median. But there are many people who are doing it tough. There are a significant number of people who are not on six-figure salaries and who continue to be left behind when this government determines its tax policies. We have seen the cost of living significantly increase in the past few years. Rates continue to increase, as well as electricity, gas, water and many other bills. Many Canberrans are not only struggling to pay their bills but also seeing a reduction in their quality of life due to a decrease in their disposable income.

Whilst the ACT government does provide a number of concessions for pensioners, those that are unemployed and others, many low income earners often miss out. A home owner on \$50,000 a year may not necessarily be classified as a low income earner, but when rates, mortgage repayments, utilities, food and other bills are deducted, this leaves very little room for disposable income or for other charges, rates and taxes. A rise in rates may lead to a family being unable to afford sports registration for their children or missing out on a Christmas present purchase. Whilst this may seem trivial to some, this makes a big difference for these families.

Ms Le Couteur's motion focuses predominantly on making Canberrans aware of the concessions available to them, and the Canberra Liberals support this. It is important that the most vulnerable in our society are aware of the financial assistance that is available to them.

However, as noted in Ms Le Couteur's motion, this principle is undermined by the changes to the layout of rates notices that have been sent this year. My office has received many pieces of correspondence about these changes, with many Canberrans stating that they are misleading and deceitful. I also note that most of the feedback by residents given to ABC radio last week when this issue was canvassed was also quite negative. The government should not be trying to deceive Canberrans into paying their rates up-front. There is an option to pay in instalments, and people will choose to do this for many reasons. The Canberra Liberals support this motion's intent to call on the government to redesign the rates notices further in order to ensure that Canberrans understand that a quarterly payment option is still available to everyone.

To further compound this problem, the government's concessions webpage does not have mention of a rates deferral scheme. This scheme is open to many people. However, the eligibility criteria outlined on this page are so brief that many people would not be aware that they are eligible for a deferment. In fact, the ACT Revenue Office's webpage that ratepayers are directed to does not provide any mention of the deferral scheme.

To add to this difficulty, those who are aware of the scheme have a form that says that income information is required. This is not a requirement for people aged over 65. Everybody aged over 65 is open to this scheme. How many people have been deterred from applying for the deferral because either they feel that their income exceeds what they think might be the threshold or they are just not comfortable to pass on their income information?

This is not a hard problem to fix. We raised this issue with the government months ago, and as of Monday the problem still existed. I hope that the paper form which can be downloaded regarding the rates deferral—

Mr Barr: On the Revenue Office website?

MR COE: I can send that through to you, Mr Barr, rather than have this conversation. That should not have the income information on it.

Ms Le Couteur's motion also seeks an investigation into whether fines or penalties should be based on a person's income. The ability for this to be put into practice is somewhat difficult, as records regarding personal income are held with the tax office rather than the ACT government. This would present significant obstacles not only in determining a person's income at a territory level but also in raising some privacy concerns in the community. Such a policy may also present an undue advantage to those who are income poor but asset rich. There would be many unintended consequences that would have to be worked through before any such scheme is rolled out.

The Canberra Liberals are very concerned about the rising cost of living in our city. Whilst there are concessions available for rates and utilities, we must not talk down the impact of hikes to rates, fees, taxes and other charges for people on low and middle incomes. The government must make the deferral scheme known to all those who are eligible, rather than keep it a secret.

In conclusion, Ms Le Couteur's motion addresses many symptoms but not actually the cause: the high rates bills that Canberrans pay. These symptoms are serious and must be dealt with, but we must not forget the hardship caused by successive decisions of this Labor-Greens government to increase rates beyond what people are capable of paying.

MS LE COUTEUR (Murrumbidgee) (3.49), in reply: Thank you, gentlemen, for basically your support for low income people in Canberra. That is what my motion is about: making sure that people who are currently suffering from a degree of financial stress do not get pushed totally over into hardship and bankruptcy and, in particular, lose their licence, something that the ACT government is involved in.

I repeat the figure from my initial speech: 81 per cent of licence removals are due to unpaid fines. Quite a few of those fines—the majority of them, I suspect—will be minor fines: you were a couple of kilometres over the speed limit or you parked in the wrong place. They are the sorts of things which, quite frankly, happen. Yes, we all know we should not do it, but it happens. And if you get a fine which you cannot pay and then you cannot drive anymore in this car-dependent city, life can get rapidly very much worse for you. You may not be able to go to work. You may not be able to get your kids to school. You may not be able to shop anywhere reasonably.

There is an issue apart from the issue that Mr Coe talked about, which was basically about the general level of government revenue. It is fairly clear, particularly from the last election, that the people of Canberra want our government to do a lot of good things for us, and that as a whole we are reasonably comfortable. Sure, we would prefer to pay less, but as a whole we are reasonably comfortable with the idea that if we want our government to provide the high quality services we want, we are going to have to pay for them. I do not think that is really a contentious idea, and that is what I am trying to say in this motion: there are some people that cannot pay and some people we need to make more allowance for.

Mr Barr spoke about the various schemes which enable people to not pay fines immediately. I am well aware of these, because some of them were introduced by my

former colleague Amanda Bresnan. The problem with a lot of those is that they are fine if you are someone on Newstart who has some spare time, but if you are a single parent on the minimum income you simply do not have time to organise approval to go on this scheme, because you do not have the concession card, so you are going to have to see Care financial to get them to say that you are broke enough to be on it. Then, if you are looking for significant hours of community work, you quite possibly do not have the time or the capability to do it.

The government has done the right thing in the past, but we need to now look at the people that it is not working for. As Mr Barr said, the people who have a moderate income and are renters are people who it is not working for. I am glad that there is universal agreement that we need to improve rates notices, and I look forward to no longer getting emails about them. I thank all members for their support for low income Canberrans who are doing it tough and I look forward to a fairer Canberra in the future.

Question resolved in the affirmative.

Bushfires—prescribed burns

MRS JONES (Murrumbidgee) (3.53): I move:

That this Assembly:

(1) notes:

(a) the need to protect Canberrans against bushfires; and

(b) only 24.3 percent of prescribed burns were completed in the 2017-18 Bushfire Operations Plan, while only seven percent of prescribed burns were completed in 2016-17;

(2) further notes the bushfire season commenced one month earlier than usual, on 1 September 2018; and

(3) calls on the ACT Government to investigate methods of increasing the burning capacity during periods of suitable weather conditions and to report back to the Assembly by the end of the 2018-19 bushfire season.

I am pleased to speak to the motion that is in my name on the notice paper relating to back-burning and bushfire protection. I note that an amendment from the minister has been circulated, and I will comment on that a bit later. I also note that Minister Rattenbury is circulating an amendment to the amendment. I hope this does not take us all evening; I am sure it will be straightforward once we get into it.

Canberra is the bush capital. It is a badge that we wear with honour. We are surrounded by nature and our city is lined with open green spaces, nature reserves and parklands. We have many homes backing onto sweeping reserves, along the fringes of our city and between the town centres. However, being this sort of capital comes with responsibilities. We all know in this place, and some more than others, how severely Canberra is prone to bushfire. We were reminded of the horrors of the massive 2003 bushfires when, earlier this month, Pierces Creek was on fire, just eight

kilometres from the nearest suburbs in Weston Creek and Tuggeranong, and was burning out of control.

The out of control fire grew in size to over 200 hectares and it took firefighting crews multiple days to get the blaze under control. I would like to take this opportunity to thank the firefighters, paramedics, volunteers and all of our first responders who worked tirelessly and bravely to keep our community safe. It was a nerve-wracking time for residents in Duffy, Chapman and Kambah in particular, in my electorate. When an emergency strikes, these brave men and women run towards the emergency to save lives and property. I thank them.

My concern is that, under the government and this minister, we are making it harder than it has to be, potentially, for our firefighters and first responders, and indeed more risky for the community each bushfire season.

Why is it that we back-burn? Back-burning is one of a number of tools that we are committed to deploying here in the ACT in the lead-up to bushfire season. It is not a panacea, but there are reasons that we deploy it. There are also reasons why it is in the bushfire operational plan and why we are committed to at least trying to get through the majority of the areas determined as being worth burning ahead of the fire season.

I brought this up earlier in the year when I realised through questions that we had only achieved seven per cent of the burns recommended in the year before. I believe that that was certainly not in line with community expectations. John Fisher, of New South Wales State Forests, told the New South Wales Joint Select Committee on Bushfires how the fuel reduction burns carried out in autumn produce a favourable result. He stated:

The ... aim with fuel reduction burning is to burn a proportion of the landscape during autumn when fuel moisture levels are sufficiently high, and sensitive environments, particularly rainforest gullies, stream sides, buffers et cetera that are sensitive to fire, are not impacted by fuel reduction burning. That allows us to constrain fuel reduction burning in that period of time to the areas that are short-term fire-dependent ecosystems blackbutt ridges, et cetera. That breaks up the fuels in the landscape and allows an effective suppression effort. Our research demonstrates that this has been quite effective.

According to the latest Justice and Community Safety Directorate annual report, just 2,004 of the 8,259 hectares identified and scheduled for prescribed burns actually underwent burning in 2017-18. That is only 24.3 per cent of the back-burning being completed—less than a quarter of it—meaning that over 75 per cent of land which was in the plan to undergo burning has not been able to be burned and is left untouched.

While I note the report states that the incomplete burns will be, hopefully, carried out over the next implementation next year, as happens every year, it comes after the year before, as I mentioned, when only seven per cent of back-burning was completed. Clearly, we are having issues with meeting these targets, and it is a legitimate concern.

Back-burning is a key tool in the prevention and mitigation of bushfires. The community have a high expectation that we will keep them as safe as we possibly can. In areas where back-burning has been carried out, potential fires will not produce as much heat or intensity, and even if a fire is declared out of control, as soon as the weather improves and the wind drops et cetera, the reduced fuel load of back-burned areas means that they can greatly assist in regaining control of a fire.

Back-burning fuel loads also assists in reducing potential flame heights and the production and size of embers. This again makes bushfires easier and safer to fight, but, more importantly, it can make them slower to spread and less dangerous to the public. Embers were a huge problem, as we all know, in 2003. The devastating speed at which that fire spread was a major factor in why that was such a destructive disaster.

Back-burning is a responsibility that comes with being the bush capital. In a city like ours, with its unique corridors of bushland separating our town centres, we need to be constantly vigilant. Our hotter and drier than usual conditions in the lead-up to the current bushfire season led to the commencement of the bushfire season a month earlier than usual. This meant that we may have had even less time to get through the burning program, potentially.

With this shorter than usual time frame and unsuitable weather conditions, we got through just 24.3 per cent of the area identified for burns. Of course, on days when the weather is unsuitable, there is little that can be done. The safety of our community, however, is paramount, and back-burning in unfavourable conditions is a risk that we obviously cannot take. In the not-too-distant past we have seen fires here and abroad that began as controlled back-burns getting out of control, so I am not suggesting for a minute that we do it on days when it is unsafe.

When the conditions are suitable, however, we should be doing whatever we can to achieve the goals and targets. The minister has often stated that because the weather conditions were unsuitable, the back-burning targets were not met. In annual reports hearings the minister stated that it will only be more challenging “as we see global warming occurring”. If that is the case, consequently there will be fewer suitable days to achieve our goals. Therefore, what are we going to do about it? Hopefully, we will not just throw our arms up in despair.

I do not claim that the minister can simply click his fingers and complete all the burns; far from it. This is a complex issue. However, meeting seven per cent of a government target, or only 24 per cent of the area identified, to me, says that we must do more, and that is what I am calling on the government to do. I am asking the government to investigate how we can increase our burning capacity during the limited periods with suitable weather conditions so that we can do more to protect ourselves on the days when the weather is appropriate.

Are we able to make better use of the different agencies across ACT government to carry out burns? Could we make better use of volunteers, trained casual workers, or even recently retired firefighters who would be happy to assist? If we have a few good days in a row, are we able to increase our burning loads at short notice to achieve more of our targets? These are all important questions that I hope we can work on

solving. We cannot continue to severely underperform in this area of the bushfire operations plan. We need to have enough resources available between our different agencies so that we prevent bad weather conditions from completely ruining our burning schedule.

If there were to be more burning carried out on a given day then we might need to improve on the communication with the community about what is happening. The community could be made better aware of where back-burning will be carried out, through multiple different methods, whether it is signage, radio, the RFS website or social media. That would be a good start.

I look forward to hearing from the minister about this matter. Well, I did until I saw his amendment, but we will wait to hear whether there is more in the speech. I think it must be possible to do better. I am hoping to work in a constructive way here, to work at how we can get through the vast bulk of burning in line with the professional advice that goes each year into our plans for preparation for the bushfire season.

I was about to talk about tripartisan work, but I will go briefly to the amendment. The thing that concerns me about the minister's amendment is not that any of it is incorrect but that it totally disregards the heart of the question which I am asking, which is: is there any way of increasing the number of burns that we do or the hectares of burns that we complete on a good weather day, during those few good weather days that we get each year? At this stage I am not in support of the amendment because essentially it completely takes out the crux of the message. But I do hope there is something we can do together in this space. I think the community expect us to work together in this place so that they are as safe as they possibly can be.

MR GENTLEMAN (Brindabella—Minister for the Environment and Heritage, Minister for Planning and Land Management, Minister for Police and Emergency Services and Minister assisting the Chief Minister on Advanced Technology and Space Industries) (4.03): As discussed, I will move an amendment to Mrs Jones's motion. I move:

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

"(1) notes:

- (a) hazard reduction burns in the ACT are one of many important activities undertaken in the preparation of a bushfire season;
- (b) the ACT Government, including the ACT Emergency Services Agency (ESA), is better prepared for a bushfire emergency than ever before;
- (c) the ACT's emergency plans and policies, warnings systems, and governance arrangements, lead emergency management practice on a national level;
- (d) the ACT community can be confident that they continue to live in one of the safest cities in the world; and
- (e) while the ACT Government, the ESA and Government Directorates are well prepared for the risks that the ACT may face, preparation for bushfires, storms and heatwaves is everyone's responsibility; and

- (2) calls on the ACT Government to continue working with the community to help prepare Canberra for this year's bushfire season.”.

Mrs Jones's motion presents a one-sided picture of bushfire management in the territory. Mr Rattenbury has foreshadowed to me that he will move an amendment to my amendment that acknowledges the impact of climate change, both now and ongoing, on bushfires. As I have spoken about in this place before, Mother Nature may not be kind to us this summer. Expert advice is that the territory faces increased risk from extreme weather events. This includes bushfires, heatwaves and wind storms.

This year's bushfire season has started early. As we heard, the Pierces Creek fire would not normally occur at this time of year. It would normally occur after Christmas. It does show the influence that climate change is having. It also reinforces the importance of the public message that the ESA has been issuing to the community: Canberra, be bushfire ready.

Let me again reassure members that the ACT government, including the ESA, is better prepared for a bushfire emergency than ever before. There are a range of ways that the city prepares for a bushfire. These include hazard reduction burns, as well as slashing, grazing, mowing, physical removal of vegetation, and trail upgrades and maintenance.

The ACT also has a great relationship, and a memorandum of understanding in place, with New South Wales in relation to emergency management. The ACT Emergency Services Agency has conducted, and will continue to conduct, a range of community education and preparedness activities. Throughout October, November and the coming months, ESA volunteers and staff will be directly engaging with the residents of Canberra's highest risk properties through the “Canberra, be bushfire ready” doorknock campaign.

The ESA is reaching out to about 5,000 homes in areas of greatest risk to discuss the importance of preparing for emergencies. The ACT Rural Fire Service has been working with communities through preparedness workshops and presentations to schools, embassies, libraries, community organisations and local clubs. ACT Fire & Rescue has held open days for the community fire units to encourage preparedness and to build recruitment for this valuable resource.

The ACT State Emergency Service has recently undertaken the 10th annual Legacy gutter cleaning program and in recent months has also conducted a targeted storm season community engagement program. All of these activities sit alongside the ongoing program of community engagement for all ESA services. Part of the ESA's community engagement includes educating the community on the bushfire warning messages used by the ESA.

