



Debates

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Tuesday, 19 February 2019

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.

The Hon Gordon Scholes AO
Motion of condolence

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) (10.01): I move:

That this Assembly expresses its deep regret at the death of the Honourable Gordon Scholes AO, former Member for the Victorian seat of Corio and Minister for Territories from 1984 to 1987, and tenders its profound sympathy to his family, friends and colleagues in their bereavement.

I rise this morning on behalf of my Labor colleagues to express our deep regret at the death of the Hon Gordon Scholes AO, former member for Corio in the state of Victoria. Importantly for the ACT, he was Minister for Territories from 1984 to 1987.

Although he was a Victorian by birth and spent more than 25 years representing the electorate of Corio, Gordon Scholes had a very significant impact on the Australian Capital Territory in his lifetime. He was the Minister for Territories in the Hawke government, from 1984 to 1987. During that period Mr Scholes was instrumental in the process that led to the passage of the territory's constitution, the ACT self-government act, and indeed the very creation of this Assembly. Although he had retired from the ministry before the passage of the self-government act, his former senior private secretary, Michael Brown, wrote that it was Gordon "who all but made self-government a reality" during the term of the Hawke Labor government.

In an interview with the Old Parliament House political and parliamentary oral history project in 2010, Mr Scholes reflected on self-government for the ACT as being one of the significant aspects of his more than 25-year career as a member of federal parliament. This career included being Speaker on 11 November 1975, a very significant day in Australian political history—significant for many things, of course, as colleagues would be aware—but he was also in the chair when the House of Representatives passed the first, and still now only, successful censure motion against a Prime Minister, then Malcolm Fraser. I am not sure that our current federal parliament is quite at that point with the current Prime Minister, but that was a very significant moment in Australian political history.

Mr Scholes's career included serving as Minister for Defence in the first Hawke ministry and as Minister for Territories until his retirement from the ministry in 1987. He retired from the federal parliament at the 1993 election, having served the people of Corio for 25 years, and having played an important role in the history of Australian Capital Territory self-governance.

Prior to entering the parliament, Mr Scholes worked for the Victorian railways, following in the footsteps of his father and his grandfather. He served as a Geelong city councillor from 1965 to 1967 and as president of the Geelong Trades Hall Council from 1965 to 1966. He was first elected to parliament as the member for Corio at the 1967 by-election, at the age of 36.

He was recognised, through his appointment as an officer of the Order of Australia in 1993, for his significant service to the Australian parliament, the people of Corio and the broader Australian community.

Mr Scholes passed away on 9 December 2018 at the age of 87. This morning we extend our deepest sympathy to his daughters, Kerry and Anne, as well as his extended family and extensive friendship network throughout the Australian Labor Party, the trade union movement and the broader Australian community.

MR COE (Yerrabi—Leader of the Opposition) (10.06): I too rise today to express condolences on behalf of the opposition at the passing of the Hon Gordon Scholes AO. Mr Scholes was a prominent and successful figure over three decades in political life. He was a prominent figure in the Victorian Labor Party, and he was elected in 1967 as the federal member for Corio in a by-election.

Mr Scholes won the Geelong seat in a very close-run race. The trades hall, federated workers bodies and unions all backed Mr Scholes heavily. Interestingly, opposition leaders Arthur Calwell and Gough Whitlam visited the seat on at least a couple of occasions during the campaign, with the leadership changing during that period. Mr Scholes gained a nine per cent swing to narrowly win the seat, a seat that he would hold until 1993. Upon his election he was reported as saying:

It's so hard to say whether you are doing the right thing during the campaign.
You take a punt at things at the time, and if you win, then it was the right thing.

The election was very significant as it gave a boost to Mr Whitlam and gave him and the Labor Party confidence for the years ahead.

Whilst on a different side of politics, Mr Scholes made a significant contribution to public life, especially through his time as Speaker of the House, Minister for Defence and Minister for Territories. Of course, as Minister for Territories, he was instrumental in the discussion about and ultimate development of self-government in the territory.

As Speaker of the House of Representatives in 1975, Mr Scholes presided over the chamber during the constitutional crisis that happened in November. Following that election, Mr Scholes then served as the opposition spokesperson for postal and telecommunications commissions, primary industry and defence. He also served as the spokesperson on the Australian Capital Territory.

After the election of the Hawke government in 1983, Mr Scholes was made Minister for Defence, a role he held through 1984, before taking on the role of Minister for

Territories. He retired from public life in 1993, after 26 years as the member for Corio, having made a significant contribution to Australia. In further recognition of his contribution, in June of that year he was recognised as an officer of the Order of Australia in the Queen's birthday honours.

Mr Scholes passed away in December of last year, and he was honoured with a state funeral in Victoria. On behalf of the ACT opposition, I again recognise his significant contribution to Australia, but particularly to the ACT, and I pass on our condolences to his family.

MR RATTENBURY (Kurrajong) (10.09): On behalf of the ACT Greens, I join my Assembly colleagues in expressing my condolences on the death late last year of the Hon Gordon Scholes AO. In the period that I have been in this Assembly, we have had many condolence motions for a wide range of people, and, of course, many politicians. Mr Scholes played a very important role for us as members of the ACT Legislative Assembly, given his work as territories minister in the 1980s in the Hawke government.

As my colleagues have already mentioned, Mr Scholes was a Labor MP based in Geelong, Victoria. He was first elected to the House of Representatives as the member for Corio in 1967 and stayed in federal parliament for 26 years. Over that period he played a number of roles—in opposition, as a government backbencher, as Speaker, and, after another period in opposition, as a minister in the Hawke government.

Mr Scholes's speakership was throughout the infamous Whitlam-Fraser-Kerr period of 1975—still the most controversial constitutional crisis ever seen in federal parliament and quite a challenge for any Speaker, I would imagine. Mr Scholes is one of only two speakers who later became a government minister. His first ministerial role was as Minister for Defence and, most relevant to us here in the ACT, he went on to become the Minister for Territories from 1984 to 1987.

Members and many ACT residents may not be aware of the key role that Mr Scholes played in the process of the ACT gaining self-government. Following the establishment of Canberra as the national capital and seat of federal parliament, there were various councils and committees established to manage the construction of infrastructure and the affairs of the people here in Canberra. From the early 1970s there had been much discussion about giving Canberra self-government, and about the many complexities of the financial arrangements, especially given that the federal government was getting any funds gained from land sales.

But it was only when the Hawke government came to power in 1983 that there was a clear commitment for the ACT to take charge of its own affairs, although it was still very unclear what that might look like. Once Mr Scholes became territories minister in late 1984, political and bureaucratic momentum for the move finally built up.

It was Mr Scholes who was very clear about and intent on shifting management of the territory from federal cabinet, and on the concept of establishing a municipal government for the ACT which also managed a range of state-level responsibilities

such as housing and community services and which, over time, would take control of all government functions that could be extracted from the commonwealth.

By December 1985 Mr Scholes released a plan for a model for the territory's governance which is not far from where we are today. It was a proposal for a single-chamber council of 13 members elected by optional preferential voting for a four-year term, the key difference being that there would have been 13 electorates. One key part of the model was that the ACT would not have a lord mayor, thereby not making it a local municipal government, as many expected. This is why we are the only capital city in Australia without one today. A key decider in why we are not solely a municipal government is that the Hawke government agreed to the ACT being a part of the state-federal financial relations system.