After the bushfires in Victoria in 2009, the Australasian Fire and Emergency Authorities Council facilitated consultation across all jurisdictions to reach agreement on common terms, trigger points and common messages for information and warnings to the community. This resulted in the establishment of bushfire alerts. Those alerts

are: advice—that is, that a fire has started and that there is no immediate danger; watch and act—that there is a heightened level of threat, that conditions are changing and that you need to start taking action now to protect yourself and your family; and emergency warning—the highest level of bushfire alert, that you may be in danger and need to take action immediately, with any delays now putting your life at risk.

Bushfire alerts are issued using the ESA website and also Twitter, Facebook, local radio and television, telephone via the Access Canberra call centre, and emergency alert. It is important that the community knows what the fire danger ratings and bushfire alerts mean for them and their families well before the bushfire season starts.

Fire services throughout Australia produce a fire danger rating for each day during the bushfire season. In December 2017 I announced the installation of the automated digital fire danger rating signs in the ACT that will help keep Canberrans and visitors up to date with the latest fire danger information. The signs are highly visible. They are strategically located on major arterial roads throughout the ACT.

The fire danger ratings are low/moderate, high, very high, severe, extreme and catastrophic. In low/moderate, high and very high conditions, you should review your bushfire survival plan with your family, keep yourself informed, monitor conditions and be ready to act if necessary. In severe and extreme conditions, leaving early is the safest option for your survival. Well-prepared homes that are actively defended can provide safety, but only stay if you are prepared and able to defend in these conditions. If you are not prepared or able, leave early. In catastrophic conditions, leaving early is the only option for your survival. Do not wait and see what happens.

I must stress that it is very important for the community to understand that some fires start and spread so quickly that you may not always receive all three threat levels of bushfire alert in a consecutive order. You may simply receive an emergency warning first. There may also be situations where there is no time for any warnings to be issued at all. This is why the community should not rely on warnings before they start acting to protect their family. It is also another reason for all Canberrans to be bushfire ready. I encourage residents to visit the ESA website, download a bushfire survival plan and take the four steps to get ready for a bushfire.

I would like to take this opportunity to recognise and thank all our emergency service workers for their dedication and assistance in making Canberra a safer place for us all over this summer. They do a great job of keeping Canberra safe. I acknowledge their hard work and dedication. It is also important to acknowledge their families, who see their loved ones head off to work on Christmas Day or New Year's Day.

I want to express my disappointment about the terms of the motion moved by the Canberra Liberals' spokesperson and her comments directed to me earlier about seeing what we can increase. Firstly, I refer to a question on notice that was signed off and sent to her two days ago directly on this matter. We were asked whether these operations could be increased. In the answer I said:

Implementing prescribed burning is a risky and challenging task which takes into account resources available both for the burn and the days following the burn.

The ACT Parks and Conservation Service (PCS) utilise all available trained, skilled and accredited resources from across several government directorates, including EPSDD, TCCS and JACS.

The closing comment in that answer was:

PCS already maximise the opportunities for burning by utilising all available resources and scheduling multiple burns across any available burning window.

The last sentence states:

We cannot safely increase what we already undertake on any given day.

That is a pretty clear response to Mrs Jones in regard to whether more burns can be done in any particular window. As I said, I think the hard work of front-line staff should be remembered. I think the comments from Mrs Jones disrespect the hardworking men and women who keep the city safe. Theirs is not an easy job. Because of their actions, our city is better prepared than ever before in the event of a bushfire. This is why I moved the amendment.

The hard work of our front-line staff and volunteers is not good enough for the Canberra Liberals. Their spokesperson on emergency services—the acolyte of the Abbott and Dutton era—thinks she knows better than our experts. Like Abbott and Dutton, the member opposite is happy to ignore the expert advice and happy to ignore scientists, as she has done with this motion, knowing the response from the experts.

Time after time, Mrs Jones has been informed about the range of ways our city is kept safe from bushfires. For example, Mrs Jones has been informed that prescribed hazard reduction burns are only one way to keep the city safe and that these burns cannot always be undertaken as planned because of weather and other factors. But it is not good enough. For Mrs Jones, there is only one way: burning; prescribed burns are the only way.

In the best conservative—dare I say “authoritarian”—traditions, the Canberra Liberals spokesperson demands that prescribed burns must occur on the day they have been scheduled. It does not matter what the weather is, whether it is windy or hot. It does not matter if experts in bushfire management are saying it is not appropriate. It does not even matter if it is not safe to do so. According to the Canberra Liberals, a burn should happen if planned, no matter what. This was the clear position Mrs Jones gave to the *Canberra Times* earlier this year. I quote from the article:

An ACT government spokesman said the highly variable weather meant the entire schedule of burns was not able to be carried out every year, and this was factored into their overall bushfire management plan.

Outstanding burns were rolled over into the next year, he said.

But Canberra Liberals emergency services spokeswoman Giulia Jones said dry weather conditions shouldn't be a deterrent ...

Let me repeat that:

But Canberra Liberals emergency services spokeswoman Giulia Jones said dry weather conditions shouldn't be a deterrent ...

What an extraordinary position! Canberrans should be rightly worried if the Canberra Liberals spokesperson on emergency services ever becomes a minister. Can you imagine it? A burn is scheduled in advance but the day before the bushfire management experts say that the weather will be too hot and windy and that the burn would be dangerous. Imagine what Mrs Jones would do. She would be straight on the phone saying that that burn will go ahead because the weather should not be a deterrent to that burn. Talk about the shadow minister for reckless endangerment! Unlike Mrs Jones, I respect the role of our emergency services workers and will continue to respect their operational independence—that is, do not interfere.

In closing, let me reassure the Assembly and the community that the ESA and all those across government responsible for bushfire preparedness have been working hard to prepare our city. Their efforts mean that our city is better prepared than ever before. But we also need Canberrans to prepare. Bushfire preparedness is the responsibility of all of us.

MR RATTENBURY (Kurrajong) (4.15): Mrs Jones has brought an important topic to the Assembly. Bushfires are a terrible occurrence and an ever-present risk during the hot summer seasons and, increasingly, beyond the summer seasons. The terrible events of 2003 made this all too real for so many Canberrans who were here at the time. As a city and a community many people are still painfully affected by the events of 2003.

I want to firstly recognise and thank the emergency services staff and volunteers for their ongoing work. Our community is extremely grateful for the work they do in often very difficult conditions. I am also aware of the key role that the parks and conservation service play in undertaking fuel management and reduction across the territory. The ACT parks and conservation service manages over 75 per cent of the land in the ACT, which is a huge job. I also want to note the work done by the parks and conservation fire management unit which undertakes crucial bushfire operations planning, most of the hazard reduction burning and the bulk of fire suppression work for the ACT, and they are ably backed up by the Rural Fire Service.

Since 2003 the ACT government's understanding of fuel management has improved vastly due to dedicated staff, lots of scientific research and goodwill in implementing improved fire and land management measures. The government has developed a much better picture of what the various vegetation types are across the territory, what the best land management practices are for each one, which ones need to be burned and how to best monitor and assess fuel loads, and which ones are too delicate and should instead be hand-slashed or fuel-managed in some other way. This knowledge means that in the ACT we can strike an effective balance between managing fuel loads and protecting ecological values in our natural environment.

On this issue it is important to point out that Mrs Jones's motion raises only prescribed burns and does not take into account other fuel reduction measures which are equally important for reducing our bushfire risk. These include slashing, grazing, mowing, physical removal and chemical treatment as well as prescribed burning. Each of these techniques is used in different contexts, depending on the physical environment, depending on how close we are to the urban environment and, compared to being in Namadgi, being really mindful of sensitive areas like the sphagnum bogs through to areas that can be more readily burned and, as a fire, more readily managed.

All the measures that I have just mentioned are included in the bushfire operational plan and they all collectively contribute to our level of bushfire preparedness, which is why looking at prescribed burning in isolation, I do not think, gives an accurate picture of the level of risk or the level of preparation that has been done to combat that risk.

In her motion Mrs Jones says that under the 2017-18 bushfire operations plan 24.3 per cent of prescribed burns were completed and only seven per cent of prescribed burns were completed in 2016-17. I do think that this is a slightly misleading interpretation, as the annual report makes clear. The annual report says that, of the prescribed burns identified in the 2017-18 bushfire operational plan, 37 of 45 were completed, totalling 2,004 of 8,259 hectares; and in 2016-17 the plan identified 24 burns, totalling 7,379 hectares and nine were completed, totalling 504 hectares. Mrs Jones in her analysis has actually taken the hectare figure percentage and then used it as the percentage of burns completed.

When we look at the data the way that I would understand it, in 2017-18 the number of completed prescribed burns was actually 37 of 45, which is actually 82 per cent, much greater than the 24 per cent Ms Jones has cited in her motion. There is no need to try to misrepresent the situation when it comes to prescribed burns. We should look at the complete and accurate picture, and this should refer to the number and the area of prescribed burns, which is what the annual report shows. As the annual report also makes clear, the remainder of the burns were not completed due to unfavourable ecological and weather conditions.

I also note that officials in annual reports hearings have explained in detail the reasons for missed burns as well as the other factors beyond burning that are important to bushfire and fuel management. It is important that the professionals on the ground have the discretion to decide when it is safe to conduct prescribed burns and what type of fuel reduction activity is best for each environment.

I am also conscious that there is a range of stakeholders involved in the preparation of the bushfire operation plan, including groups such as rural lessees, the National Parks Association. All these factors that need to be weighed up have been very well considered and certainly from my recollection there is a high level of agreement about the bushfire operation plan. I think that that is very constructive and very positive. It is a testament to each of the people who have been involved in putting it together. I think it indicates that we have got that right balance between the protection of

ecological values, adequate preparedness for bushfires, and the other risk factors that we need to take into account.

The government also takes on board the advice of the Bushfire Council, which has members with experience in fire sciences, land management, firefighting, Indigenous land management and environmental factors as well as representation from rural leaseholders and the community, as I just touched on.

I also would like to talk about the amendment that I am proposing, which is about the serious impact that climate change is having and will have on bushfires in the ACT and, in fact, around the world. Mrs Jones is talking about prescribed burns because she is concerned about the risk of fires and about keeping Canberrans safe. She should also then be concerned about climate change. I think it is important that we add climate change to this motion as something that should always be on the agenda of this Assembly and certainly when we are talking about mitigating the risk of fires.

The reason we need to address this is that climate change is affecting our fire risk now, today. It is predicted to worsen in the future, but we are already suffering the impacts. Repeatedly, our temperatures are breaking records. We are breaking records for summer heat, for reduced rainfall, for extreme fire danger, for all kinds of metrics that dramatically increase the risk of bushfires and the consequences of bushfires. We will see an increase in the amount of extreme fire days, the length and severity of heatwaves, the number of extreme weather events.

A Climate Council report in 2016 found that the direct effects of a three to four-degree Celsius temperature increase in the ACT—and we are currently on track for that—could more than double fire frequency and increase fire intensity by 20 per cent. The report found the economic cost of bushfires in New South Wales and the ACT in 2016 was approximately \$100 million.

Those annual costs are projected to more than double by 2050. These figures are so staggering that it can be hard to digest them but we certainly cannot ignore them. It is because of these climatic changes that we saw the start of the bushfire season this year brought forward a month to 1 September. The same kinds of changes are being made around the world as climatic conditions change due to global warming.

In the context of the concerns that Mrs Jones raised, historically September is a time in which a range of burning gets done. It is a tricky time because it can also be quite a windy season. And we all know September particularly in Canberra can be very windy. But it has always been one of the windows. With bushfire season coming forward, it underlines the diminishing window there is for burning opportunities. There is nothing surprising about some of the data I have just described and the circumstances. It is predicted that climate change would result in these sorts of consequences in a range of scientific models.

It is not yet summer in Australia—it will be in few days time—but we are already seeing serious, dangerous bushfires. We have of course seen the bushfires currently raging in Queensland. We have seen the reports of those in our news headlines this morning. And those reports say that Queensland will be lucky to make it through the

day without lives being lost as firefighters prepare to battle the worst bushfire conditions in the state's history, according to authorities. There are more than 80 fires burning across the state. And, as of this morning, more than a thousand people have lost their homes near the Deepwater fire on Queensland's central coast.

Members will be aware of terrible fires that have been occurring all around the world in recent months. On my recent trip overseas I spoke to European officials who were shocked at the fire issues they were suddenly having to deal with, which they have never had to deal with. Fires devastated Sweden over the European summer. And these are not fires they are prepared for, because historically they have not had to confront this threat. In the UK peat bogs are catching fire, destroying a precious and finite natural resource.

While I was in California in September wildfires were raging, destroying properties, and taking lives. In fact, there was a large contingent of ACT firefighters there assisting US firefighters to fight and manage those blazes. Wildfires have killed nearly 100 people so far this year in California. The latest climate change report from the US national climate assessment—that is an official report from the US government—warns that wildfires will become worse with climate change. That report says that climate change has driven the wildfires in the south-west of the USA, leading to the loss of lives, environmental damage and costing billions of dollars. It says the area affected by wildfires has essentially doubled due to climate change.

These are some of the reasons that the Greens say, as do many others, that we are in a climate change emergency. These are also some of the reasons why today we have had kids here in Canberra and across the country missing a day of school, standing in the rain certainly here in Canberra, to call for urgent action on climate change. It is to protect their future and to protect all our futures which are being jeopardised by ignorant and inadequate federal action on climate change.

US President Donald Trump responded to the US national climate assessment firstly by releasing it just after Thanksgiving, which essentially buried it, and secondly by saying that he did not believe it. Let us not take such a blinkered and negligent approach in this Assembly and here in the ACT.

I ask that all of us acknowledge the impact of climate change. I welcome Minister Gentleman's comments on this in terms of its significant impact on bushfire risks and bushfire preparedness and that we continue to take the right action and the right steps to do what we can to address it.

Climate change impacts on our ability to prepare for fires. As well as the increased risk of fires, as I said in my earlier remarks, firefighting is becoming much harder. As climate change extends the hotter and drier weather, the fire seasons of Australia and the USA, which are usually separate and distinct, are starting to overlap. Usually firefighting resources can be shared between countries. Now the seasons are starting to overlap. The usual off-season between dangerous fire periods is disappearing.

The Climate Council's report found that there had been a nearly 20 per cent increase in global fire seasons between 1978 and 2013. This means that firefighters have less

time for all their tasks, including hazard reduction burning. And the opportunity for firefighters, including volunteer firefighters, to actually have some kind of rest is diminishing in this context. It is important that we talk about and acknowledge these issues in this Assembly debate.

I simply conclude by firstly indicating that the Greens intend to support Minister Gentleman's amendment and secondly by moving the amendment circulated in my name, which I believe will need to be addressed first as part of the process; then we will come back to Minister Gentleman's amendment. I move:

Insert new paragraph (1A):

- “(1A) Further notes that climate change has increased the risk and severity of fires in the ACT, and is predicted to continue to do so, including by:
- (a) increasing hot, dry conditions and increasing the likelihood of very high and extreme fire danger weather in the ACT;
 - (b) making heatwaves longer and more frequent; and
 - (c) causing fire seasons to start earlier and extend longer—which also reduces the opportunities for safe hazard reduction burning;”.

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

MRS JONES (Murrumbidgee) (4.27): I move:

Add:

- “(3) calls on the ACT Government to investigate methods of increasing the burning capacity during periods of suitable weather conditions and report back to the Assembly by the end of the 2018-19 bushfire season.”.

MRS JONES: Without rejecting any of what has been put by the minister or the Greens, I am amending Mr Gentleman's amended amendment. I am asking the government to investigate if there are any methods of increasing the burning capacity during the periods of suitable weather conditions and report back to the Assembly by the end of the 2018-19 bushfire season. I would like other members to take the opportunity to respond to my amendment.

MR GENTLEMAN (Brindabella—Minister for the Environment and Heritage, Minister for Planning and Land Management, Minister for Police and Emergency Services and Minister assisting the Chief Minister on Advanced Technology and Space Industries) (4.29): The government will not be supporting this amendment to my amended amendment. It repositions the original request for the government to do this work.