Obviously, there was almost another decade of detailed debate about exactly what self-government would look like, and whether it should even happen at all. I think members here are all starkly aware of those debates. Importantly, I think we have a lot to thank Mr Scholes for. As I understand it, he had to lobby within his party, including Prime Minister Bob Hawke, for the ACT to be able to self-govern.

The Hon Gordon Scholes retired from federal parliament in 1993. The ACT Greens convey our thoughts and sympathies at this time to his family and friends.

Question resolved in the affirmative, members standing in their places.

Justice and Community Safety—Standing Committee Scrutiny report 27

MRS JONES (Murrumbidgee) (10.14): I present the following report:

Justice and Community Safety—Standing Committee (Legislative Scrutiny Role)—Scrutiny Report 27, dated 18 February 2019, together with a copy of the extracts of the relevant minutes of proceedings.

I seek leave to make a brief statement.

Leave granted.

MRS JONES: Scrutiny report 27 contains the committee's comments on 44 pieces of subordinate legislation, one regulatory impact statement, two government responses and proposed amendments to the Residential Tenancies Bill 2018 (No 2). The report was circulated to members when the Assembly was not sitting, and I commend the report to the Assembly.

Economic Development and Tourism—Standing Committee Report 5

MR HANSON (Murrumbidgee) (10.14): I present the following report:

Economic Development and Tourism—Standing Committee—Report 5—*Report on Annual and Financial Reports 2017-2018*, dated 7 February 2019, together with a copy of the extracts of the relevant minutes of proceedings.

I move:

That the report be noted.

This is the fifth report of the Standing Committee on Economic Development and Tourism following a referral on 25 October 2018 of relevant annual reports by the Assembly. The committee held two public hearings and heard from 34 witnesses from the relevant directorates and agencies. Twenty-six questions were taken on notice during the hearings and 48 questions were placed on notice after the hearings. Answers to these questions are available on the committee's webpage. The committee has made five recommendations.

On behalf of the committee, I would like to thank ACT government ministers and directorate and agency officials for their contribution to this inquiry, with a timely return of answers to questions on notice. I thank the committee secretariat and the other members of the committee for their participation and support. I commend the report to the Assembly.

Question resolved in the affirmative.

Education, Employment and Youth Affairs—Standing Committee

Statement by chair

MR PETTERSSON (Yerrabi) (10.16): Pursuant to standing order 246A, I wish to make a statement on behalf of the Standing Committee on Education, Employment and Youth Affairs relating to statutory appointments in accordance with continuing resolution 5A. I wish to inform the Assembly that during the applicable reporting period—1 July 2018 to 31 December 2018—the standing committee considered a total of seven appointments and reappointments to the following bodies: the Board of Senior Secondary Studies and the University of Canberra Council. I present the following paper.

Standing Committee on Education, Employment and Youth Affairs—Standing Committee—Schedule of Statutory Appointments—9th Assembly—Period 1 July to 31 December 2018.

Study tour to the United Kingdom and Ireland

Ministerial statement

MS STEPHEN-SMITH (Kurrajong—Minister for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Affairs, Minister for Disability, Minister for Children, Youth and Families, Minister for Employment and Workplace Safety, Minister for Government Services and Procurement, Minister for Urban Renewal) (10.17): I am pleased to provide a report to the Assembly today on my visit to the United Kingdom and the Republic of Ireland in December 2018 as Minister for Children, Youth and Families. This visit, on which I was accompanied by the Director-General of the Community Services

Directorate and my chief of staff, had a strong focus on early support for children, young people and families at risk.

As you would be aware, Madam Speaker, the government is currently undertaking a project previously called “Early intervention by design”, now known as “Early support by design”. This project is led by the Community Services Directorate and has engaged all of the human services cluster directorates—CSD, education, health, and justice and community safety—as well as our community partners, in a detailed consideration of what we need to do to move our service system towards providing better support for individuals and families early in the life of a problem and even before problems emerge.

Members will also be aware of this government’s commitment to working towards Canberra becoming a restorative city. While the primary responsibility for this lies with my colleague the Attorney-General, those of you who have participated in forums on this topic will know that other restorative cities have prioritised the use of restorative practices in the spaces of child protection, youth justice and family support.

Providing further context, the government is now just past the halfway mark in implementing both its five-year out of home care strategy, A step up for our kids, and its 10-year blueprint for youth justice in the ACT. It was, therefore, timely to visit jurisdictions that have made substantial changes in the way they support children, young people and their families through the implementation of practices that focus on working with families rather than doing things to or for them.

Madam Speaker, during the trip we heard time and time again that, particularly when you are working in complex situations with vulnerable individuals and families, it is all about relationships. That is why so many of the programs and services we visited were co-designed with children, young people, parents, carers and other program clients, because good relationships can only be built on a platform of trust and respect. We also observed the importance of cultural change being led from the top, while those we spoke with emphasised that changing culture and practice is a journey, and there is always more that can be done.

The visit took in four sites of the United Kingdom and Ireland: Nottingham and Leeds in England, Renfrewshire in Scotland, and Cork in Ireland. We spent two days in Nottingham, starting the visit with Opportunity Nottingham. This program is funded by the National Lottery over eight years to support the most challenging, hard to reach customers who are not accessing current services. Beneficiaries must meet three out of four criteria: homelessness, mental health, substance abuse or being an offender. Sixty per cent of clients meet all four. Important for us to recall as we continued on the visit with a focus on children and families was the fact that most participants’ behaviours and vulnerabilities trace back to severe childhood trauma.

Opportunity Nottingham has recently increased its capacity to focus on trauma-informed care and create a “psychologically informed environment” for its work, by employing a clinical psychologist. This has also enabled identification of previously undiagnosed brain injuries and autism in clients.

A key lesson from Opportunity Nottingham has been the importance of genuinely involving its expert group of beneficiaries in decisions on new services. This was seen as critical to designing a service response that works for those who otherwise do not seek or accept help. It is important to note that, while successful intervention was found to deliver reduced costs in the justice system, in line with a justice reinvestment approach, and in emergency presentations to hospital, it also saw increased demand in rehabilitation and other medical services when clients were able to engage.

In the afternoon of the same day, we visited the city wellbeing hub, one of a number of examples we saw of service collocation facilitating collaboration and referral. A feature of this particular hub was a commitment to seeing everyone who came in as quickly as possible, with all clients seen and assessed by a relevant service on the day. The following day was spent with policy leaders and service providers who are engaged with Nottingham's commitment to being an early intervention city, a commitment it has had since 2008, and in particular the small steps big changes program.

These meetings were held at one of Nottingham's eight children's centres—not dissimilar in concept to our child and family centres—that include multidisciplinary early help teams, public health teams and childcare providers. Early help is part of Nottingham's family support pathway that is clearly laid out and updated every couple of years. This model of “universal support, early help (universal plus), early help (targeted) and specialist and protection services” is presented as a continuum of support, with the vision that all families get the right help at the right time wherever they are along the spectrum of need.

This approach has seen Nottingham achieve: a significant reduction in the rate of teen pregnancy, from the highest in Europe; an increase in breastfeeding prevalence to above the national average; a reduction in obesity at entry to school and the end of year 6; a reduction in emergency hospital admissions; and a reduction in the number of children in care, reduced costs of care and better outcomes for children and young people who do come into the care system.

A key part of the model is based on a more collaborative approach to procurement or commissioning, clearly identifying outcomes that community partners are working towards, but enabling services to adapt within an existing contract to better meet consumers' needs. While Nottingham has learned many lessons in its 10-year journey, the executive councillor for children's services told us that a key lesson is that there are a whole lot of things that evidence tells us will work but actually making them work is about local needs and relationships.

That is exactly what drives small steps big changes, otherwise known as SSBC. SSBC is another big lottery-funded project, through its better start initiative. After two years of engaging with the community, looking in depth at existing services and bringing a range of partners together to bid for funding through a gruelling application process, the program was awarded £45 million over 10 years to deliver parent-led reform to the service system for children and families. To quote SSBC's website:

The SSBC vision is simple—to grow our children together with love and respect. Every aspect of the programme has children at the heart with parents (right from pregnancy) leading the way, supported and guided by experts.

Parents were vital partners in designing the SSBC service offer, with some clear messages: they want services close to home; they want services more joined up; and they want government and service providers to use language that is respectful and strengths based. Now parents are co-producing new services, sitting on boards and interview panels for new staff, and even delivering family mentoring. It was a pleasure to meet some of these parent champions.

From Nottingham we travelled to Leeds, also for two days. The focus of this visit was Leeds's 10-year journey to become a restorative city and a child friendly city. This is a multifaceted approach which no doubt some members are familiar with from the children's mayor and voice and influence team who ensure that children's voices are heard across the range of council responsibilities to the commitment to restorative practice in schools and across the child protection and care system. The commitment is not only whole of council but it seeks to engage the wider community. There are now 850 child-friendly Leeds ambassadors and annual child-friendly Leeds awards organised by children and young people.

Since making its initial commitment in 2008 Leeds has restructured its child welfare services to be more place based, changed its processes to be built on conversations about issues rather than thresholds, introduced a range of both restorative and therapeutic approaches to supporting families to keep their children safe at home and placed children squarely at the centre of practice, service design and planning. In Leeds it is children and young people who interview applicants for senior positions in children's services.

It is not possible to do justice to the lessons shared with us in Leeds in the time available but the cultural change they have achieved has seen a 15 per cent reduction in looked-after children, while the rest of England has experienced a 12 per cent increase. As senior officials emphasised, children and families are still getting support, just a different type. And services continue to adapt and improve. Leeds was an early adopter of family group conferencing or family meetings, which are now embedded across the system, not just for families at risk of having children taken into care but also to address issues early in the life of a problem, including an outreach service to victims of domestic and family violence.

A new service, restorative early support, sees multidisciplinary teams working with families to achieve the goals they set for themselves through structured conversations that help them identify both core challenges and the strengths they can bring to bear in addressing them. Materials to support these engagements have been co-designed with families and individual families score themselves on their progress against their goals.

Throughout the conversations in Leeds we returned to the challenges of cultural change, workforce and practice development and the importance of leadership. Children's services has sought to embed the restorative practice ethos of working with,

not doing to or for, across its systems, including human resources and complaints. As a result of this philosophy and its support of staff in relation to caseload, supervision, recognition and career development, the organisation has gone from having one in four staff contracted through an agency to having 100 per cent permanent staffing.

The next visit was to Renfrewshire, just outside Glasgow in Scotland. I was keen to see Scotland's getting it right for every child strategy in action and we certainly had a whirlwind tour of a range of services. Our first visit was to Arkleston children's house, a purpose-built, government-run residential care home for six young people, which exemplifies the trauma-informed philosophy of care that the reforms are seeking to deliver. Getting it right for every child was introduced in 2006 and its values and principles guide work across education, social care and youth justice. The strategy's objective is to see every child safe, well and healthy, with seven wellbeing indicators established to measure progress.

An example of the way in which systems, services and supports have been integrated is the fact that every child has a named person who offers a clear point of contact for children, young people or their parents if they need support. For children below school age it is usually a health visitor and for school aged children it is a head teacher, deputy or other designated teacher. The named person is expected to either support a family directly when they seek help or refer them to an appropriate service. Importantly, this is not something that applies only to vulnerable or at-risk families. It is a universal principle and reflects the view that everyone has a responsibility for child wellbeing and all children deserve to be nurtured.

Within the child protection or social care system, reform has been based on an initial survey of the entire population of 13½ thousand children and young people in care, providing a strong evidence base about what children and young people were experiencing as well as new approaches to social work based on the reclaiming social work model.

In contrast to England, Scotland has now seen reductions in the number of looked-after children for five consecutive years. This has resulted from a strong focus on early support or families first, which includes a range of evidence-based supports delivered in a way that was described as "completely relationship and person centred". When children and young people do come into care the trauma-informed approach is now seeing indicator-based outcomes for children and young people in foster and residential care exceed those for children at home.

Following the visit and briefing, we toured Riverbrae School, a newly opened school for students with disability aged from 2½ to 18 years, formed from the merger of two special schools and a nursery. The school was a result of parent choice, as parents in the closing schools resisted mainstreaming, and has seen children return to schooling in Renfrewshire who were previously enrolled in other council areas.

One benefit of a purpose-built school is that it has enabled the provision of specialist facilities such as a hydrotherapy pool that would not be possible in a mainstream school. However, the school puts significant focus on students' access to the outside

world, including through outdoor learning and participation in mainstream social and cultural activities.

Our hosts then took us to speak with managers and social workers who work with young people at risk and their families, including in the provision of functional family therapy to support families to address the issues that are preventing a young person being or feeling safe at home. Again, there was a firm focus on the importance of relationships and building trust with young people by meeting them where they are at.

The next stop was Renfrew Health and Social Work Centre where we met a nurse who delivers support for mothers up to 19 years old under the family nurse partnership model and a young mum who has benefited from her visits from pregnancy until her child was two years old. Here we were also shown the baby box that is offered to all new parents in Scotland, again, a universal offer that prevents stigma.

The last leg of the trip was Cork where we visited the young Knocknaheeny program focused on infant mental health and wellbeing, and Youth Reach, providing young people who have not been able to engage with mainstream school a second chance at education. Young Knocknaheeny has been established in a particularly disadvantaged region of Cork where a number of community sector leaders recognised that the service system was fractured and families and children were falling through the gaps. This group came together to develop a coordinated, evidence-based service response and to seek funding under the national area-based childhood program funded by the Department of Children and Youth Affairs and Atlantic Philanthropies.

The program is built on a strong evidence base around the impact of adverse childhood experiences and early trauma. This had been a theme throughout the trip but it was interesting to hear in detail how high level academic research has been built into a program that is having a very practical impact in changing the way services are delivered.