As I have said, we gave Mrs Jones information in regard to whether further work could be done, and I will reiterate that. Implementing prescribed burning is a risky and challenging task which takes into account resources available both for the burn and in the days following the burn.

The ACT parks and conservation service—PCS—utilise all available trained, skilled, and accredited resources from across several government directorates, including EPSDD, TCCS, and JACS. PCS already maximise the opportunities for burning by utilising all available resources and scheduling multiple burns across any available burning window.

We cannot safely increase what we already undertake on any given day. It is a very clear answer to the proposal that Mrs Jones has put both in her original motion and now in an amendment to my amended amendment. I will not be supporting it.

MR RATTENBURY (Kurrajong) (4.30): In an earlier conversation with Mrs Jones she said she wanted to ask these questions and be made aware of other possibilities. I told her I thought they were fair questions to ask and I had some sympathy with her view on that. I was not aware of the additional information that Minister Gentleman has just provided, but it seems that there is a tabled question on notice asking whether other methods can be undertaken and whether resources can be increased. The answer provided by Minister Gentleman on behalf of the agency is that they cannot.

I cannot support the amendment purely as a matter of logic. The answer has been provided and on that basis and with the summer season coming up I cannot in good faith ask the agency to do further work given that they have already given an answer they believe is the most appropriate. The Greens will not be supporting this amendment.

MRS JONES (Murrumbidgee) (4.31): I am sorry that Mr Rattenbury did not have the information but I thought we should deal with the possibility of my amendment being agreed to before I completely show up the minister. The minister knows very well that motions in this place have to be put in by 12 o'clock on Monday. The answer to that question did not arrive in my office until Tuesday.

The minister also knows that the aforementioned article is not a quote from me; it is a complete misrepresentation of what was said. The article states:

But Canberra Liberals emergency services spokeswoman Giulia Jones said dry weather conditions shouldn't be a deterrent, and the government should mobilise its Rural Fire Service and Community Fire Unit to carry out more burns when conditions were favourable.

That is a summary by a journalist of my position. It is not a quote from me so cannot be directly attributed to me, and he has been given half of the quote. I ask the minister to think very carefully about coming into this place and misrepresenting what has been said by members of this place in the media or elsewhere.

Mrs Dunne: They've got form.

MRS JONES: They have form. The minister has got a hide. What a grubby tactic. I made it very clear in my speech that that was not the position that I take. In fact, the speech by Mr Rattenbury makes it very clear that in his view fewer days will be

available for back-burning. Is the minister content to have fewer and fewer of the recommended areas burnt each year? Or one day will we have to find a way of scaling up burns on those few days that are available? What a grubby tactic, minister.

MADAM ASSISTANT SPEAKER (Ms Orr): Mrs Jones, you have said a few words today that have previously been withdrawn. Can you watch the language.

MRS JONES: Yes, thank you very much. Part (c) of Mr Rattenbury's amendment goes to the point that he believes the fire season will be even harder to handle as we go ahead. The absolute lack of interest from the minister in looking into ways of getting through a greater number of the recommended burns each year so we achieve more than just a quarter of what is set out in his own bushfire operations plan is a great shame for this city. Should something happen while this minister is in charge of fire management based on the fact that we did not get through as much as we could have, he will have to answer for that.

Question put:

That **Mrs Jones's** amendment to **Mr Gentleman's** proposed amendment, as amended, be agreed to.

The Assembly voted—

Ayes 10

Noes 13

Miss C Burch	Ms Lee	Mr Barr	Ms Le Couteur
Mr Coe	Mr Parton	Ms Berry	Ms Orr
Mrs Dunne	Mr Wall	Ms J Burch	Mr Pettersson
Mr Hanson		Ms Cheyne	Mr Ramsay
Mrs Jones		Ms Cody	Mr Rattenbury
Mrs Kikkert		Ms Fitzharris	Mr Steel
Ms Lawder		Mr Gentleman	

Amendment negatived.

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

Original question, as amended, resolved in the affirmative.

Place name guidelines

MS CODY (Murrumbidgee) (4.40): I move:

That this Assembly:

(1) notes:

- (a) the naming of many places in Canberra, including suburbs and streets, after historical persons;
- (b) that the behaviour of some of those persons was criminal, reprehensible and/or abhorrent;

- (c) the ongoing hurt caused in the community by the commemoration of villains as heroes;
 - (d) that the ACT Place Names Committee provides advice to establish policies for the naming of divisions (suburbs) and public places on Territory land in the Australian Capital Territory (ACT);
 - (e) the current role, responsibilities, membership and expertise, and operations of the ACT Place Names Committee is set out in its terms of reference which is available online; and
 - (f) the Public Place Names Guidelines, which are notified on the ACT Legislation Register, detail the established policies for the naming of new divisions, roads and other public places in the ACT; and
- (2) calls on the ACT Government to:
- (a) review the terms of reference and expansion of membership for the ACT Place Names Committee to ensure it continues to be representative of the diversity of Canberra as a modern, inclusive and progressive city;
 - (b) review the Public Place Names Guidelines to ensure that they meet with community standards, allow for greater community input and capacity to raise concerns;
 - (c) ensure that the ACT Place Names Committee considers community proposals relating to place names that no longer meet community standards;
 - (d) request the ACT Place Names Committee review particular non-residential place names that have been the subject of significant community disquiet, such as William Slim Drive and Haig Park, as a priority; and
- (3) report to the Assembly during the June 2019 sitting period on the outcomes of this review.

We do a lot of different things in this Assembly. We provide fiscal oversight of the government. We manage the ACT economy. We debate and reform laws. We consider matters of public importance. And, when we are very good, we right wrongs.

I am usually far more engaged with the economic matters of delivering services and improving the daily lives of working people. I am not usually so enthused about identity politics.

Members interjecting—

MADAM DEPUTY SPEAKER: Order!

MS CODY: Apparently I am.

MADAM DEPUTY SPEAKER: Mr Hanson, Mr Parton—

Mr Coe interjecting—

MADAM DEPUTY SPEAKER: Order, Mr Coe.

MS CODY: Be it the right-wing nationalist reactionary variety or its left-wing reflection, I take the approach that—

Members interjecting—

MADAM DEPUTY SPEAKER: Order! We need to be able to hear Ms Cody. A certain amount of interjection is okay, but that is beyond the pale.

MS CODY: I take the approach that, whatever and whoever you want to call yourself, as long as you are not hurting anyone else, go for it. That is my attitude, and I reckon an attitude most people share, right up to the moment when your balderdash starts hurting people, right up to the point where you start having real-world consequences.

You can cause real-world consequences by lying about the past. By consequences, I am not talking about the sorts of tantrums I have seen in the press because I have pointed out that some of our national heroes are more fiction than fact. I am not in the business of changing history. The facts of history do not change. But the lies about history can be fixed.

In a city where the place names are designed to tell our history, those names can contribute to either lies or to the truth. If we do not tell the truth about history, we risk repeating its mistakes. The settlement of Australia by white people includes many extraordinary stories of courage and ingenuity, and many others of massacre and dispossession. Both are facts. Both are our heritage today and neither should be forgotten.

The First World War gives us many great stories of Australians who bravely travelled to the other side of the world to fight for their values and their country. History tells of their leaders ordering them into desperate attacks at Gallipoli and on the Western Front with no hope of success and great risk of death.

The incompetence of politicians and generals who put people in harm's way for ego or advancement should be condemned, not celebrated. It is the sort of wrong we can and should fix, even if the identity politics crowd throws tantrums. When you say your identity requires that 250 years of white people in this land demands that a culture that has been here for millennia be erased, that is political correctness gone mad. When you say that we should continue to cover up a paedophile becoming Governor-General, because we might have a to pay for a few street signs, that is political correctness gone mad.

Members will note that this motion that I am moving today has been expanded significantly since the version I placed on the notice paper last month. As I stated in the media, I placed it on the notice paper to start a conversation. Because of that conversation, I would like to thank my caucus colleagues and all those members of the community who helped guide the changes to the motion.

The reactions to my proposal that we review some of Canberra's worst place names have included congratulations, condemnations and comedy.

To those who congratulated me, thanks, but it is not me who should be congratulated; it is all those people who have campaigned on this issue for many years, often being ignored and sometimes being abused. For your forbearance, your passion, and your patience, thank you. We have heard you and we are making sure we have a good process to advance your point now.

To those who have condemned me, we disagree but that is all right. I have tried to get back to everyone who has contacted me. So many of those who at first suggested that this was an expensive or unnecessary review have come to agree with me that paedophiles and war criminals may not be the best examples of praise in our place names.

To the comedians, many of whom sit opposite, good work. Thanks. You have given me and many others a good chuckle and, by highlighting the issues, advanced the conversation. Even if you do not want me to, I will still endorse the importance of mocking politicians. Perhaps that can be a future MPI.

After listening to everyone's views over the past month, it is clear that this is a debate we need to have. It is also clear that there is very loud resistance to having this debate in some quarters. Some people do not seem to want sunlight shone on Australia's history, like snowflakes scared of the sun. I will tell you one thing for free: the conservative commentariat cannot scream loudly enough to scare me or the Labor Party out of our values.

Passing today's motion will achieve several things. First, it will create a process for fixing past mistakes with place names. We should never be too proud to admit past errors. Second, it will make sure that the place names guidelines and committee are equipped to consider and correct those mistakes. Third, it will encourage community debate about our history and reduce the harms caused by the fantasies of reactionaries. Fourth, it will address particular concerns relating to two places with urgency.

The outcry over William Slim Drive and Haig Park has been ignored for too long. These are non-residential places. We can fix it, and we can fix it now. Not doing so is arrogant, unnecessary and unjustified. Canberra has renamed places before, be that 21 streets in Narrabundah, Blandfordia becoming Forrest, NATEX becoming EPIC, or the many past names of the Tuggeranong Hyperdome, or Hyper D, or South.Point as it is now known. I think last month Mr Parton moved a motion in this very place asking that we review the name of Tharwa Bridge, to be replaced by a very worthy name: Val Jeffery. I have no issue with that but, again, it is an opportunity to review a place name.

Across Australia a movement has grown to correct past naming mistakes. Batman, Denison, and McMillan are no longer electorate names, in recognition of their role in Aboriginal massacres. That process does need substantial consultation and education. I agree with everyone who has pointed out that we should not just go haphazardly changing residential street names. Although I have had a number of constituents contact me asking to rename their streets, it is a lot longer and more difficult process. Any process involving those kinds of changes should involve substantial consultation with residents and businesses, due notice and extensive explanation. That is one of the

reasons why I have limited the place names included in my motion for urgent review to Haig Park and William Slim Drive. Neither is anybody's address. They are also by far the most frequently raised issues.

We need to do more to bring this city and this country together to have a more harmonious future. I did not run for politics because I believe in people being victims. I ran because I want us to work together to make our country and our city better. Whether it be the past covering up of paedophiles or the stolen generations, the best way for our city to come together and keep making our community stronger is to tell the truth.

Australian governments have been issuing a lot of apologies in the past few years. It is time we made our deeds match our words. Opening the door to a review of how we tell our history through place names is one way we can do that. If we can, we should.

MR PARTON (Brindabella) (4.52): Madam Deputy Speaker, where to start? I drew the short straw in the party room on this one. I genuinely wish I was not standing up here and speaking to this motion. I had high hopes that it would never be debated.

Like most in this place, I watched the storm of comments that filled the public space when Ms Cody initially flagged her intention to bring it forward. I watched that storm, and I had this belief that common sense would prevail. I had this belief that Ms Cody would skulk off into the shadows and go looking for some other virtue-signalling outrage. I thought she would go scouring the restrooms of RSL clubs around the country to find something else. But I was wrong.

Ms Cody has certainly watered down what she originally signalled a month ago. I do not know that it has become more extensive; I think it has been watered down. My understanding is that Ms Cody's colleagues have forced her to water it down, but it is very clear that this motion still misses the mark. And I am not the only one saying that. This is what Derrick Johns from Florey had to say about the motion in a letter to the editor of the *Canberra Times*:

Presumably the ACT Place Names Committee was established precisely to address such issues. Why then does one MLA need to be expending such time and effort on this matter? It would appear that Bec Cody is far more concerned about the names of streets than the fact that we have too many homeless people actually living on those streets and that's just one example of a far more pressing issue. If this is the best the Labor Party can offer then they really don't deserve to be in government.

So said Derrick Johns from Florey. Personally, I am relatively happy with the ACT Place Names Committee, and I cannot help but wonder why Ms Cody is not, and also I wonder if her vision of an expansion of the membership of the Place Names Committee to be representative of diversity would include a place at the table for the union movement. I can only assume that that would be the case.

Ms Cody: Wouldn't that be awesome.

MR PARTON: Yes, of course it would. I think we all read the amazing opinion piece in the *Australian* from the Mocker that pertained to this motion, but just in case there is anyone here that did not see it, I must pluck a few things from it. Please understand that the Mocker piece referred to the original public offering from Ms Cody on this motion, back in the days when she intended to call for a complete review of every place name in the ACT. Nevertheless I think most things in the Mocker piece retain relevance.

The Mocker came up with some wonderful reasons why we must change the names of the suburbs of Watson and Fisher. Both Labor prime ministers made some quite objectionable racist remarks. They are considered to be quite racist now, but truth be known they were not considered racist at the time, because it was a different time. Labor Prime Minister James Scullin publicly announced that the first plank of Labor's fighting platform was to be "the maintenance of a white Australia". So Scullin must go. Calwell has to go. I think we are all aware of the "two Wongs don't make a white" comment. So how can we possibly have a suburb called Calwell?

As was pointed out by the Mocker, we need to get in quickly and change the name of Whitlam. How could we possibly name a suburb after a former Prime Minister whose inhumane response to the fall of Saigon in 1975 was—and I will not give the full quote—"I'm not having these effing Vietnamese Balts coming into the country with their religious and political prejudices against us." That was from Gough Whitlam. When urged by his foreign minister, Don Willessee, to grant South Vietnamese refugees asylum, he said, "Vietnamese sob stories don't wring my withers." So we must strike out Whitlam.

Of course, Ms Cody cannot dismiss those claims of racism as being unimportant, because this is the same Ms Cody who was outraged by the Indigenous tiles in the bathroom at the Sussex Inlet RSL. We all remember that outrage. We all remember that Ms Cody stormed into this chamber with smoke coming out of her ears to declare that the Sussex Inlet RSL was a national disgrace because of these tiles which had been installed 40 years ago and had pretty much gone unnoticed by everyone since. The claims that men were urinating on the tiles were weirdly incorrect. What I am saying is that Ms Cody has no tolerance whatsoever for any suggestion of racism, so she would have to favour the wiping out of Watson, Calwell, Scullin, Whitlam and a stack of others. Very clearly, none of those suburb names should be changed. They should not be changed.

Ms Cody: Why?

MR PARTON: Are you seriously suggesting that we should strike them out, Ms Cody? Seriously? The Place Names Committee in its various forms went through a process to determine the name which took many things into account. It is not for us to airbrush history into something which is more palatable to us. Of course, it all depends on who is doing the airbrushing, doesn't it?

The Place Names Committee, when I brought a motion to this place calling for a change of name for the Tharwa Bridge, pointed out to me and to all sorts of people

that once a place or a thing is named something, that tends to be what people call it until the end of time. Sometimes meddling with place names at this official level does nothing in regard to what we actually call places.

As I said earlier, this motion, when it was initially flagged, was much more extensive than in its current form. Ms Cody was calling for an extensive review of pretty much every place name in the ACT. I am pleased to see that she has backed away from that, after receiving a lot of public advice, some of it from Jeff Brown from the ACT Place Names Committee, who noted that there were 6,000 or 7,000 place names in the ACT, and wondered how much time and money it would take to review all of them.

The motion does, however, specifically call for a review of the name “Haig Park”. I know that Ms Cody received correspondence from Sydney lawyer Terry Dwyer about Field Marshal Haig. He said:

May I suggest you read a detailed military history of 1918? Field Marshal Haig was the only Allied commander who thought that victory was possible in 1918. Everyone else expected the war to continue to 1919. I am more than well aware that Field Marshal Haig’s tactics have been well criticised and competently so, but by people in a position to judge and people who would be the first to acknowledge that the British commanders of World War I were facing a war unlike any other they had experienced, and we must remember that Haig had the job of building a mass army from scratch to match the German army.