The infant mental health and wellbeing strategy is based on the premise that experiences and relationships occurring as children have long-lasting impact and that children should be nurtured. It is also grounded in the firm belief that it is possible to deliver dramatic improvements in life prospects for young people facing adversity with the right environments and supports.

Young Knocknaheeny is again focused on relationships as well as strengthening children's capacity for self-regulation, language development and building capability across all services for children. A key element of the latter is the rollout of "incredible years training in classroom management" to more than 85 per cent of teachers, giving them tools to reduce conflict and make learning more engaging for three to eight-year-olds.

Once again, working with parents early was seen as vital and there are a range of group and individual supports under the program. One service offered is an intensive home visiting service with visits as often as weekly for parents with children zero to

three years. Workers noted that some parents are initially reluctant to come to group courses but may subsequently engage if they have built trust and confidence through one-on-one support.

Compared with the other places we visited, the young Knocknaheeny program was clearly practitioner led. However, it has just started a piece of work seeking to better capture children's voices, and we were told that one of its next priorities is to increase parental engagement in decision-making.

In Cork I also met the lord mayor, who is a great friend of Australia, having lived here for a period. It was a pleasure to sign his visitors book and hear his insights into early intervention and youth programs in Cork. The following day we spent time at the Cork city learning support services, part of the Department of Education and Skills' youth reach education, training and work experience program for early school leavers.

The school supports students from 12 to 23 years old with a range of issues and presentations that prevent them engaging in mainstream school. For many young people, this is likely to include serious family trauma or other difficulties associated with inappropriate role modelling. However, some of the students were also recent migrants who have arrived with little English and limited formal education.

The coordinator noted that all students present with low self-esteem. However, while all report as underachievers, only one in eight actually performs below average and one in four tests well above average. And when asked what they want to achieve, the young people want to do the junior certificate and leaving certificate, just like other students. Again, relationships were identified as key. The organisation's philosophy is to focus on knowing each student and having a relationship that enables the right support and resources to be offered at the right time.

In conclusion, this study tour was a timely insight into some of the leading practice that is spoken about across the child protection, early support, youth work and restorative practice communities. It was invaluable to see the philosophies and programs in context to better understand the environment in which they have emerged and matured. In that regard, austerity was a frequent topic as programs have struggled with disinvestment, but also as people have found a new impetus to invest in early intervention. While our broad policy environment is rather different, we learned a lot that will inform the next stages of our reform agenda.

I present the following paper:

United Kingdom and Ireland Study Tour—December 2018—Ministerial statement, 19 February 2019.

I move:

That the Assembly take note of the paper.

Question resolved in the affirmative.

Review of plastic shopping bag ban

Ministerial statement

MR STEEL (Murrumbidgee—Minister for City Services, Minister for Community Services and Facilities, Minister for Multicultural Affairs and Minister for Roads) (10.36): I welcome the opportunity to report back to the Assembly on the government response to the recent review of the efficacy of the ACT's plastic shopping bag ban undertaken by the ACT Commissioner for Sustainability and the Environment. I am responding to the commissioner's report on behalf of the ACT government, as the responsible minister for the Plastic Shopping Bags Ban Act 2010, which moved to my portfolio in August 2018.

The commissioner's report, *Unfantastic plastic: review of the ACT plastic shopping bag ban*, was tabled on 20 September 2018. We commend the commissioner and her staff for this report, which challenges us to question what success looks like in the context of our plastic bag ban, and frames potential changes to the ban in the context of a broader approach to single-use plastic. I thank the Minister for Climate Change and Sustainability, Mr Shane Rattenbury, for commissioning the report as the then minister responsible for the Plastic Shopping Bags Ban Act.

Scientists estimate that 90.5 per cent of all plastic waste ever made has never been recycled and still exists in some shape or form. Plastic can be an incredibly versatile material, found in virtually every example of recent human endeavour. Plastics are light, useful, durable and cheap to produce and can last for centuries or more in the right conditions.

However, in recent decades, our fondness for single-use plastic, particularly items in use for a short time such as plastic cutlery, cups, straws, packaging and lightweight plastic bags, has grown considerably. It is estimated that 10 million straws are used in Australia every day. They can take up to 200 years to degrade, and they will never biodegrade into micro-particles. Plastic straws used today will outlive your children's children's children.

Plastic bags have become a symbol of our throwaway society. It was noted at the time of the ACT's plastic bag ban that one of the benefits of banning plastic bags was to raise community awareness of broader environmental and sustainability issues. The ACT was the third jurisdiction in Australia to introduce a ban on single-use plastic shopping bags, by way of the Plastic Shopping Bags Ban Act 2010, which came into effect in November 2011.

The ban was introduced to restrict the supply of single-use lightweight plastic bags in the territory and encourage the uptake of reusable shopping bags. The ban prohibits the supply of plastic bags that are less than 35 microns thick and made in whole or part from polyethylene. It makes an exception for biodegradable, compostable bags. The ban does not include integrated produce bags, the thin plastic bags in the fruit and veg section of a supermarket, and does not require retailers to charge for the sale of thicker plastic bags, although many choose to.

As a government, we have a responsibility to evaluate the effectiveness of territory laws. The plastic bag ban is no exception. It was reviewed first in 2012 and again in 2014. The most recent review, requested in December 2017 by Minister Rattenbury, asked the Office of the Commissioner for Sustainability and the Environment to investigate the efficacy of the existing Plastic Shopping Bags Ban Act 2010; make recommendations as to how and whether improvements could be made to improve overall environmental outcomes; and analyse options, where possible, through triple-bottom-line and cost-benefit analysis.

Unfantastic plastic: review of the ACT plastic shopping bag ban was tabled in the Assembly on 20 September 2018. Drawing on analysis undertaken by the Australian National University, the report concluded that the ban has had a marked impact on the ACT's consumption of single-use plastic bags but that plastic consumption appears to be gradually returning to the levels seen prior to the ban's introduction. This is for a range of reasons, including population growth and household consumption. The commissioner noted that there is no easy solution to our plastic addiction, and that when it comes to shopping bags every alternative has its own implications in respect of carbon emissions, energy, water use and pollution.

A key to reducing these impacts is to reuse bags as many times as possible, consistent with our ambition for a more circular economy. A number of reform options were explored in the report, including the potential for increasing the minimum thickness of plastic shopping bags, requiring all plastic bags to be biodegradable and compostable, using price signals to influence plastic bag consumption, and even banning plastic shopping bags altogether.

Drawing on the analysis of these reform options, the commissioner developed four recommendations: one, a mandatory plastic bag disclosure scheme; two, minimum plastic bag pricing; three, improved governance of plastic bag regulation; and, four, research synergies for compostable plastic and household organic collection schemes.

Importantly, the commissioner recognised that further consultation with the community and industry would be needed if these recommendations, particularly mandatory plastic bag disclosure and minimum pricing, were to be developed further. The commissioner's recommendations need to be considered further in the context of their impact on equity and cost-of-living concerns from a business perspective, while also ensuring that there are no perverse outcomes that lead to a worse overall outcome for the environment.

In light of the commissioner's report and the recommendations, we need to further consider the range of options for the future of plastic bags. Detailed analysis needs to be undertaken on the social, environmental and economic impacts.