Terry goes on to say in his correspondence:

You and your fellow elected members are not being paid to be armchair Generals or to be social justice warriors or social commentators ... You are being paid to govern a Territory on behalf of the Crown ...

As a constituent, I would be very grateful if you could turn your mind to doing so and, if you can do it competently, you will earn my respect and I will not think that your election is a case of the community paying you in order to be deprived of a hairdresser who provided a useful service.

This is Canberra, Madam Deputy Speaker. This is the home of the suburban lobby group. They are springing up left, right and centre. They are all over town. They are opposing all manner of things, from apartment blocks to drones and public housing developments. The suburbs are full of retired public servants with plenty of skills and plenty of time on their hands. If there are cases of place names that are causing genuine hurt for groups of people, these people, by and large, are more than able to launch their own campaigns to move towards changing those names. I note that some of those campaigns have been going on for some time.

If Ms Cody has knowledge of other specific place names that are causing hurt to people, as an MLA, or indeed just as a member of the public, she has the means to bring this to the attention of place names and to get the powers-that-be to examine such hurt. I am sure that the Place Names Committee would then consider the level of hurt caused by such names and consider whether or not to go down a path of potentially changing the name.

It must be said that because a specific place name causes pain to a very small number of people it should not mean that we are compelled to change it. Ms Cody's motion is vague in that it calls upon the government to "request that the Place Names Committee review particular non-residential place names that have been the subject of significant disquiet, such as William Slim Drive and Haig Park". "Such as", but what are the other ones? The motion needed to identify definitively which other place names have been the subject of significant disquiet. What is the actual definition of "significant disquiet"? Does that mean that two or more hairdressing clients mentioned it in the salon? What is "significant disquiet"?

Ms Cheyne: That is insulting.

MR PARTON: Excuse me?

Ms Cheyne: That is insulting.

MR PARTON: I am referring to the Radio National interview that Ms Cody did where she said that she received feedback on this as a hairdresser. It certainly was not meant as a disparaging comment; I am referring to her Radio National interview.

Under Ms Cody's original vision, we would all be much better off just adopting a number-based street naming and a number-based suburb system. "Where do you live?" "I live on the corner of Sixth Avenue and 21st Street in Sector 48," and then no-one gets hurt. Everyone is happy.

We understand that Labor and the Greens wish to disinfect Canberra of all possible harm. We understand that Labor and the Greens wish to cleanse us of greyhound racing, cleanse of poker machines, cleanse us of gender-specific traffic lights, cleanse us of chocolates being sold in government offices, cleanse families of backyards, and cleanse us of car parks. We understand that Labor and the Greens want to create a warm and cuddly, fluffy space in which nobody can suffer any form of harm from anything. But we on this side of the chamber also understand that that is ideological utopia. It is a left-wing fantasy, and it is just not practical. The Canberra Liberals will not be supporting this motion.

MR HANSON (Murrumbidgee) (5.03): I will speak relatively briefly. I was not intending to, because Mr Parton has eloquently responded to the nonsense that is this motion. But Ms Cody said a number of things which I think deserve a response. She talked about Gallipoli generals "hoarding" people to their death, and calling them war criminals.

Ms Cody: Sorry, I have been misquoted.

MADAM DEPUTY SPEAKER: Sit down, Ms Cody. There are opportunities for you to do deal with that, and that is not it.

MR HANSON: Clearly, that is how I heard it. If she wants to make a correction when she is responding at the end of the debate, she may, but that is certainly as I heard it.

I want to make it very clear that the commander of the 1st AIF at Gallipoli, Major-General William Bridges, died of his wounds on 18 May, after having been shot by a Turkish sniper. He was one of the first ashore at Anzac Cove. He actually tried to withdraw the troops there and suggested that they be withdrawn, but that was overruled. He was regularly on the front lines; indeed on a daily basis. We ought to be very careful before we smear every general from World War I as supposedly “hoarding” people to their deaths. We need to be very clear and understand the sort of men that we are talking about. If Ms Cody would like to, she can go up to Mount Pleasant, where General Bridges is buried, and reflect on what sort of a man he was, as on many of the generals who commanded Australian soldiers in World War I.

MS LE COUTEUR (Murrumbidgee) (12.16): The Greens will be supporting Ms Cody’s motion today. I must admit to sharing some of Mr Parton’s feelings when I first heard the motion discussed in the media. The idea that there was going to be a very resource-intensive and time-consuming review of all place names in the ACT was somewhat alarming. Media reports claimed that this audit could result in name changes for streets and places and people’s residential addresses. This would have had the potential to cause more problems than it helped to solve.

There are numerous services and datasets that rely on a person’s address. I believe that there are at least 150 government data points. The obvious one is Australia Post; we want them to know where we are. But there are other ones: electricity, communications, electoral rolls, health records, mapping platforms, cards, mail, databases et cetera.

The 30 October edition of the *Canberra Times* reported the ACT Place Names Committee co-chair Jeff Brown’s concerns about the many difficulties associated with changing a place name, and I will not elaborate on this more than Mr Parton has already.

Fortunately, the motion before us today is a much more workable idea than that. This motion sets up a process whereby non-residential place names that the community have concerns about can be referred to the Place Names Committee. That seems like a fairly sensible approach. Mistakes, no doubt, have been made by many people, possibly even the Place Names Committee, in the past.

The motion makes it clear that residential street names or anything that is part of a residential address are not going to be changed. This clarification will have come as a relief to many people who live on streets which are named after people who they may be concerned could have a questionable history. As Mr Hanson pointed out, all the generals from World War I could potentially be in that, and there are a lot more than that.

While we are talking about street names, I thought I would talk about some of the things that we do well about street names in Canberra. First off—this is a really good thing—no two streets share the same name. You may feel that that is unexceptional, and it should be unexceptional, but if you go almost anywhere else—Sydney, Melbourne—you will find a heap of streets called Railway Street or High Street. I could go on and on. We have at least worked that one out.

Another thing we have worked out is that odd numbers generally ascend on the left-hand side of a street. Also—I did not realise this—street numbers generally ascend away from the GPO. This is sensible. One of my advisers was told this by a taxi driver, who obviously had a significant interest in working this stuff out. This was before the days of Google.

This is all a far cry from the many confusing situations in other cities. In Melbourne, for example, Hoddle Street—we all know Hoddle Street, I am afraid—runs north-south. Victoria Parade runs east-west, and it crosses Hoddle Street. At that intersection, Hoddle Street's numbering restarts in both directions: running north, it starts at No 1, as it does running south. This is very confusing.

I would say that Canberra's street names and place names are not without some faults. Just around the corner from where I used to live in Phillip there is my favourite pain. On one side, the town centre side of Woden, there is Neptune Street. It has been there for a long time. However, about 10 years ago we did Woden east, and we extended it. We had a perfectly good name, Neptune Street. It is now called Wilbow Street. That is just ridiculous, and we cannot blame it on some century-old or even decades-old change.

Another thing which I imagine all of us who have done quite a bit of doorknocking and letterboxing will be aware of is that there are some places in Canberra—in Belconnen and Gungahlin in particular—where we have one name and it goes in a U-shape so that you have what appear to be multiple different streets all with the same name.

These things are hugely confusing. These are the real place name issues that I would like the ACT government to come to grips with. I do not know what we can do about the past ones, but let's make sure we do not do it in the future.

The Greens share many of the concerns of people around the country who have raised the issue of some of our favourite places being named after people we are not that proud of anymore. There are certainly names that have been subject to significant community disquiet.

Members would all be aware of the considerable community discussion earlier this year about places named after Captain Cook, as well as the many statues of him. One of the more sensible ways to approach that issue would be, in the places where there is a statue of Cook and the memory of Cook, to give a bit more information about what Captain Cook did: expand the history rather than get rid of the history.

We do not want to have the situation where the Place Names Committee is being judge and jury about what people did in the past, particularly where what people did in the past either was not investigated or, as Mr Parton eloquently talked about, was something that in the past was not in any way regarded as a bad thing; where people were expressing the views of the community they lived in.

History may or may not have truths and facts; that could be a whole motion in itself. But it is very clear that how we view history changes with how we view our community: whether we think that various things that happened in the past were good or bad.

Let me return to the theme of more information being a good solution. When I was discussing this with my colleague Minister Rattenbury, he noted that when he was minister for TAMS, these issues about Haig Park came up. What he did was talk to the War Memorial. The War Memorial provided some extra text. If you go and look at the plaque in Haig Park about who General Haig was, it has some additional text from the War Memorial to give a more balanced view about General Haig's contributions, positive or negative.

And if we are going to go down this route, with a bit of digging, there could be many place names that are worth review. Wendouree Drive, which is near the carillon, for example, is named after Lake Wendouree in Ballarat. The name comes from a Wathaurong word. I have been told the direct translation, but it involves the use of unparliamentary language; Wikipedia reports that it means "go away". It was reportedly the response given to the settler William Cross Yuille when he asked a local the name of a nearby swamp, which was later dammed and converted into what is now known as Lake Wendouree, a shallow urban lake. Was permission given by Wathaurong elders to use this name "Wendouree"? Do we really want a name in an area that many tourists go to that means "go away"? Should we reflect on whether this even matters?

There are numerous other examples of street and place names in Canberra that have been named after "villains", to use one of Ms Cody's original words, or have been named insensitively. I suspect local residents and Canberrans more broadly would not feel very strongly about changing those.

Batman Street in Braddon is named after John Batman, who is credited with founding the settlement that is now known as Melbourne. He is also known for dispossessing the local Aboriginal people of their land to do this.

The ACT government states that Wybalena Grove in Cook, a townhouse development containing a street of the same name, is named after an Aboriginal word meaning home or resting place. It is quite possible that it might not have been so named had the people who named the development and street been aware of the terrible connotations the word Wybalena has for Aboriginal people from Tasmania, whose forebears were rounded up and taken to a settlement of the same name on the western point of Flinders Island. Yes, it was a meeting place of sorts, but maybe not one we want to commemorate.

I do not think that there is a big community uprising to suggest that we should change these names. But in spite of the many villainous things that people who have had places named after them may have done, or may have not done, and in spite of the connotations or contexts of particular places or things that a street or suburb is named after, it is important that we acknowledge history. This should include the fact that the

names given to places reflect the thinking of the time or are a product of ignorance. That is except for particularly egregious place names, or ones which cause significant and ongoing trauma to certain people. Where consideration of changing a name may be warranted, perhaps a better way to proceed would be via education about its name, its context, and why some people might find it traumatic. Such information could be included, for instance, in the information that is provided on the ACT government's ACTmapi place names website.

We should be equally wary about changing some of our place names which, with the benefit of hindsight, may not have been so wise. Iron Knob Street in Fyshwick and Swinger Hill in Phillip are well known. I point out that Swinger Hill, which I live very close to, was named after a surveyor, but I think very people in the ACT are aware of that meaning and most take another one. What about Bogan Place in Kaleen? Should we change this or should the residents, the people, have some pride—Belco pride—in the name?

I studied maths at uni, so I would not mind living in Calculus Lane in Duntroon, but some people have said that they have a problem with this. Perhaps residents in Cockburn Street in Curtin tire of telling people that it is really pronounced “co-burn”. Should we take pity on them? And what about the people who live in Adcock Place in Banks or Handcock Place in Macgregor. Where do we stop?

People themselves are very resistant to changing names. I know theoretically that Southern Cross Station is a station in Melbourne, but as far as I am concerned it is still Spencer Street Station, and that is where you get the trains that come from Sydney. The name was changed over a decade ago but nobody calls it Southern Cross Station. Well, maybe a few people do.

What this motion will not do and cannot do is ensure that our place naming committees will always get things right either at the time or, even harder, with hindsight. In spite of the great work that the ACT Place Names Committee does, the naming of places is a subjective matter. It is based on the mood of the time, on what the community at the time feels is a good thing to do, and on the information that is available, which may not be complete.

I have another suggestion. Given the gender imbalance in the current names, a good start might be to consider naming more streets, suburbs and places after women. It is a pretty big imbalance. Parliaments and cabinets can be replaced through elections, and have been in the ACT, where we are proudly a female majority. The most practicable way to right the imbalance in place names in our city may be to have a moratorium on naming places after men for a while. I suspect the moratorium might have to be in place for decades if we are serious about this, but I put that forward as a concept to be considered.

In closing, I would like to thank Ms Cody for bringing this motion to the Assembly. It has caused my office considerable amusement. Unlike the Liberal Party, we did not regard it as something where someone had to draw the short straw to be the speech writer; in fact, numerous people have contributed to this. We did have to take out some of the more salacious commentary; this is definitely not the X-rated version.

This is a refreshing change from some of the more self-congratulatory efforts of government backbenchers and it is a very timely reminder of a matter which most of us rarely think about but which nonetheless is important and does cause harm to a few people.

MS ORR (Yerrabi) (5.19): I thank Ms Cody for moving this motion and giving us the opportunity to consider the place names in our own electorates. I draw the attention of the Assembly to one particular place name in my electorate of Yerrabi: William Slim Drive. William Slim Drive is named after Viscount William Joseph Slim, British military commander and the 13th Governor-General of Australia. William Slim was born in 1891 and passed away in 1960. He served in both the first and second world wars, and from 1953 to 1959 he served as the 13th Governor-General of Australia.

His service and the accolades he collected throughout his life led him to be revered as a man of great accomplishment and honour. Since his passing, William Slim has received the honour of many place names. This includes a university campus building, a secondary school and two different roads, including our own William Slim Drive. Upon hearing about Ms Cody's push to review Canberra's place names, William Slim is one name that immediately came to mind.

In 2009 several allegations of child sexual abuse against William Slim were made public on the ABC television program, *The Long Journey Home*. The allegations that were aired were inexcusable and unfortunately numerous. It was alleged that during his time as Governor-General and his visits to Fairbridge Farm, William Slim sexually assaulted and otherwise interfered with a number of migrant children.

Fairbridge Farm was set up to arrange the emigration of children from the UK to Australia. It was a place where these children were meant to be cared for and educated. Instead, it is alleged that Fairbridge Farm became a place where young child migrants were abused and assaulted.

The accounts of abuse from Fairbridge Farm are so numerous that one survivor told an inquiry into child sexual abuse that up to 60 per cent of the child migrants sent there were sexually assaulted. It is alleged that along with many others, William Slim played a part in perpetrating these assaults. At the time, reports of misconduct against Fairbridge Farm were ignored by both Australian and British governments, and allegations against William Slim himself were dismissed by those who had served with him in the army as well as by his son. It was not until the 2009 ABC program that William Slim's victims started to see justice in the form of a \$24 million payout.

Throughout the recent Royal Commission into Institutional Responses to Child Sexual Abuse many of those who had experienced William Slim's horrific behaviour and the behaviour of others on that farm spoke out. Just this year two survivors shared their story in the *Canberra Times* in hopes of having the name of William Slim Drive changed.

William Slim Drive is one of the major roads in my electorate. Every day an estimated 20,000 vehicles use this road to move throughout our city. For those who

know the horrific stories of William Slim's character, this road serves as a daily reminder. Several more place names across the ACT have similarly difficult histories. I have no doubt that members in this Assembly each have some in mind, and I know from the constituent engagement Ms Cody has had on this issue that members of the community also have several examples of their own.

Reviewing the place names as outlined in the motion will be an important step forward in acknowledging and reconciling some of the more difficult parts of our shared history so that the pain of those who have suffered is not carried forward into our future. I commend Ms Cody's motion and I look forward to the findings of a review into ACT place names as outlined in the motion.

MR GENTLEMAN (Brindabella—Minister for the Environment and Heritage, Minister for Planning and Land Management, Minister for Police and Emergency Services and Minister assisting the Chief Minister on Advanced Technology and Space Industries) (5.23): Place naming plays an important role in the identity of our city and the commemoration of those people and parts of our society that have made significant contributions to the development of Canberra and the Australian nation. It is worth noting that in September this year it was the 90th anniversary of the first commonwealth gazette published to explain the origin and significance of names determined by the Federal Capital Commission for our national capital.

The 1928 gazette commemorated names of people considered to have contributed to the growth of Canberra, and Australia as a nation, as well as words from Aboriginal languages and local words of Aboriginal origin identified as having a long association with the area. Place naming in the ACT is now supported by the Place Names Act 1989 and the non-statutory ACT Place Names Committee.

The first ACT Place Names Committee was established in 1999. The Assembly may be aware that the committee is a voluntary advisory committee appointed by me for a three-year term. The committee provides expert advice about the naming of divisions and public places, including geographic names and opportunities to commemorate the names of eminent Australians.

The committee reviews draft naming proposals to consider any sensitivities and provides guidance to the place names unit within the Environment, Planning and Sustainable Development Directorate. I acknowledge the important work done by members of the ACT Place Names Committee past and present in providing their expertise as a service to the community.

The Public Place Names Act provides a number of categories to which the minister must have regard when considering the naming of a public place. These include the names of famous persons in the history of Australia as a nation, the names of Australian flora, the names of things characteristic to Australia, and Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander vocabulary.

The Public Place Names Act also allows for the minister to establish guidelines for the naming of public places, and I determined the most recent guidelines in 2014. The guidelines for the naming of public places provide direction to the Place Names

Committee and the place names unit on key considerations for names and the types of terms and names to be avoided. The guidelines also provide specific direction on the naming of places after persons and when naming geographical features. For example, when considering naming a place after a person the guidelines state that only the names of deceased persons should be determined and that at least 12 months should elapse after the person's death before their name can be used.

As the responsible minister I recognise that decisions on place naming are important. They reflect our society's history, our attitudes and the things we value. Given the importance of place naming, a detailed process is undertaken in the identification, researching and final decision-making of names for public places.

For the benefit of the Assembly I will take a moment to briefly outline the process undertaken when naming a public place in the ACT. The ACT place names unit within EPSDD researches potential names in accordance with the criteria in the Public Place Names Act. Each division, also known as a suburb, has a nomenclature theme which guides the potential place names for that suburb. Some of the recent examples of themes used include the names of architects, town planners and urban designers for the suburb of Taylor; native fauna for Throsby; and activism and reform for Denman Prospect.

The ACT Place Names Committee reviews the draft names for new roads and other public places and provides expert advice on any sensitivities that may have been overlooked. The committee considers opportunities to commemorate names which are reflective of a diverse cultural situation and to improve the gender balance represented in ACT public place names in accordance with the act. Advice is then provided to me or the director-general of EPSDD as my delegate to make the final decision on place names and to sign the formal legislative instrument, which is publicly notified on the legislation register.

During the naming process and as required by guidelines, the Place Names Committee seeks to consult with the person's relatives, close colleagues or their professional organisation. If the name proposed is an Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander name, consultation must occur within an appropriate cultural group.

Despite the detailed research and expert advice provided for each place name, I am aware that some names have led to debate within the community, including the two names outlined by Ms Cody in her motion. As new information comes to light, the government is open to reviewing existing place names and determining whether these names should continue to be commemorated.

As the minister responsible for place names I am pleased to support the specific actions called upon by Ms Cody in her motion. The motion presents an opportunity to review the terms of reference and membership of the ACT Place Names Committee to ensure that it continues to be representative of the diversity of Canberra as a modern, inclusive and progressive city.

The motion also brings an opportunity to review the guidelines for place naming in Canberra to ensure they continue to meet community expectations and standards. The

current guidelines are coming up to five years of operation and this is a good opportunity to review the content and purpose of the guidelines to ensure that they are delivering the outcomes that we as a community would like to see.

While the current process for place naming involves a number of consultation opportunities, particularly with the families of those being considered for commemoration, I am interested to explore opportunities for greater community input and feedback on potential names prior to making final decisions on place names. This will allow an important opportunity for the broader community to comment on proposed naming and give them the capacity to raise concerns or provide further information to the Place Names Committee prior to final naming decisions being made.

In relation to issues with specific names, the government is always open to receive information from the community. I note that the Place Names Committee has an existing process for receiving and reviewing complaints from the community, and this has led to name changes in the past.

While the researching process for potential names is quite intensive, further information may be held by the community, and I encourage members of the community to be proactive in providing evidence and information to the Place Names Committee where it is believed that particular persons or names conflict with community standards.

I understand place names can be an emotive issue for the community, especially as community values change over time and new information comes to light. We must strike the right balance between commemorating important figures in the development of our city and our nation and ensuring the people we choose to commemorate reflect the values and standards of the society we choose to be.

I welcome the motion put forward by Ms Cody. I commend her for initiating this serious and worthwhile community debate and her passionate advocacy for more community input into the government's place naming process. The motion deserves to receive the support of all members in the Assembly as it provides an important opportunity to review the government's place naming process to ensure that it continues to reflect the standards of the community we seek to serve.

MS CODY (Murrumbidgee) (5.31), in reply: What an interesting day in the last sitting week of the year. Certainly it has opened our eyes to a few things. I thank those who have contributed to the debate this afternoon. I thank Ms Le Couteur for opening the door on many other street names that have different connotations and can be pronounced in different ways.

As outlined in my motion, it is really important that we understand, as Mr Gentleman has already stated, that many places in Canberra, including suburbs and streets, are named after historical persons—that is not up for debate; that is how it is—but that the behaviour of some of those persons may not meet today's community standards. I understand that often times do change. There were times in our past when things were celebrated that today are not.

I have had many members of the community contact me both before I came into this place and since I started this discussion a month ago. We have to think about how we, as representatives of our community, can help to assist everyone in our community. Ms Orr spoke about William Slim and the effects on some of the children who were in *The Long Journey Home* and many other publications over time and have struggled with what happened to them as children.

We have had a royal commission into institutional child sex offences. Some of those children are now coming to an age where they have to look at possibly re-entering an institution, namely an aged care institution. They look at those institutions, and they often have the same names and are run by the same organisations as those who may have been involved in their abuse as children. Not only did they once have to suffer the awful indignity and the awful pain of living through that hell but also now, again, they might have to be faced with entering an institution of the same name.

We as elected representatives need to ensure that we are looking after our community and that we are respectful and help in any way we can. If that means reviewing some of Canberra's place names so that they better reflect today's community standards, to help people who are suffering, then that is what we are here to do. That is what we have been elected to do.

Mr Gentleman mentioned that it has been some time since the guidelines for the Place Names Committee have been reviewed. As in all things, time changes the way we think. We need to review those guidelines and the way in which we do things. What was acceptable 20, 30, 40 or 60 years ago may not be acceptable today. That is okay, but we as elected representatives need to make sure that we are thinking about those things when we make our laws, when we bring motions into this place and when we stand up and say that we represent our communities.

I listened to what Ms Le Couteur was saying about the thought of renaming or naming some of our places after women: strong, wonderful, insightful women. We are a majority female parliament and we are all proud to be sitting in here in Australia's first majority female parliament, as well we should be. I agree that we should be looking at ways in which we can celebrate women, women's achievements, women's work and everything women have done.

This week Bonita Mabo died. She was a great advocate for her causes. She started a school in 1973 in Townsville so that she could help educate Aboriginal, Torres Strait Islander and South Sea islander children so that they could grow up and have the same opportunities as everyone else. That should be celebrated. Hers would be a name that we look to name something after.

I believe that this motion is good. I would not have moved it if I did not. I was not forced to change anything. We have a democratic caucus where we all get to have our say. We all get to tell each other what we think of everything we debate in this chamber, and that is exactly how I hope to continue.

Mr Parton may have made a very good suggestion about the possibility of a union representative sitting on the Place Names Committee, but it is not up to me to make that decision; that is up to the Place Names Committee, the review of the guidelines

and what comes out of that review. Why could we not look at naming places “Eureka Square”, “Eureka Place” or “Eureka Mall”? There are other towns and cities that have done that.

I did have a moment of amusement while Mr Parton was speaking. Anyone would think that this idea is something that no-one has thought of ever in the history of the world, that we have never thought to rename anything. Washington DC is renamed a lot. Mr Parton mentioned having all our streets and suburbs named as numbers and units. Well, in New York most of the streets are things like 53rd and 27th streets; they are numbers. The first 21 streets in Narrabundah were all numbers, not names. Names came many years later. We have renamed a lot of things in the ACT over the years, some for good, some where maybe we could have thought about things a bit better.

This is an opportunity to look at some of the place names that we currently have in Canberra, some of the place names that do and can cause hurt to people in the community, some of the place names that may not meet today’s community standards. I have named two in my motion. I have named William Slim Drive and Haig Park. They are easy ones to look at. They are non-residential.

I agree with Ms Le Couteur that renaming streets can be difficult. There are big consultation processes that would need to be undertaken if that were ever to occur. But we can do things. We can rename things. We can ask for reviews. I think anyone and everyone in the community who believes that they have a case to put forward to the Place Names Committee should do so. Raise it with us; raise it with your members of parliament. These are all legitimate causes and legitimate actions to follow.

I look forward to hearing back about the review in June next year. I think it is a review that is well timed to occur. I look forward to hearing about how we go with the renaming of William Slim Drive and Haig Park. It would be wonderful if some of the people who still feel the pain of having to drive along William Slim Drive every day did not have to think about those things, if the start and end of their day were not couched in the reminder of a previous time in their lives.

Question resolved in the affirmative.

Language education

MS LEE (Kurrajong) (5.41): I move:

That this Assembly:

(1) notes that:

- (a) the ACT government should refocus Canberra on being the best city in Australia to learn a second language;
- (b) Canberra is a great multicultural city;
- (c) learning a second language from an early age has enormous benefits for all children – academically, socially, culturally and for future employability;

- (d) strong communication skills are becoming increasingly valued by employers and our education system should evolve to equip all Canberra children with skills for a future not limited by geographic borders;
 - (e) the ACT government's Future of Education Strategy does not make a single mention of the importance of language education in Canberra schools;
 - (f) very few ACT government primary schools offer Mandarin – yet China is Australia's largest trading partner;
 - (g) no ACT government schools teach Arabic – despite Arabic being the third most commonly spoken language in Australia and the increasing demand in both public and private sectors;
 - (h) very few ACT government primary schools offer Indian languages – despite the importance of India as a trading partner and the high Indian population in the ACT; and
 - (i) the ACT government has failed to:
 - (i) appropriately prioritise or think strategically about the future of language education in Canberra schools;
 - (ii) adequately encourage or support teachers to pursue the appropriate qualifications to teach a second language; and
 - (iii) adequately promote the qualifications to teach a second language as a desirable skill for new teachers, which has resulted in Canberra students not having a consistent language pathway from preschool or kindergarten through to college to pursue study of a second language; and
- (2) calls on the ACT government to:
- (a) explain to the Canberra community why it has failed to make a single mention of the importance of language education in its Future of Education Strategy;
 - (b) establish an action plan to encourage, improve and support language education in Canberra schools;
 - (c) work more closely with the Community Language Schools Association to share teaching resources so that language education can be offered in a school setting where needed; and
 - (d) report back to the ACT Legislative Assembly on its action plan by the last sitting day in March 2019.

Australia is one of the most multilingual societies in the world, with more than 350 languages in regular use in our homes and workplaces. Australia is a high migrant intake country—I am a case in point—and learning a foreign language not only strengthens intercultural understanding within our community but also adds to the ability to communicate with others globally. It is more than just a social benefit or a career benefit; it is a life benefit.

Languages are increasingly being recognised as one of the capabilities that young people are going to need in a globalised world. We know that the future for today's school leavers is quite different to what we have all experienced. Over the past five

years the Foundation for Young Australians, the FYA, has done some very thought-provoking research on what the working world will look like for Australia's next generation. It believes that the transition for young people between full-time education and full-time work is increasingly uncertain and that beneath the seemingly benign surface of Australia's labour market there is a quiet revolution occurring.

Three global forces are rapidly changing the way we work: automation, globalisation and collaboration. Career pathways are not as linear as they used to be, with young people expected to have 17 jobs across five careers in their lifetime. How can we better prepare young people to navigate this uncertain and perhaps scary new world? The FYA also highlighted that jobs are closely related and more portable than previously thought. When a young person trains or works one job they acquire skills that will help them get 13 other jobs to reveal seven new clusters of work.

We know we are living in an increasingly global economy. We are a trade dependent nation and we rely on foreign investment, foreign trade, overseas students and overseas job opportunities. In fact, since the year 2000 Australia has doubled its earnings from foreign employment. Whilst once it was only the department of foreign affairs and the intelligence agencies that valued fluency in a second language, it is now a valued skill across a range of industries.

Here in the ACT we can proudly make claim to our multicultural and multilingual credentials. At the 2011 census 102,161 people or 24.2 per cent of Canberra residents reported that they had been born overseas. By the 2016 census that figure had risen to 26 per cent. Just under 45 per cent of all ACT residents have either one parent or both parents born overseas. Further census data shows that nearly 20 per cent of ACT residents reported speaking a language other than English at home.

The ACT Education Directorate apparently recognises the importance of languages insofar as it has published the 2017 languages pathway plan for Canberra public schools. This document tells us:

The Education Directorate strongly supports the teaching and learning of languages in Canberra public schools ... Learning languages broadens students' horizons in relation to personal, social, cultural and employment opportunities.

It goes on to quote the curriculum requirements in ACT public schools that all Canberra government schools provide a language program for a minimum specified time in one of eight priority languages: French, German, Italian, Spanish, Indonesian, Japanese, Mandarin Chinese and Korean. There are also three primary schools offering a bilingual language program: Chinese at Mawson, French at Telopea and Italian at Yarralumla. These are excellent examples of quality language education and a testament to what can be achieved working with embassies and the community.

We also have 25 ACT government preschools offering a language program as participants in the early learning languages Australia or the ELLA program. ELLA is a digital, play-based language learning program for preschool children. This Australian government initiative inspires children by driving a genuine interest in a new language and a culture. There are nine languages to choose from: Arabic,

Mandarin Chinese, French, Hindi, Indonesian, Italian, Japanese, Modern Greek and Spanish.

In 2019 and 2020 the Australian government has committed to also support the development and implementation of apps in Korean, Vietnamese, Turkish and German. This will fully align the ELLA suite of languages with the languages in the Australian curriculum which children can study in later years.

We have a directorate policy that talks about the compulsory teaching of languages in schools, we have evidence that at least 25 government preschools and several non-government preschools also are offering a start at a foreign language through the play-based language program supported by the Australian government and we have a pathway plan that is designed to provide a language pathway for children through primary and high schools to college. Why does this ACT government not follow its own rhetoric into action?

This is where the train starts to become derailed. For a start, according to the government's own information there were six primary schools last year that had no language program at all. And where you live plays a major part in what language might be available. I know from recent constituent correspondence that if you do not live in Yarralumla but have an Italian background, speak the language at home and want your child to attend Yarralumla specifically for its bilingual Italian program because it is the only school in the ACT that provides that, you have to fight and plead with the authorities to make an exemption for you.

If Indonesian is your language of choice you are okay if you live in the priority enrolment area for Turner Primary School and Lyneham High School because you can start at Turner primary and go all the way through to college with that language.

But if it is Mandarin Chinese you want to study, tough luck, because while you can study it at Dickson College it is only available in primary school at four different locations, none of them within the same catchment as Dickson College. You would have to go to Melba, Copland, Melrose or Canberra High if you wanted to continue. That is hardly what one would call a considered pathway plan.

At Kingsford Smith you can start Mandarin Chinese in preschool and go through to year 8 and then pick it up again at Hawker College in Year 11. I am not sure what you do for years 9 and 10. And of course if you do not live in Higgins or Holt you are not in the priority enrolment area for the preschool, and for years 6 to 10 you must live in Dunlop, Higgins, Holt, Latham or Macgregor. Bear in mind that Mandarin Chinese is the language spoken by more people in the world than any other and the foreign language most spoken in ACT homes. China is our largest trading partner and the importance of proficient Chinese as a highly desirable skill is not in dispute.