As noted in the report, measures could include an outright ban on plastic bags. In late 2018, New Zealand committed to an effective ban on plastic bags, with bags below 70 microns to be phased out by mid-2019. New Zealand took this step after agreeing in principle to phase out single-use plastic bags, subject to the outcome of consultation.

The commissioner's preferred recommendation, to introduce minimum pricing for plastic bags, requires detailed consideration. The report suggests charging a levy on plastic bags and using those funds for environmental purposes such as pollution control, research, behavioural change and education initiatives. Alternatively, it suggests that the price of bags could be increased without charging a levy. But this may be putting more money into the pockets of large supermarkets and retailers, which may not be the ideal way to drive change with the community's support. A price floor is most likely to have the greatest cost-of-living impact on those least able to afford it and with the fewest options available to adapt their behaviour.

The commissioner's report did not provide any modelling on the price elasticity of plastic bag consumption, so government will need to consider further economic implications of the recommendation, the costs associated with using price as a mechanism to achieve change in consumer behaviour, and equity concerns.

The option of increasing the minimum thickness of the plastic bags also needs to be further considered. Under the current ban, single-use bags were replaced by thicker 15c bags that are still used once by shoppers. Increasing the thickness to between 45 and 55 microns theoretically improves the longevity of these bags, but analysis is required as to whether this affects the behaviour of consumers in reusing plastic bags.

Transitioning to alternative bags made from calico, jute, hemp, paper and other materials may also be part of reducing our reliance on plastic. However, each alternative needs to be carefully considered, as they also have an impact on the environment because of emission and water intensive production processes. For example, according to a Danish study, polypropylene bags, most of the green reusable bags found at supermarkets, should be used 37 times and cotton bags should be used 7,100 times before being discarded. A significant shift in community behaviour towards reuse would be required.

Madam Speaker, the report also made further recommendations regarding a mandatory plastic bag disclosure regime, the governance of plastic bag regulation and the potential of further research into the feasibility of compostable plastic bags. A mandatory disclosure regime does have a potential impact on business. While we would like better information to support future decision-making on single-use plastic bags, many small businesses in the ACT that use plastic bags would be burdened with additional regulations and must be consulted on this matter. Seeking this data only from larger businesses has the potential to dilute the quality of the data. The disclosure on the number of plastic bags per retailer may also be commercially sensitive and these privacy issues need to be further analysed. It is also not guaranteed that the increased disclosure would drive behaviour in such a way that would offset the additional costs of increasing regulation.

Recommendation 3 called on the government to confirm the optimal division of responsibilities for the regulation of plastic bags. In just August 2018, responsibility for plastic bags moved from the Environment, Planning and Sustainable Development Directorate to the Transport Canberra and City Services Directorate. As the Minister for City Services, I am now responsible for litter and waste collection, as well as

plastic bags, which allows one minister to consider both the environmental and waste impact objectives of the plastic bag ban. However, the government will continue to consider the governance framework for the ban.

For example, recent plastic bag bans in other states have also been established under the umbrella of broader waste or environmental legislation. Along with allowing for greater regulatory efficiency, this may also allow a more consistent approach to waste management and enable a more flexible approach as our understanding of problematic materials evolves.

Recommendation 4 of the report explored the potential of the ACT government to research synergies for introducing compostable plastic bags, which could feed into a future ACT household organic collection scheme. We need to continue to assess the future potential of bags to be biodegradable and compostable, though compostable bags may not break down in household composting. If disposed of incorrectly, these bags may instead break down in landfill, contributing to greenhouse emissions.

Dealing with large quantities of compostable bags also requires detailed planning. The waste feasibility study recommended the implementation of food and organic waste collection in the future and this may require consideration of new infrastructure for large-scale composting or other biological processes, such as controlled anaerobic digestion.

A ban on single-use lightweight plastic bags now exists, or is in development, in every Australian state and territory except New South Wales. The Australian bans already in effect share some common characteristics, including a minimum bag thickness of 35 microns or greater, with penalties available for retailer noncompliance.

However, the most recent state bans do not exempt biodegradable and compostable bags due in part to the persistent environmental impacts of these products when not managed correctly. We must consider the unintended consequences of compostable plastic bags in challenging single-use culture and start encouraging the reuse of durable, environmentally-friendly bags.

Each of the recommendations and alternative options presented in the commissioner's report requires further detailed consideration. The government will take additional time to consider the social, environmental and economic impacts of potential changes to the current plastic bag ban and do so in consultation with the affected businesses and the community. However, a much broader approach is needed than the issues contained in the report.

While the commissioner's recommendations took a narrow approach, focusing on shopping bags only, we know that plastic bags are only one part of a much larger plastics problem. In fact, one expert estimated in the report that plastic bags represent less than one per cent of the waste going into landfill in the ACT. So while we support the intent of the recommendations made by the commissioner, we also need to consider greater regulation in tackling other types of plastics.

We must consider actions on other kinds of single-use plastic to question whether they remain consistent with our ambition to reduce environmental impacts and drive resource recovery in the ACT towards 90 per cent by 2025. This has been recognised at the national government level through the 2018 national waste policy, which provides a framework for approaching what were once considered waste issues, with a circular economy lens and specifically targeting plastic, packaging and pollution. This national approach empowers us to look at these issues in a different light, looking at not just the environmental impacts of plastic pollution but also ways to extend the useful life of the resources we consume and consider their whole-of-life environmental footprint.

These issues are complex and important enough to have been included in the United Nations sustainable development goals through goal 12, sustainable consumption and production; goal 14, life below water; and goal 15, life on land. The ACT government is committed to reducing the prevalence of single-use plastic where practical and possible, and we are exploring opportunities to champion systemic change through education initiatives and the provision of water fountains across the city, where reusable water bottles can easily be refilled.

Single-use plastics, including, but not limited to, lightweight plastic bags, are an issue of both public and environmental concern. Given our ambition to work towards 90 per cent of our waste being diverted from landfill by 2025, a broader approach to single-use plastic is a logical approach. The ACT is not alone in grappling with these issues. Community concern has deepened around the impact of our traditionally linear economic model of taking resources, making products, using them and then throwing them away.

In particular, the community has a heightened awareness of the global environmental impact of single-use plastics. Many single-use plastic items like plastic cutlery, straws, coffee stirrers and plastic-lined takeaway coffee cups are used for a matter of moments before being discarded, potentially releasing toxins and damaging the environment as they decay.

In many parts of the world, single-use plastics are having destructive impacts on waterways and marine life. Security of our earth's resources and climate change are also cited as drivers in the efforts to curb single-use plastic consumption, given the petrochemical origin and non-renewable nature of fossil-based plastic production.

There are a number of steps that industry is already taking. I want to highlight the ambition of the packaging industry, led by the Australian Packaging Covenant Organisation. APCO, supported by government, has developed some of the world's most ambitious 2025 national packaging targets.

These targets are, first, 100 per cent of all Australia's packaging will be reusable, recyclable or compostable by 2025 or earlier; second, 70 per cent of Australia's plastic packaging will be recycled or composted by 2025; third, 30 per cent average recycled content will be included across all packaging by 2025; and, fourth,

problematic and unnecessary single-use plastic packaging will be phased out through design, innovation or the introduction of alternatives.