Let us take Korean as another example. You can study it at only one government school, Gold Creek, and for only one year, in year 3, and then pick it up again, say, at Gungahlin, Narrabundah or Lake Tuggeranong colleges; nothing in the early education years and nothing in year 4 all the way through until year 11.

When you drill down further into the pathway plan you start to realise that whilst it might, generally speaking, meet the ACT curriculum policy for languages it is tokenistic at best. Take Gold Creek. Students at that school have a wide choice of languages but they seem to be nothing more than sampler lessons. You can study Korean in year 3, Japanese from year 2 to year 10, French in years 7 to 9, German in years 8 to 9, Indonesian from years 7 to 10 and Latin in year 8 and again in year 10. Perhaps you pop over and do a year of German or French in that missing year 9. I do not know.

Whilst we have a policy that requires all Canberra public schools to provide a language program we know they do not. And whilst we have a policy that apparently the ACT government “strongly supports the teaching and learning of languages in Canberra public schools” we know that these words do not translate into action.

When you look at what is required as a minimum it is, indeed, a minimum. For years 3 to 6 you study the language for a minimum 60 minutes and in years 7 to 8 it is a minimum of 150 minutes a week. The Institute of Foreign Languages estimates it would take a native English speaker about 2,500 hours to gain the same level of proficiency in Mandarin Chinese. That means, for ACT students having 60 minutes a week Mandarin Chinese language, it would take 48 years. As much as the minister’s education plan is to enrol students from birth, I doubt any Canberran is going to want to stay in school for that long in the hope of gaining that level of proficiency in Mandarin Chinese. Even when you take into account the additional high school lessons, we are looking at 25 years for proficiency in Mandarin Chinese at best.

Learning a language ought to be more than being able to count to 10, say hello, goodbye and order a beer in any given language. But at the minimal hours a week policy requirement our students will not be in a position and will never be in a position to take up career opportunities in foreign affairs, intelligence or other jobs in other countries.

This is talking only about the languages that are on offer. Let us take Arabic. Arabic is the third most spoken language in Australia. It is one of the languages translated in international conferences, just as Russian is, but not one ACT government school offers Arabic. We do have Arabic-speaking teachers and we know the ACT Community Language Schools Association offers Arabic at two locations, while community schools offer Russian at one non-government school. As early as 2004 there was concern expressed about the significant need for more language skills among our foreign affairs staff, including Arabic. Fourteen years later, still not a single government school teaches Arabic at any level.

What about Indian languages? We have Hindi offered at one preschool. Given the significance of India as a trading partner of Australia, and closer to home the dynamic, vibrant and active Indian community we have right here, why has this government not prioritised any Indian languages to be taught in our schools?

It is not just foreign languages that are missing out here. As home to one of the longest living cultures in the world, we must never forget our roots. It is wonderful to

see a few Koori preschools in the ACT and a number of our respected Aboriginal elders who do so much to keep our Indigenous language alive. What more support can we be giving them to ensure that the languages of Australia's first people can live on so that our future generations will be able to benefit from learning about our history and about our culture?

I do note from the minister's amendment, paragraph 1(h), which surprisingly was circulated before I was on my feet—that never happens—the government is prioritising work on the development of an appropriately localised Aboriginal language education. This is something that I welcome and look forward to hearing more about.

This government, as it does so well, knows how to spin the yarn to say all the right things about being supportive of language education. “We have a policy, we have a pathway plan”—even though it is somewhat unpaved—“and we have a whole heap of supporting material on the website telling us how important language tuition is.” The website tells us that learning a language is apparently a core component of the ACT curriculum framework. It tells us that students who study a language extend their thinking and reasoning skills and they apply these in other areas of learning and in processing knowledge, that it helps students to develop multiple intelligences and that it can assist in the understanding of the structure of English. All these claims are supported by extensive research. An interesting aspect of the research about the value of language to education is that being bilingual helps you to learn about and become more proficient in your first language.

In the last two years the minister has spoken many times about her future of education strategy. So I have to ask: why is there not a single reference to the importance of language education in Canberra schools? It is not in the strategy, not in the consultation report, not in any speeches given, not in answer to a question, not in any interviews and certainly not in adhering to her own policy on language tuition. In a two-year conversation with thousands of people to identify how we move education forward into the future, to have no acknowledgement of how important it is for our students to be best prepared for a global world through education is as short-sighted as it is concerning.

England introduced languages for primary years from ages 7 to 11 as a compulsory subject in 2014, believing that in an increasingly globalised world intercultural and multicultural competence is essential. Given all that, how can a minister who claims her focus for the last two years has been entirely on setting out a 10-year plan for education in the ACT omit to mention even in passing the importance of languages?

This government and this minister have failed to appropriately prioritise or think strategically about the future of language education in Canberra schools. This government and this minister have failed to adequately encourage or support teachers to pursue the appropriate qualifications to teach a second language. This government and this minister have failed to adequately promote the qualifications to teach a second language as being a desirable skill for new teachers, all of which has led to Canberra students not having a consistent language pathway from preschool or kindergarten through to college in the pursuit of the study of a second language.

The Canberra Liberals value the importance of second languages in our community. In September last year Mr Coe brought forward a motion in this chamber marking the importance of mother languages and we will continue to commit to ensuring that our children are better prepared for a global future. I would like to think that the Labor and Greens members would see the importance of these issues and support my motion as is. However, I will not hold my breath.

The importance of languages for our future generation is too important an issue and I implore all members to support my motion. Our future generations will thank you for it.

MS BERRY (Ginninderra—Deputy Chief Minister, Minister for Education and Early Childhood Development, Minister for Housing and Suburban Development, Minister for the Prevention of Domestic and Family Violence, Minister for Sport and Recreation and Minister for Women) (5.56): On behalf of the government, I move the amendment circulated in my name:

Omit paragraphs (1)(e) to (i) and paragraph (2), substitute:

- “(e) the ACT Government’s *Future of Education Strategy* highlights the importance of students learning to ‘participate effectively and respectfully in a diverse society’ and schools operating with inclusion so that ‘diversity in all its forms’ is embraced;
- (f) the ACT Public Schools *Curriculum Requirements Policy* and associated procedures require all ACT government schools to provide a language program in one of eight priority languages (French, German, Italian, Spanish, Indonesian, Japanese, Mandarin, and Korean);
- (g) decisions about the language offering at a particular school are made by the school community including school leaders, teachers and parents;
- (h) ACT government schools have been prioritising work on developing appropriately localised Aboriginal language education including senior secondary courses, in close consultation with the ACT Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community; and
 - (i) there is an opportunity to improve how the ACT Government:
 - (i) strategically delivers language education in Canberra schools;
 - (ii) builds teacher capability and capacity to deliver language education in Canberra schools; and
 - (iii) ensures a learning pathway for students from preschool or kindergarten through to college in study of a particular language; and

(2) calls on the ACT Government to:

- (a) develop an action plan to encourage, improve and support language education in Canberra schools as part of implementing the *Future of Education Strategy*;
- (b) consult with the Community Language Schools Association as part of developing this action plan; and

(c) include development of the action plan as part of the *Future of Education Implementation Plan* that will be presented to the ACT Legislative Assembly during February 2019.”.

I welcome the opportunity to talk about the vision of the ACT government for education across the ACT. In August this year I released the future of education strategy that lays out a road map for work over the next 10 years. The strategy was developed through a sustained conversation with the community, with over 5,000 Canberrans having their say. The direction set out in the strategy was developed following the identification of 10 common themes identified by the community. These were consolidated into four foundations.

Young people were central to the development of this future vision, with 44 per cent of feedback coming from children and young people. The ACT government placed a strong emphasis on the importance of hearing the views of children and young people because students need to be engaged in their learning. We also believe that students should be active participants in their learning, making informed choices about what they learn and how they learn. The community agrees with this.

This is why one of the four foundations of the future of education strategy places students at the centre, alongside empowering learning professionals, building strong communities for learning and ensuring that we have systems supporting learning. By ensuring that students are at the centre, we enable each student to tread their own educational pathway based upon their developing interests, knowledge and skills. These interests may be in a variety of different subjects, ranging from health and physical education to technologies or languages. Each child in the ACT has gifts and talents across a range of areas. Personalising learning ensures that every child has a great potential to learn, progress and achieve.

The future of education strategy establishes a strategic policy direction that informs future initiatives and project work and, at a high level, outlines actions to be taken over the next 10 years. It is not a laundry list of disconnected things. It also includes principles for implementation of the strategy, which include student agency and inclusion. Through student agency, our young people get a greater say in what and how they learn. Through inclusion, diversity is embraced, with students learning to participate effectively and respectfully in a diverse society.

Diversity includes cultural and linguistic diversity. The ACT government believes in the importance of language education to ensure that our students are set up for success. This is why we have ensured that a number of educational language associations were involved through the development of the future of education strategy. This saw the provision of feedback in phase 1 of the conversation through to engaging in the testing foundations, proposed policy directions and actions in phase 2. This engagement resulted in access to language education being facilitated through placing students at the centre, providing student agency in relation to learning, and ensuring that inclusion is core to how the strategy is implemented.

Madam Speaker, Ms Lee’s motion is incorrect on this issue. Canberra is a city that celebrates and embraces diversity and multiculturalism. This is strongly reflected by

the commitment to language learning in ACT schools. There are distinct benefits to students and community that come from language learning, including cultural understanding and enrichment, as well as making students global citizens and increasing their cultural efficacy and employability.

Languages put students at the centre of learning about other cultures, providing critical capabilities, knowledge and a deep understanding of other cultures as well as their own. By learning languages and engaging in other cultures, students become more effective members of the diverse ACT community.

At 6 pm, in accordance with standing order 34, the debate was interrupted. The motion for the adjournment of the Assembly having been put and negatived, the debate was resumed

MS BERRY: There are currently 28,854 students in ACT public schools who are studying a language. Schools in the ACT offer between one and eight different language options. Languages are one of the learning areas under the Australian curriculum. They are considered as much as a priority as other subject areas such as mathematics, English and science.

The Australian Curriculum, Assessment and Reporting Authority, ACARA, provides the following rationale for learning languages in schools:

Languages are intimately linked to the essentially humanistic, cultural and intellectual reasons for making education compulsory. Bilingualism can foster more reflective and imaginative dispositions in citizens, and the principles of democratic discourse, participation and opportunity which Australia proclaims also find resonance with language study since the bulk of humanity lives in societies and continues traditions forged outside of English.

There are diverse offerings of language in ACT schools. All ACT schools deliver the Australian curriculum, which has only relatively recently—at the end of 2015—released curriculum for languages beyond the priority languages. This goes some way to explaining to Ms Lee why some of the languages she raised are not available to school students. I suggest it would have been worth while for her to inform herself about when the curriculum became available for various languages.

Delivery of language education in a systemic, meaningful way that provides a quality learning opportunity for students relies on a curriculum. It also relies on quality teaching delivered by qualified teachers. Under the curriculum requirements policy, students in ACT public schools are required to study at least one of the eight priority languages, which are Chinese, Indonesian, Japanese, Korean, French, German, Italian or Spanish.

Students are required to study 60 minutes per week from years 3 to 6, and 150 minutes per week in years 7 to 8. There are 16 ACT public schools that offer Chinese Mandarin, including bilingual Chinese programs at Mawson Primary School. This is hardly “very few”. Again, Ms Lee’s motion is incorrect.

While there is no doubt that overseas language study has social and economic benefits to ACT school students, the value of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander languages, culture and histories is not lost in ACT public schools. It is vital that the Australian community grows in respect, understanding and knowledge about the language, culture and history of traditional custodians of the land and Australia's first language. The government has given this focus.

At Belconnen High School there is a program in development that incorporates Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultures and languages. This program is being developed in consultation with Aboriginal students, their families, academics in Indigenous studies and linguistics, as well as local elders. The pilot program has been successful and work is continuing that will expand the program to an elective subject in the school.

I had the opportunity to visit the school and to join the group as they participated in this class. Additionally, there are other schools that are looking to adopt this program, including at a college level. The Board of Senior Secondary Studies has been working closely with the ACT Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community on a college course for this purpose. There is also work underway to support language education for young children, which I am happy to hear Ms Lee has apprised herself of.

Early Learning Languages Australia, ELLA, is a commonwealth government funded app-based language program that is used in preschools across Australia. In 2019 there will be expansions of the newly developed ELLA program for kindergarten to year 2 students. This program is aligned to the Australian curriculum. There are a number of schools in the ACT that are currently participating in the 2018 trial. Arabic is one of the languages that is available through this program.

All nine ACT colleges provide languages as an elective study. These languages provide pathways to universities. Language students are able to attain bonus points towards their ATAR for some relevant university courses across Australia. There are approximately 2,800 students who are undertaking language as an elective subject in years 9 to 12. The decision regarding the choices of language offered in ACT schools sits with the principal of each individual school, in consultation with the school board. The school community has a voice through the school board, the representative members of parents, students, teachers and other independent members.

Madam Speaker, it is important to note the engagement of the community and the decisions of the schools in ensuring that education programs meet the needs of those individual school communities. I have moved an amendment. I ask the Assembly to support my amendment to Ms Lee's motion.

MR STEEL (Murrumbidgee—Minister for City Services, Minister for Community Services and Facilities, Minister for Multicultural Affairs and Minister for Roads) (6.05): The ACT has a strong history of valuing and promoting our cultural diversity. The government is committed to strengthening inclusion and cohesion to ensure that all Canberrans are fully able to participate in our community. This includes acknowledging and supporting the learning of languages. Learning and sharing

languages builds a greater understanding of diversity and helps to strengthen our sense of cohesion and inclusion.

According to the 2016 census, there are over 105,000 people living in Canberra or over 26 per cent of the community, who were born overseas and over 80,000 people, or 22 per cent of the community, who speak a language other than English at home. For many of these people, continuing to learn about their language and culture is an important part of establishing their life in our city. For others, choosing to learn a second language opens the doors to greater understanding of culture and literature.

The ACT government welcomes the many diverse cultures and languages that contribute to our city. For this reason we provide funding to a range of programs that strengthen language learning. We do this in partnership with the ACT Community Language Schools Association. The association is the umbrella body for community-based language schools in the territory. There are a total of 52 language schools that are members of the association. The association has a significant role in protecting and promoting our cultural diversity by supporting and enhancing the operation of these schools.

Currently, these schools cater for over 2,500 students learning a raft of different community languages. Across our city, young people are learning to speak fluent Arabic, Bangla, Cantonese, Mandarin, Croatian, Dutch, Filipino, Finnish, Greek, German, Hebrew, Hindi, Indonesian, Tallinn, Karen, Khmer, Korean, Macedonian, Maori, Mon, Japanese, Persian, Polish, Punjabi, Russian, Samoan, Serbian, Sinhalese, Spanish, Swedish, Tamil, Tongan, Vietnamese, just to name a few.

In 2018-19, 42 language schools and two playgroups applied for and received ACT government funding. Almost \$200,000 was invested as part of grant funding to support the valuable work of the language schools. In addition, 10 community language schools applied for grants under the 2017-18 multicultural participation grants round, receiving an additional \$20,000 in funding.

One of the schools receiving funding was the Filipino Language School, which received \$2,500 to participate in the National Multicultural Festival, present the Filipino language and cultural radio program and run the Philippine language month celebration. As part of the National Multicultural Festival, we have been working with the bilingual association to showcase and celebrate many of the languages that are spoken in Canberra. The festival brings together more speakers of more languages in one place than any other Canberra event in the year. It will no doubt be a fantastic demonstration of our diversity in 2019.

Of course, there are other supports that the ACT government provides, including bilingual story times at the Civic Library, language-related activities at the Children's Sanctuary during National Multicultural Festival and other events throughout the year. This is all done in the context of promoting and facilitating mutual respect and understanding amongst culturally diverse communities.

The motion today focuses on the learning of languages other than English. However, for many new arrivals, learning English is key to their effective engagement in our

community. The 2017-18 ACT budget committed \$208,000 over four years to expand English language programs for migrants, refugees and asylum seekers living in the ACT.

In May 2018, Migrant and Refugee Settlement Services was funded to implement a four-year English language support program. The \$160,000 program is enabling MARSS to provide individual, case-managed English language programs to refugees and asylum seekers living in the ACT who are from non-English speaking backgrounds and to contribute to improving referral pathways to other support services, including employment.

Also in May 2018, the Office of Multicultural Affairs partnered with the Canberra Institute of Technology to ensure that ACT services access cardholders can access English language courses either for 12 months full-time or 24 months part-time, free of charge. To support this initiative, the CIT has been funded for \$40,000 over the next four years.

It is apparent that the suite of funded programs that the government is providing is supporting the learning of languages in the ACT. We are doing so through programs that target areas of need and places where there is a desire for learning that language.

Through last week's multicultural summit, we heard from the community about the outcomes they wanted to see to improve inclusion and participation in our city. I have no doubt that language learning was one focus that will be considered in the development of the multicultural framework second action plan, which I will present here early in 2019.

We believe that these are the most effective ways to ensure that Canberra is welcoming and inclusive and provides the best platform for success for all of our residents, including young people.

MR RATTENBURY (Kurrajong) (6.10): Often we see matters of education as isolated or disconnected, but this motion and the amendments serve together to highlight the complexity of a system. Ms Lee's motion, clearly critical of the government's direction and investment regarding language education, calls for action, and on that element I support her. There is a need for action in this space. But minister Berry's amendments also highlight the need to strategically deliver language education in Canberra schools, to build teacher capability and capacity to deliver language education in Canberra schools, and to ensure a learning pathway for students from preschool or kindergarten through to college in study of a particular language.

This approach and Minister Berry's desire to integrate the development of an action plan into the broader future of education strategy makes sense as it will take time to grow the workforce required and embed the long-term pathways I think we all want to see.

The ACT Greens certainly want a vibrant public education system that attains world-class standards of excellence and is built on an evolving and evidenced-based curriculum and pedagogy. We want to improve transitions between early childhood,

primary, secondary, tertiary, and vocational education and greater coordination across those sectors.

We know we should continue to develop the ACT as a university city as part of the knowledge economy and that we should be taking full advantage of the opportunities this affords our local school children. As Minister Berry's signature future of education strategy extends forward over 10 years it only makes sense to have language education more fully considered in that plan.

That said, I join Ms Lee in hoping to see more specific details of this and other important items more clearly articulated in the implementation plan. I have no disagreement with the comments Ms Lee made in her opening remarks in setting the scene in the sense that we want an opportunity for our students to learn a second or maybe even a third language. I have spent my share of time living overseas in countries where it is not uncommon for people to speak two, three, four or sometimes five languages.

I come from that not uncommon but particularly Australian thing of speaking only English, having had no or very limited exposure to other languages, and I think that that is a shortcoming. I speak a little bit of broken Dutch, but I would not describe myself as a Dutch speaker; that would be an insult to the language. It is something I wish I had had better exposure to and it is something we should give our students an opportunity to learn.

The challenge as Australians is which language you choose. The discussion has been about the eight priority languages identified, but as Ms Lee noted in her remarks you could easily add a number of other significant languages to that list in the context of both those who have immigrated to Australia and those with whom this country needs strategic and cultural connections.

I agree with the thrust of this. I will be supporting Minister Berry's amendment. It acknowledges the substance of the issues Ms Lee has raised; quite a bit of the language in the calls on section in Ms Lee's motion is repeated. As the future of education document moves from the current level—direction setting, aspirational and indicating where we are heading—into the specifics I am keen to see more detail fleshed out on how languages will play an important part of that.

As Ms Berry's amendment notes, the education strategy highlights the importance of students learning to participate effectively and respectfully in a diverse society. It talks about diversity in all its forms and that is the area where languages could be included. One might look back with hindsight and say perhaps it should have been more explicit but those things are always easier to observe in hindsight.

We will be supporting the amendment with the clear expectation that this issue will be elaborated more explicitly with the opportunity for students to learn a second, third or fourth language if they are so inclined and capable, as some students are. I would really like to see that opportunity for ACT students delivered better in our schools.

MS LAWDER (Brindabella) (6.15): I support Ms Lee's motion and wish to deliver a few brief remarks on behalf of my colleague Mrs Kikkert, who had to leave. Mrs Kikkert's remarks are in the context of being the mother of five children who are all enrolled in the territory's public school system. She is also a bilingual Australian and one who, like nearly 24 per cent of Canberrans, grew up using a language other than English at home.

Her husband spent his earlier years in the Netherlands where, naturally, he spoke Dutch, but he also learned English from his mother. He then learnt Tongan as a third language in his twenties. And Mrs Kikkert shares these details as a way of supporting all that has been said in this debate about the benefits of learning a second or even a third or fourth language. These benefits go far beyond just the ability to communicate with or understand a broader range of people.

Naturally, Mrs Kikkert, like so many other Canberra parents, wants her children to enjoy those same benefits that come from learning a second language. Unfortunately, her family has encountered some of the issues identified by Ms Lee in her motion. For example, one of her children had the opportunity to learn a second language in the first two years of primary school but no opportunity at all for the next three years, only to have a completely different language offered in Year 5. Needless to say, this muddle of approaches has not resulted in any proficiency in either language.

Sadly, this experience is not unique. As a spokeswoman from the ACT Council of Parents and Citizens Association recently pointed out, many Canberrans are concerned about the lack of clear pathways for language students in the capital; it is not a working system. The research on this point is quite clear: students need constant exposure to a language over time in order to acquire it.

To help fix this problem, some of Mrs Kikkert's children enrolled in a community language school, and she would like to specifically thank the ACT Community Language Schools Association for all they do to provide informal language learning opportunities in our community, including creating opportunities where the government school system has failed to provide them.

On that point, she speaks strongly in favour of Ms Lee's motion for the recommendation that the ACT government work more closely with that association in order to share resources so that language education can be offered in a school setting where needed.

We have a wealth of human and other resources in the nation's capital, and I urge the government to do more to take full advantage of these resources. This could include working with community language experts keen to teach in order to ensure they are available to school students and that this relationship can be formalised, whether that is by the issuing of credit or merely annotating a student's school record.

Mrs Kikkert has had discussions with expert language instructors who teach both in the ACT and across the border in New South Wales. They have informed her that creating a permanent record of a student's achievement is far easier in New South Wales than it is here. Clearly, this could be fixed.

The Canberra Academy of Languages is currently able to issue credits to its students, but its accreditation is with the ACT Board of Senior Secondary Studies and therefore only works for students in years 11 and 12. We need to extend those opportunities into the lower years of school.

We need a serious action plan for second-language learning in the territory, one that responsibly pulls together the resources already at hand, seeks to create new opportunities and resources, and embeds into our schools a rational and consistent language pathway for our students.

Many of our students want this to happen and they would benefit from this happening. We can see their passion for learning in the example of the two Narrabundah College students who recently launched an online petition in response to finding out that their Indonesian course had been cancelled halfway through their studies without any known consultation.

We are the national's capital. We have thriving multicultural communities, an abundance of diplomatic missions, committed community language instructors and more. In light of our situation we can and absolutely should be the nation's leader when it comes to second-language learning opportunities. The Canberra Liberals are united in our commitment to that educational future. I commend the motion to the Assembly, as does Mrs Kikkert.

MS LEE (Kurrajong) (6.21): I thank all of my colleagues for their contributions; and, in particular, Ms Lawder and Mrs Kikkert for their insight into and support for my motion today.

My motion highlights what I consider to be an important missed opportunity for this government in not getting the education fundamentals right. But we should not be surprised. This is just another in a growing list of failures under this government and this minister.

In recent months we have learnt about the discovery of asbestos in at least one ACT government school which the minister did nothing about until, apparently, she heard it from us. This begs the question of how much trust her own directorate has in her, in keeping her in the dark about such a significant issue.

We have had expert after expert raising the alarm about our slipping academic standards, to which the government's response is, "The data is two years old," and that "equity" will fix everything. Even the directorate's own commissioned expert was forced to come out and slam the government for misinterpreting his findings, the very foundation on which this minister has placed her 10-year blueprint for education in the ACT.

We have seen the intervention of WorkSafe because of the abysmal failure of this government to protect our teachers in our schools. The Work Safety Commissioner was required to take the extraordinary step of slapping the directorate with an enforceable undertaking.

If this was not bad enough, in answer to a question on notice I asked about student injuries occurring in our schools, the minister in her answer admitted that she and the directorate have no data, no information and know nothing about what is happening. She does not know, and her directorate does not know, who was injured, how they were injured, whether they were receiving additional support in learning support units or were in mainstream classes. At best, it is downright incompetence; at worst it is a wilful closing of the eyes and turning of the back, throwing this into the too-hard basket. Either way, it is absolutely unacceptable.

This motion today shows yet again how this minister is so focused on her future of education ideology and accompanying buzzwords and feel-good slogans that she has completely dropped the ball and is not across what should be happening in schools according to existing education policies and what the community needs.

The future of education strategy has been the minister's focus for two years and it is supposed to be the blueprint for education delivery in the ACT for the next 10 years. But with not a single mention of languages—their importance, their contribution and their value—it can hardly be considered to be a complete document or a comprehensive blueprint.

In turning to the amendment, the minister claims that the future of education strategy “highlights the importance of students learning to ‘participate effectively and respectfully in a diverse society’ and schools operating with inclusion so that ‘diversity in all its forms’ is embraced”. If she is pointing to this as the future of education strategy acknowledging the importance of language education, this is laughable, and she is clutching at straws.

To bring an amendment to my motion that suggests that these words are specifically about the importance of language education in Canberra schools is at best delusional and at worst downright untrue and retrofitting the buzzword of “diversity” to the context of something as important as language education in our schools.

Just as she demonstrated clearly in question time today that she does not understand the difference between a community school model and the school community as a broad concept, she clearly does not understand the difference between language education and diversity and inclusion in our schools.

What I do, however, have to give the minister credit for here is that she did circulate the amendment, and not while I was on my feet, which is the usual custom when it comes to this government. And on this occasion she has actually, almost, nearly, and clearly reluctantly, admitted that more can be done, something she clearly does not bend over backwards to do. There is even a time frame in which to report back with an action plan. Despite stating that there is nothing to see here, her amendment at least acknowledges that more can be done.

I suspect that her “calls upon” does contain an actual action plan and a time to report—because the Greens probably demanded it; and it seems, perhaps, from Mr Rattenbury's comments, that that actually was the case. But what is appalling is

that she has completely scrubbed my call for her to explain why her future of education strategy does not even mention language education. If she cannot even explain how she has made such a glaring failure, in failing to include language education in her 10-year education blueprint, really, she has no business being the education minister.

I implore the minister to consult with the community, our language teachers, our parents and our children about the language needs of our future generation. She is so keen on conversations, yet she has missed a great opportunity to consult properly on this important aspect of education.

When I discussed my motion with the ACT Community Language Schools Association, Dr Fuxin Li, the president, said:

We believe in this global and international world that languages are the key that open many doors. Children are naturally inquisitive about languages, particularly the amazing range that are spoken locally. Community language schools give children the opportunity to learn new languages, or—indeed—to solidify the grasp and comprehension of the non-English language that they speak at home through training, conducted outside of school hours, in a professional atmosphere which values education, diversity, and mutual respect.

Community language schools carry out a wide variety of roles and functions. They are geared towards meeting the needs of a broad range of learner needs and skill levels, from the novice to those who are experienced in languages.

It is imperative, then, that these schools remain adequately funded, in order to reap the maximum benefits out of the programs, activities, and events that they offer the broader Australian community. Their absence would leave a gaping hole in the cultural fabric of Australian life, with isolation and marginalization of ethnic cultures and communities replacing integration and celebration of difference.

I have enormous respect for Dr Li and the association for their dedication to, and expertise in, keeping languages alive in our community. I would hope that the minister does also. The association is a great resource that the government should be engaging with to ensure that we address any gaps in our language education.

Other external resources include organisations like the Canberra Academy of Languages, which commenced in 2017 and provides courses for year 11 and 12 students to continue learning in their chosen languages where these courses are not available through their schools or other providers. Again this is clear evidence of service delivery failure by this government. It is wonderful that such opportunities exist for senior students, but, as Ms Lawder just pointed out, it should be available to the broader network of students; and, of course, it does involve a financial cost for parents and logistics issues. They are offering a service that the government school system ought to be delivering, and should be supported by the government.

This government should provide more support for our language teachers. A second language, and the skills to teach a second language, should be highly desirable skills

for any teacher. But under this government it is clear that this has not been valued or promoted as much as it should be. We should be promoting, supporting and encouraging our teachers into language education. It is about saying to our teachers, “We know it takes an extraordinary commitment to learn a second language to the level of proficiency required to teach it. We value your dedication; we value your commitment to equipping our next generation for a global future.”

We want to make sure that our children’s futures are not limited by geographic boundaries because they lack the skills to effectively communicate with large parts of the world. We want to be a city that prepares our children for a future that is not limited by geographic borders, a future where communication skills would become more and more important, a future where our children can not only be what they want to be but also do it where they want to do it.

All of this requires commitment and a recognition that languages are important to our future, and that languages are important in preparing our students for the new employment framework that the Foundation for Young Australians talks about. There is no point in having glossy brochures and a compendium of policies if there is no real thought given to what is actually needed for a future that is becoming more and more global—and, in any event, are not actually being implemented in the classrooms, anyway.

The Canberra Liberals will continue to call for a better deal for languages in ACT schools, even if those on the other side of the chamber do not see it as a priority. Our future generation deserves a world-class education system that will prepare them to be not only good Canberrans but leaders in a global world.

Amendment agreed to.

Original question, as amended, resolved in the affirmative.

Adjournment

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

That the Assembly do now adjourn.

Valedictory

MS CODY (Murrumbidgee) (6.31): I rise today to say, “Wow, what a year: another year being an elected representative in this place.” What a fantastic opportunity. It has been a wonderful year. It has been an experience yet again. Every year just gets better and better.

I would like to take a moment to thank my staff for helping me through this year and to thank my caucus colleagues for all of their banter and support and for ongoing encouragement for standing up for rights in our community. I would like to thank all the OLA staff here in the Assembly for the work they do to help us sit, to help us do

our committee work, and to help us get through the days. I would also like to thank all the public servants for the time and the work they put in to ensure that private members can introduce bills, private members can move motions, and we can debate and change laws and make Canberra better in this place every night. Madam Speaker, with Christmas around the corner, I would also like to thank all those opposite. Without them, I am not sure that we would do the work that we do. We are all here with one vision, and that is to make the Canberra we love even better.

On that note, I encourage everyone to remember to stay safe on the roads this Christmas period; to be kind to the people around them; to be kind to their neighbours; and to be kind to the people that they speak to and come across. And as someone who is not hugely a Christmas celebrator, I would like to wish those who are a very merry Christmas and a very happy end of this sitting year tomorrow. I look forward to more challenges, more fun, more motions, more banter and more work next year.

Valedictory

MS LAWDER (Brindabella) (6.33): As usual at this time of year, I would like to express some thank-yous to my lovely family, who are very supportive, and I appreciate it very much; to my staff, who do all the hard work in the office; to my volunteers—thank you for your support; you are very wonderful—and to the Assembly staff, my colleagues, and those opposite.

As I usually say: to all of those who helped me over the past year, you know who you are; thank you so much. And to those who have not helped me, you know who you are; thanks for nothing.

Most especially I would like to thank the residents of Tuggeranong for their continued support of me. I appreciate it. I love interacting with you, and I hope there will be lots more of it to come.

As has become my custom for the Christmas speech at the end of the sitting year, I have prepared a short poem. Actually this year it is a song, a parody of a song. I hope you will take it in the fun spirit that is intended.

Ms Lee: Are you going to sing it?

MS LAWDER: I will not be singing.

Mrs Dunne: As entertaining as that would be.

MS LAWDER: I am no Julie Andrews. It is from music by Rodgers and Hammerstein; I hope that their descendants can forgive my butchering of their beloved song.

Light rail is delayed, the bus timetable hidden
Roaming fierce dogs that kill puppies and kittens
Health professionals' lunches that sting

These are a new non-favourite things.

Rundown city centre and garbage not picked up
Footpaths and roads cracked and playgrounds not fixed up
Planning rules that drive everyone to a drink

These are a few non-favourite things.