We welcome the approach by APCO, but all governments also need to be taking the lead in addressing single-use plastics. This includes strong national targets, actions or supporting strategies around issues like plastic pollution and resource recovery incentives. I will be encouraging my state and territory counterparts, as well as the Australian government to agree to actions to address single-use plastics under our new national waste policy framework.

We believe that more can be done to stem the flow of single-use plastics into landfill in the ACT, onto our landscape and into our waterways. Jurisdictions elsewhere have already started to take action. Last year the European Parliament voted to approve a measure to ban plastic cutlery and plates, cotton buds, straws, drink stirrers and balloon sticks, as well as other types of single-use plastics, including food and beverage containers. This follows the development of a European strategy for plastics in a circular economy adopted in early 2018.

In addition, the United Kingdom has also committed to eliminating avoidable plastic waste over the next several decades and to the removal of single-use plastic from central government buildings by 2020. The UK has also announced a new tax on produced or imported plastic packaging. Subject to consultation, this will apply to all plastic packaging that does not include at least 30 per cent recycled content.

Most recently, South Australia, which introduced Australia's first state-wide lightweight plastic bag ban in 2009, is considering potential step changes that could be made to address the impacts of single-use plastics and other single-use items on the economy, society and the environment. Last month, the South Australian Liberal government released a discussion paper titled "Turning the tide on single-use plastic products." We commend the consultative stance that South Australia is taking.

South Australia has recognised that there is a clear benefit in addressing the related issues of single-use plastic bags and other single-use plastics together. This is an approach that we support. So rather than consulting on altering the existing plastic bag ban as a stand-alone measure, I want the ACT community, businesses and industries to tell us how the ACT should address single-use plastics as well.

Why is it that the single-use plastic items that we have such as cutlery, straws or plastic-lined takeaway cups are still being used, especially when there are clear alternatives? We will consult with the community on banning these products or taking alternative regulatory or other measures. Initially, we plan to launch an information paper on moving beyond single-use plastics, including plastic bags, which will be developed in the coming months. This process will allow us to consider the feasibility of the commissioner's recommendations and the government's proposed options to curb the consumption, production and disposal of single-use plastic more broadly.

Madam Speaker, the time is right to go further. The ACT has the opportunity to take progressive action on problematic plastics, such as the action we are seeing in the EU, the UK, New Zealand and, even closer to home, here in South Australia. Doing

more also demonstrates our commitment to the national waste policy and the global shift toward a more circular economy. The time is right to ask some challenging questions and take stronger action to address the consumption of problematic and unnecessary single-use plastic.

The ACT government commends the commissioner for the report. We look forward to continuing work on considering the recommendations and the broader issue of single-use plastics with the Canberra community and updating the Assembly as we progress. I present the following paper:

Commissioner for Sustainability and the Environment Act, pursuant to subsection 21(2)—Unfantastic Plastic—Review of the ACT Plastic Shopping Bag Ban—Government response—Ministerial statement, 19 February 2019.

I move:

That the Assembly take note of the paper.

MS ORR (Yerrabi) (10.56): Across the globe we are seeing increasing environmental action aimed not only at combating the impacts of climate change but also improving the health of our environment. The EU is actively working to reduce carbon emissions produced by its member states and it is also committed to phasing out single-use plastics. India has committed to ridding its lands of single-use plastic by 2022, one of the farthest-reaching commitments to tackle the problem from any country. Singapore is halfway through an ambitious plan to turn their city state into a city within a garden, and most recently in the USA, Congress has considered a resolution calling for a green new deal to rapidly transition the country to a clean economy.

Where governments are not taking action or not doing enough we are seeing people take action. In the Netherlands a group of climate-conscious activists sued the government for not doing enough to cut carbon emissions, and closer to home in the last few weeks we have seen the NSW Land and Environment Court rule a mine proposed for the Hunter Region should not go ahead in part because of its social impacts and because it was not compatible with Australia's commitments under the Paris agreement. In short, now is not the time for talk; it is the time for action.

But this is not just about our environment; it is also about us. After all, our environment is what provides us with air, food and water and, to put it bluntly, it is what makes our existence possible. The better we sustain our environment the better it can sustain us.

ACT Labor has a long history of leading in climate action at the same time as building a fairer and more just society. By 2020 the ACT will be powered by 100 per cent renewable electricity and by 2045 we will be carbon neutral. We have brought in the plastic bag ban, we are undertaking the largest ever restoration of ACT waterways, and our Actsmart program is continuing to be a success with businesses and lower income households, among many other initiatives.

These are all actions to be proud of and I am proud to say that in the past two years I have further contributed to this action. Through my work in this Assembly I have called for reform of the ACT energy efficiency rating scheme, a trial of a virtual power plant and secured a commitment for the first single use plastic-free government event.

In the motion I moved in this Assembly in October last year, I called on the ACT government to continue to find meaningful and significant ways to reduce single-use plastic usage in the ACT, and I am pleased that Minister Steel and the ACT government are acting on this call. In 2019 I will be advocating for even more environmental action from ACT Labor and this Assembly; action that not only responds to the challenges of climate change but action that also looks to improve the health of our environment across a range of areas.

With this in mind I am pleased that Minister Steel will be releasing a discussion paper which will consider phasing out single-use plastic in the ACT. I appreciate that the minister has flagged a number of paths forward, including adopting the recommendations made by the commissioner for sustainability in her report. But faced with a mounting quantity of plastic waste that will last for generations, we need to take strong action.

Plastic pollution is harming our local waterways and causing greater damage to the world's oceans. We have all seen the images of animals strangled by milk container rings, suffocated by plastic bags or washed up dead on beaches after ingesting masses of plastic waste. There is also growing evidence that these discarded single-use plastics are harming us, with micro plastics filtering into our bodies via the food and water we consume. We cannot continue along the path of producing and consuming harmful single-use plastics, products we use for minutes—and sometimes even just seconds—that scar the earth for hundreds of years.

In response to Minister Steel's statement today I call on the ACT government to commit to phasing out single-use plastics that have a readily available and affordable alternative. I know constituents in my electorate and people right across Canberra are supportive of this call. I will be encouraging businesses, community groups and individuals to take part in consultation once the discussion paper is released.

Phasing out single-use plastic is a bold move but it is not unprecedented. Considerable work will need to be undertaken and behaviours will need to change. Ultimately, though, not only is it the right thing to do but we have no other choice; we have to look after our environment so our environment can look after us.

MR RATTENBURY (Kurrajong) (11.00): The Greens are pleased to hear that the ACT government is willing to take steps towards firm action to address the scourge of waste on our planet. As we all know, plastic is a wicked problem started long ago by generations before us who thought plastic was a revolutionary product and was a good use of easily available fossil fuel oil. At the time we marvelled at the ability to make things out of plastic—containers, bags, GLAD Wrap, straws, cutlery, plates, cups—you name it, it can probably be made from plastic. However, many decades later, we are instead trying to embark on a different plastic revolution, that of decreasing its use.

We know that there are whole islands floating in the Pacific Ocean made purely of plastic, and we can all see the amount of plastic we put in our landfill bins each week. We have increased knowledge of the presence of plastic in all corners of the globe and the extraordinary consequences it can have on our oceans. I remember in my time back in Greenpeace we were able to garner footage and were looking at evidence of toothbrushes in the middle of the ocean off the coast of Hawaii and literally hundreds if not thousands of miles from any coastline you could see entire briefcases. It is extraordinary the things you can see floating in the ocean. As Ms Orr remarked, these are often items that have been used for only a short time.

Many people are now doing their best to reduce their personal and household use of plastics. They have become aware of the situation and are thinking about what they can do. They are also trying hard to recycle their soft plastics, but now we see mountains of soft plastics building up in the supermarket recycling bins with not enough demand for post-consumer plastics to solve the problem. This goes to the very point of needing a revolution in both not using the plastics at all in the first place but also ensuring that we build the industries that can use recycled products that are available and ideally give them a second, third or many more lives.

The Greens would like to see this issue addressed at the root of the problem—both production and consumption of these plastics—in the first place. The minister's statement certainly does not give us any silver bullets; there really are not any when it comes to plastics. But it will help us set off together as a community to examine what we can all do differently.

I applaud the commitment by Australia's packaging sector to work towards completely phasing out non-recyclable packaging over the next few years. I understand they are also willing to work towards increasing the amount of recycled products used in their products. These are positive things, and I think there is pressure on the political decision-makers to get behind that.

Having attended a recent ministerial meeting on behalf of Minister Gentleman it is fair to reflect on the fact that in many ways the political discussion is behind the community and industry discussion. We need to not only catch up but also help apply pressure to set clear time lines and ensure this revolution is enabled, not stymied.

We still need to address the key issue of all the disposable plastics that are used on a daily basis and evaluate whether they could instead be replaced by a more sustainable option. In that vein Minister Steel made some comments about straws. I was really pleased with Actsmart launching the straws suck campaign. This has taken the approach of working with cafes, bars, restaurants and the like and was a bit of a test of the community's sentiment towards working on a voluntary basis. It is fair to say it was very well received. I was in a cafe just this morning that had on the counter steel straws available for individual sale, and people are increasingly using those. I was somewhere else in the last few days that served up paper straws.

There are clear and good alternatives and this effort is being well received. It highlights that the community in its various guises is ready for action, whether that is

the cafe and bar owners who want to play their part but also the punters who turn up to these venues. They know we need to do something different. We are in a place where we can take stronger and bolder steps to remove individual single-use plastics in our daily lives.

All members are aware of the many items we use regularly that could be replaced by a reusable, more sustainable option, and that is exactly the feedback we need to ensure that the government gets in response to the discussion paper that will be circulated. I think the community is up for it. People just want us to work hard to make sure that life remains practical and they can do the things they need to do. They are conscious of things like people with a disability and the particular needs they have and some of those other important practical considerations. But on the whole the community knows we can do better and can do more.

We are ready to have a mature conversation about whether we look at phasing out particular items, finding sustainable replacements or just doing things differently. That is the thing: there is no single answer; a range of strategies will need to be put in place. The Greens look forward to working with the government and the community on this issue because it will not solve itself. There needs to be drive, there needs to be leadership, and there need to be options available. But there is a huge amount we can do and that effort now will be a legacy we can be proud of and that future generations will thank us for.

We are starting to see proposals that we should burn plastics to get rid of them. Of course the consequences of that are the topic of a whole other speech. That is a terrible waste of resources, a potential source of pollutants and a really short-term fix. The people propagating that approach are just looking for a business-as-usual approach, and we need to go beyond business as usual.

I welcome the minister's statement today. We have some work to do but there is a real enthusiasm both in here and in the community to get on and get something done.

Question resolved in the affirmative.

Leave of absence

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

That leave of absence be granted to Ms Fitzharris for today and tomorrow due to illness.

Education (Child Safety in Schools) Legislation Amendment Bill 2018

Debate resumed from 29 November 2018, on motion by **Ms Berry**:

That this bill be agreed to in principle.

MR WALL (Brindabella) (11.08): In the absence of Ms Lee this morning, I will address this bill on behalf of the opposition. The bill can be broken down into three major sections. I will address each of them in turn. The major motivation for most of these changes came from the findings of the Royal Commission into Institutional Responses to Child Sexual Abuse, which has illustrated a number of possible weaknesses in the ACT's regulatory framework which this bill seeks to address by amending the ACT Teacher Quality Institute Act and the Education Act.

With the Teacher Quality Institute, or TQI, there has always been a requirement for a teacher to have a valid working with vulnerable people card at the time of registration with the institute. The bill addresses a minor loophole by ensuring that a valid working with vulnerable people registration must be maintained through the term of their registration with the TQI and that the teacher must inform the TQI of any suspension or lapse of their working with vulnerable people registration.

It also clarifies that the TQI is able at any time to exercise its power to cancel the registration of a teacher who has contravened the conditions of their registration or becomes incapable of performing a requirement of their duty. The bill also introduces a further obligation for employers of teachers to inform the TQI if the employer has a reasonable belief that a teacher's working with vulnerable people registration has been denied, has lapsed, or has had a condition applied to it.

The bill ensures greater communication of incidents with the TQI by allowing the institute to request information from an employer which may reasonably impact upon the institute's decision to register a teacher. Should any notification event occur, including disciplinary action, formal investigations or an employer cancelling the teacher's casual employment, the employer must inform the TQI.

The bill also amends the Education Act in two ways. It inserts a further provision for provisional registration, registration or renewed registration of a non-government school, by inserting a generalist clause requiring that any additional criteria set out in regulation must be complied with. The bill could be seen to allow a significant amount of regulatory freedom to the minister. Thankfully, the minister has provided the regulation to accompany this bill in part 4, that being that through their peak bodies, the Association of Independent Schools ACT and the Catholic Education Office of the Archdiocese of Canberra and Goulburn, non-government schools must work with the minister for education to implement the recommendations of the Royal Commission into Institutional Responses to Child Sexual Abuse.

The bill also introduces a regime to allow for the sharing of enrolment information across jurisdictions. In light of the royal commission's findings, the Director-General of the Education Directorate will be able to share the enrolment status of a child in the ACT with their counterparts from other jurisdictions, to prevent borders becoming a barrier to child safety.

This legislation is the first of its kind in the country and may become the model on which other states develop their own information-sharing structures. The opposition, and particularly Ms Lee, are pleased to say that in our consultations both the AIS and the CEO have expressed their eagerness to work with the minister and their

appreciation of the consultative efforts that have been shown in the drafting of this bill and the accompanying regulations.

In the opposition's briefing on this bill there were a number of areas for discussion which we hope that the directorate will be working towards post haste. Under the information-sharing provisions, it is necessary for the Director-General to be satisfied that the child has an understanding of the information being given, the reason it is being given, and who it is being given to. Exactly how the Director-General will satisfy themselves of this understanding is not clear at this stage. However, the opposition were assured that the directorate would be working on this, and we look forward to hearing what procedures are put in place on that as we move forward.