When the dog bites
When the bee stings
When I'm feeling sad

I simply remember the non-favourite things.
And then I don't feel so bad.

Changing the street names and blanking out history
Keeping the costs of big projects a mystery
Hospital rooms with leaks that will spring

These are a few non-favourite things.

But despite all the Min Reps, the grumbling and groaning
I wish you the season's best without moaning
Family, food, festive spirits and bling

These **ARE** a few of my favourite things.

Life's pretty good here
With all Christmas cheer
When you look at all we've had

I simply remember my favourite things
And then I don't feel so bad.

I wish you all a very happy and safe festive season.

Valedictory

MS J BURCH (Brindabella) (6.36): We have come to that time of year when we say farewell, keep safe and thank you. Firstly I thank the OLA staff, front of house and back of house. They keep us all on track. To whoever crafts the cheat sheets, the instruction sheets, we are forever grateful when we get them. Thank you to all OLA staff. To my colleagues, thank you. To the community, a big thank you as well for having faith in me for the past decade for which I have been in this place representing you.

I thank my staff—there have been a few this year, with some changes—Tom, Hugh, Eliza, Lauren and Jody. This time last year I notified members that my two long-term staff Melinda and Emma were going off to have bubs, and we can celebrate that in one week in December there were three Assembly babies born. Melinda is back and Nicholas has already visited the Assembly on a number of occasions. He does still

raise his eyebrows in the middle of question time, but that is what a young fellow does. And Emma has visited with Harper and will return to my office in a week or so. It is good to have them back.

It is often asked in this place, or I am as I get out and about, why I do this, as I am sure you are all asked by family, friends and community members. To me it is simple: it is about helping and it is about serving. I will give two examples, very small examples but very meaningful to the families involved.

Kimberlee and Keith I met earlier in the year. Young Keith was born with club foot. This time last year Canberra families had no support for their little ones who were born with club feet. So we put the case to the health minister and she heard, she listened, and from this Christmas onwards families with little ones born with club foot will have the cost covered for the boots and the bars for those young bubs. That is meaningful. That is what gets me going.

For Coreena, Dylan and Mohammed from Bocce ACT, I made the case to use the Chief Minister's community funds. They were able to travel to New Zealand. They came back bearing silver, in particular 14-year-old Dylan, who has only been in bocce for a bit over 12 months, came back from his first international sports competition with a personal silver. I think you cannot do better than that.

I often use the end-of-year adjournment to introduce a new Joyism word. Let that tradition long continue. This year's word is "vipsicoo". For those who are trying to work out what vipsicoo is, it is a more descriptive way of describing vertigo. I thank and credit Ayden, who was the creator of that word. And if I mention Ayden I have to mention his brother Liam as well.

To all, be safe and be content over the holiday break, and definitely take care of those around you. In closing, I send my biggest special Christmas wish to my absolutely favourite boys: Hunter, Kade and Fletcher, have a wonderful Christmas. My word of caution to you is: do not climb the Christmas tree, because you just may get a touch of vipsicoo.

To all of those and to everyone here and to yours, have a safe holiday period.

Valedictory

MR STEEL (Murrumbidgee—Minister for City Services, Minister for Community Services and Facilities, Minister for Multicultural Affairs and Minister for Roads) (6.40): It has been a very big year for Canberra. Our government has been working very hard throughout the year to deliver the things that we said we would: even better services for our growing city. Halfway through our term I am very proud that our government remains progressive and is delivering the things that matter. One is a commitment to giving every child the opportunity of two years preschool education. There are not many policies that are better than that as far as return on investment goes.

Another particular highlight for me was our funding for better quality play spaces to support children's physical health and wellbeing. We are building even better schools and supporting our hardworking teachers. We are improving access to local health care with funding delivered for the new Weston Creek walk-in centre. We are delivering upgrades to our local centres like Kambah and upgrades to roads around our growing city, including the construction of the new car park on Mount Taylor that is supporting so many more people to enjoy the bush capital that we love.

The year 2018 has been a landmark year for Woden in particular, seeing the redevelopment of old and empty buildings, the new dining precinct on Bradley Street underway, and our government's major commitments to enhancements to public spaces like the square through the Woden experiment, new footpath and cycle path infrastructure, investments in the new Woden interchange and progressing the extension of light rail from the city to Woden. Importantly, we have also started the work on the future of community facilities in Woden.

I have also been very proud of our inclusive Canberra that is open to the world and that celebrates and is strengthened by our multicultural community. In this Assembly we have worked to protect LGBTQI students and teachers in schools, and our government has delivered a comprehensive plan to improve housing affordability and to tackle homelessness. Everything is within a budget surplus, the highest economic growth in the nation and the lowest unemployment rate. So it has been a very big year.

During the year I transitioned to the ministry. It has been a real delight to engage in that role with the many community organisations who do such important work to support our most vulnerable people in Canberra, and to meet with a huge diversity of multicultural groups that make such a significant contribution through the incredible number of events and celebrations that bring life to our city.

I thank those who have worked in my office with me over the year, both as a backbencher and during the transition into the ministry. I thank my staff: James Koval, Ethan Moody, Monique Blasiak and Thomas McKernan; and the staff who have joined me since I entered the ministry, Martin Greenwood, Sarah Niall and Alexandra Craig.

I thank our fantastic departmental liaison officers, Karen Kennedy, Emma Swan, Erica Hurrell and Rowena Mele.

Thank you to TCCS director-general Emma Thomas and deputy directors-general Jim Corrigan and Duncan Edghill, and your staff, for your work throughout the year. In the Community Services Directorate I welcome Rebecca Cross, our new director-general, and thank deputy directors-general Bernadette Mitcherson and Jo Wood and your teams.

I thank you Jacinta Evans and the inclusion and participation team on their work throughout the year, particularly on the multicultural summit last week. I hope they are taking a break before the Multicultural Festival in February.

I thank Deputy Under Treasurer Shaun Strachan, the team in CMTEDD, and director-general Ben Ponton and his team in EPSDD as well.

I would also like to acknowledge a now-departed committee secretary here in the Assembly, Kate Harkins, as well as Josephine Moa and committee secretaries in the Assembly more broadly, as well as the Clerk, the Deputy Clerk, the Office of the Legislative Assembly staff and members in this place.

To the Labor caucus, it is great to be part of such a strong and stable Labor team. To my electorate in Murrumbidgee, I am incredibly proud to represent you in this place. Please have a merry Christmas. I look forward to seeing you all at the Multicultural Festival on the flip side.

Valedictory

MS LEE (Kurrajong) (6.44): New experiences and resilience. On reflecting back on the year that was, as I prepared this valedictory, it is these two themes that spoke loudly to me.

One of the best things about being a member in this place is the new experiences, each and every day. The greatest challenge and privilege this year was taking on the education portfolio. My parents did not have wealth, status, sufficient English or knowledge of the Australian education system, and I know that I would not have had the same opportunities had it not been for the education that I received and the encouragement from my parents, who instilled in me the importance of studying hard and striving for every opportunity.

There have been no shortages of issues in education in the ACT, and I am sure that it will continue to be a key area for public debate as we move closer to 2020.

I have continued to hear from Canberrans who are struggling through the transition to the NDIS, and I will be reading the Assembly inquiry report on this important issue, which was tabled yesterday, with great interest, to ensure that the government is doing everything it can to support our vulnerable Canberrans.

Our natural environment continues to be a great and precious resource for Canberra. My trip to Namadgi and the Ginini wetlands will, I am sure, be one of the greatest memories that will stay with me long after I have left this place.

One of the most challenging things about being a member in this place is the importance of being resilient, each and every day. Dealing with people is always a challenge. Everyone is different; everyone has different needs; and everyone has different views. People do not always make decisions based on logic or rational thought. We are, by nature, emotional beings, and my constituents in my electorate of Kurrajong are diverse, ambitious and full of heart. Serving them over the past two years has been one of the greatest privileges of my life. Every day I learn new issues that affect my constituents; every day I learn new ways of helping my constituents who need it most; and every day I learn about new constituents who need and rely on me to be their voice.

The past few months have been as tough as they have been rewarding, as emotionally draining as they have been character building.

I am proud of the work that I have done on the select committee inquiring into the legislation establishing the integrity commission, to play my part in getting the Assembly to where we are today, which is to debate the bill tomorrow.

I was very proud to chair the justice and community safety committee as we inquired into and reported on our consent laws; to continue the purview of the committee's ongoing inquiry into domestic and family violence; and to kick off the inquiry into the very topical compulsory third-party insurance legislation.

I gained the experience of being on the estimates committee, a character-building experience if there ever was one. Being the target of an orchestrated and protracted attack campaign was never my intention, but it is a reality that I have been and am facing. Demands for retraction, a referral to the media, personal threats serious enough for a police investigation, thousands of robocalls, threats of legal proceedings and thousands of flyers letterboxed in my electorate of Kurrajong attacking my integrity, my intelligence and my honesty are, on a personal level, an extremely difficult and hurtful experience. As hard as it is to admit, I would be lying if I said that it was not taking its toll on my confidence, my mental wellbeing and my courage.

I want to live in a world where we are able to express our different views and where we can have robust discussions, debate and even arguments about serious issues, but at the end of the day we put those differences to one side for the benefit of those who need our support, our hardworking teachers. I am, and will always be, here for you, and I will never back away from calling out what I see as issues in education that need to be called out.

Madam Speaker, of course there are the thank-yous. To all the staff of the Office of the Legislative Assembly, thank you for keeping us going in this place. To all the members in this chamber and their staff, and all my party room colleagues and their staff—and I know that big brother Steve is looking down on us fondly—it really is a pleasure working with you, and I look forward to our road to government in 2020.

I acknowledge Osiel, Young, Anna and all those who undertook work experience and internship in my office this year. I thank my team: Sue, Josh and Anton. They go above and beyond each and every day because they believe in what we do, in who we are, and in what we can achieve. I believe that the best for Team Elizabeth Lee is yet to come.

I thank my ever-suffering family: my parents, John and Cecilia, who still travel down from Sydney each and every time I hold a barbecue for my volunteers; my sisters, Rosa and Sara, who always have my back; and my partner, Nathan. I cannot wait to see what this new chapter of our journey together will bring for us next year.

Finally, Madam Speaker, to the people of Kurrajong, thank you for your continued faith in me. It was, it is and it always will be about you.

Valedictory

MS CHEYNE (Ginninderra) (6.49): Each day in this job it is a privilege to interact with people, to meet people we never would have otherwise met, to help people and to make a difference, and when I reflect on the achievements this year there are so many stories about people to tell and so many people to thank. I want to put on the record a few experiences which will stay with me long after I have left this place.

Watching Mike Avis graduate from the Ginninderry SPARK conservation land management and horticulture program is one. When I met Mike earlier this year, by his own admission, he was not in a good place. Being part of Mike's transformation this year has been one of the most rewarding experiences for my office.

Another was drafting, speaking on, voting on and then delivering the remonstrance to the Senate after they denied Canberra citizens the right to be treated the same as citizens in the states in deciding our own laws on voluntary assisted dying. We turned one of the lowest points of my political journey into a strong signal that the fight had only just begun.

Another was having people swarm around us at Margaret Timpson park as we brought one of my long-held visions to life with the Belconnen town centre twilight market and broader show case. It is people who make a place, and thousands of people made that place light up on that cold night.

Yet another was uniting in this chamber last month on behalf of parents and babies everywhere by recognising the need for a physical breastmilk bank closer to us here in the ACT region and the stories many parents told me of some of their most vulnerable times.

Very recently I was working with grieving families as we try to uncover just what has gone wrong at Norwood crematorium for them to have lost children's ashes. Most importantly, we do not give up in our quest to have those ashes found.

There are an enormous number of people to thank who help in getting the important work of this job and the important work of this place, more broadly, done. I have outstanding staff. This year we bid a fond farewell to Josh Orchard and Maddie Manning who gave so much to the office. I continue to enjoy the support of Minuri Dharmasena and Jemma Cavanagh. We also welcomed Annika Rees and Maryanne Irhia and Xiaolan as our intern.

But an extra special thank you goes to Emma Kelly who took a very big leap of faith to move from journalism into the bright world of politics. The transition has been seamless, I think, which says a great deal about her professionalism and her capacity. To Nick Argy: Nick's contribution, Madam Speaker, I am sure you are aware, is simply extraordinary. He goes above and beyond every single day. The sheer amount of work Nick does each day, and always so compassionately and always in such a friendly manner, is a template for us all.

Thank you especially to my Labor colleagues for their support, friendship and leadership on so many issues to make our city a better place and to you, Madam Speaker, for your support and patience although I reckon I am owed a few supps in 2019.

To members of this chamber, forgetting the few bilious outbursts of the past few days, surprisingly you are all generally pretty sufferable. But I will single out Mr Parton for making question time a little more fun behind the scenes; and opposition whip, Andrew Wall. Last year Mr Wall said that if I had started to grow ever so slightly fond of him he had not done his job well enough and we would see how we went this year. Based on our very good working relationship as whips, he has not done a good job at all.

But, in all seriousness, together with Mr Rattenbury and you, Madam Speaker, we have had to work through some very complicated things this year and the respectful relationship between us all makes some painful things a little less painful. But, for the record, I am never doing a standing orders review ever again.

We could not function without all the OLA staff. Thank you for all you do and again especially for your patience with me. My random questions, my requests, putting up with my office's humour, how much water I drink in the chamber all keep people running around and mostly turning a blind eye when I eat donuts during committee hearings. I appreciate all that you do for us and the good humour with which you do it.

Thanks to my many gorgeous friends, near and far. And most of all, thanks to all the constituents in Ginninderra, more and more of whom I have had the pleasure of meeting, and more and more of whom I now call my friend. It remains such a great honour and privilege to be here and I commit to giving my all to do the best by you and for you. Merry Christmas.

Valedictory

MR COE (Yerrabi—Leader of the Opposition) (6.54): I too rise to wish my colleagues in this place and in the broader community a very merry Christmas. In particular, to my Liberal colleagues here—Nicole, Andrew, Mark, Giulia, Jeremy, Elizabeth, Candice, Elizabeth, Vicky and James—it really is an honour to serve the people of Canberra alongside you. I think we have had real progress this year.

But opposition is tough. Opposition is pretty ordinary. And there is no shortage of motivation on this side of the chamber to do absolutely everything we can over the coming 23 months to make sure that come October 2020 we are on the other side of this house.

Of course to my staff, I am very grateful for all that they do to support me and also the broader team. To Sarah, Ramon, Emily, Stuart, Ausilia, Deborah and David and Steven, thank you very much for all that you do.

To the Canberra Liberals, thank you for giving me the opportunity to be a member of that great party. The Liberal Party has a great tradition. We have a great history. We have got a great present and we have got an even better future.

To the management committee, John, Angela, Brad, Jimmy and Josh, Rob, Ben, Brian, Ray and Sharee and Robert and Kate; to the staff, Kay, Tamara, and Marie: thank you so much for all that you do for the Liberal cause in the ACT. Also our federal candidates—Leanne, Ed and Robert Gunning—and also of course Zed and his team, they do a great job flying the Liberal flag in the ACT.

The reality of commonwealth politics, of federal politics, is that it is so hard to have a single message that resonates across the entire country. Sometimes that means fighting uphill battles and other times it means that all the ducks line up. But they do a great job of representing the Liberal Party to thousands of Canberrans who are seeking leadership from our party.

Finally, of course, to my family—my wife Yasmin and our two kids, Angus and Annabel—thank you very much for the joy that you bring to my life. Very rarely am I there for dinner or bedtime but I certainly enjoy the very natural alarm clock that I have at home when Angus and Annabel come running in at about 5.30 each day. It is a real blessing to have them all in my life and I am so grateful for the tolerance that they show me in being able to live this slightly unusual life.

All 25 of us here have commitments that are not really practical and they are not really usual. But they are ones that we of course all enjoy, we all thrive on. But they do take their toll both personally and also on our families. I am very grateful for the sacrifices that we all make in order to serve the city.

Question resolved in the affirmative.

The Assembly adjourned at 6.59 pm.