In the process of the opposition's consultations with stakeholders, we discussed the implications of the bill with both the Association of Independent Schools and the ACT branch of Catholic Education. Both meetings illustrated that the AIS and the CEO were happy to work with the minister to address issues arising out of the Royal Commission into Institutional Responses to Child Sexual Abuse. Our meetings with the directorate fleshed out why the broad wording has been introduced through regulation.

However, the opposition's discussions with the AIS did raise a possible difficulty that this bill might impose for principals of independent schools. The bill creates an obligation upon the employer of a teacher to inform the TQI of various changes in a teacher's registration status. Government schools and the Catholic education system will be affected differently, as their peak body is considered the employer of the teachers. However, due to their unique structure, each principal of an independent school will be obliged to make such reports. We bring this up to flag to the government the possible need for improved specificity around the definition of the employer of a teacher, to ensure that an undue burden is not placed on principals of independent schools.

Ms Lee's office was also concerned in examining the bill to note that there is no definition in the bill, the TQI Act or the Education Act as to exactly what "the employer of a teacher" means. Although there has not yet been an issue, the opposition would encourage the minister to consider defining this term in future amendments, as a broad interpretation could lead to other employers of part-time teachers being bound by the obligations under the bill regardless of their connection to the education sector.

In spite of these issues yet to be ironed out and minor definitional concerns, the Canberra Liberals will be supporting this piece of legislation. I commend the bill to the Assembly.

MR RATTENBURY (Kurrajong) (11.14): The Greens are pleased to support this bill, which improves the processes around information sharing and registrations to ensure that children in our schools are protected and kept safe. The ACT Greens recognise that, to get the best possible education, our children need the best possible teachers and great leadership from our principals. We respect the roles our teachers and learning assistants play in an increasingly complex school environment. While the

vast majority of teachers act with professionalism and care for their students, it is important that there are rigorous processes in place to investigate and respond to any allegations of inappropriate behaviour.

The bill tightens the requirements around teachers maintaining a current working with vulnerable people check so that a teacher's working with vulnerable people approval must remain current at all times and cannot lapse while the teacher is registered.

The bill also ensures that the Teacher Quality Institute can obtain information about a teacher where there may have been a breach of their conditions of registration. The new section clarifies that information can be provided to TQI during an investigation, not just when one is fully completed. This also includes situations where an investigation is started but not completed due to a person resigning. In these circumstances it is appropriate for TQI to be aware that an investigation was started, as it may be relevant to decisions about that person's registration, particularly if they choose to seek employment at another school.

Of course a decision to suspend or cancel a teacher's registration has serious consequences and should not be taken lightly. All people involved in an investigation must be afforded natural justice before any decisions are made. But this should not prevent the sharing of information and does not ease the burden on TQI to make robust, evidence-based and defensible decisions. I believe that the new provisions balance the rights of children to be protected with the right of an individual to fair process.

The rights of children and young people in the ACT must be protected and promoted. We have an obligation to provide a healthy, safe and sustainable environment for children and young people to live and thrive. The Royal Commission into Institutional Responses to Child Sexual Abuse showed some harrowing stories of what happens when this does not occur.

Through this bill the ACT government is continuing its commitment to implement the recommendations of the royal commission by addressing those recommendations that relate to non-government schools. The bill allows the minister to make regulations outlining the conditions and criteria that non-government schools must meet in order to be registered in the ACT. This includes addressing the child safe standards through their policies and procedures, as recommended by the royal commission.

The bill also implements recommendation 26 of the Glanfield inquiry, requiring that when a child is unenrolled from school and the school has had concerns about that child, the Education Directorate should confirm the move with the family and confirm enrolment in a new jurisdiction. Through this bill the Education Directorate can respond to a request for information about the enrolment status of a child from another jurisdiction. Again there are competing rights involved. The bill allows for the sharing of information while maintaining appropriate privacy protections.

The Greens support the continual review of ACT legislation to strengthen the human rights of children and young people, including protecting them from neglect, abuse and disadvantage. Our schools play a key role in providing supportive, caring learning

environments and in protecting the human rights of their students. This legislation strengthens the processes that keep children safe and ensures greater coordination across the system between the Education Directorate, TQI and both government and non-government schools. The Greens support these changes and are pleased to support the bill in the Assembly today.

MR PETTERSSON (Yerrabi) (11.18): There has been a lot of talk in this place lately about keeping children and young people safe. What is clear is that the government is getting on with the job. This bill is a further demonstration of our commitment to the safety and wellbeing of Canberra's students.

I am proud to support this bill. I would like to focus on two areas of the bill. The bill reinforces the government's commitment to driving change in response to the Royal Commission into Institutional Responses to Child Sexual Abuse by ensuring that the non-government education sector takes seriously and acts on its relevant recommendations. The ACT community expects the government to direct change in this area and, through amendments to the Education Act, the bill will ensure that the government has the necessary power to do so.

The bill provides for this by allowing regulations to supplement the criteria for registration as a non-government school and the conditions for maintaining registration. Children and young people are entitled to special protection because of their vulnerability to exploitation and abuse. We must give their safety and welfare a high priority. Education settings are built on trust and parents should have confidence that there are robust protections in place to safeguard their child at school.

My colleague Minister Berry has shown an unmistakable willingness to make change and work towards matters of principle on the basis of genuine dialogue with those affected. This bill is, of course, no exception. The approach in the bill was developed through a process of explicit consultation with the education sector. Using regulations will allow for ongoing implementation of the royal commission's recommendations over time and allow for sustained engagement, participation and collaboration with the non-government sector as implementation occurs.

Alongside implementation of the royal commission's recommendations, the bill leads among Australian jurisdictions in allowing for appropriate information sharing about a child or young person's enrolment status in the ACT. This amendment reflects findings of the Glanfield inquiry and other related reports.

It is an important amendment because schools are one of very few key contact points that children and young people must have with society outside their family. Schools provide system protection. This amendment will ensure that it is lawful to share information about a student unenrolled from a school across state boundaries where there are significant welfare concerns about the student. The framework for this in the bill is appropriately balanced by the right to privacy and the rights of the family.

Alongside these amendments, the bill continues our demonstrated commitment to the teaching profession in the ACT through amendments that support a robust teacher registration scheme. I join my colleagues in commending this bill to the Assembly.

MR GENTLEMAN (Brindabella—Minister for the Environment and Heritage, Minister for Planning and Land Management, Minister for Police and Emergency Services and Minister assisting the Chief Minister on Advanced Technology and Space Industries) (11.21): It gives me great pleasure to rise in this place as a member for Brindabella in support of this bill.

The bill furthers the protection of children and young people in schools by more clearly defining the roles and responsibilities of those that have a duty of care for them. This has been achieved in a number of ways. One way in which this bill provides better protection is in strengthening the current requirements around working with vulnerable people registration as a condition of teacher registration. Not only does the bill make it clear that it is the responsibility of the teacher to maintain their vulnerable persons registration; it also places an onus on the employer to take on more of a role in monitoring and passing on information about vulnerable persons registration of teachers within schools.

Through this bill the government is furthering its implementation of the findings of the Royal Commission into Institutional Responses to Child Sexual Abuse. This was an important royal commission, and I want to acknowledge the work of former Prime Minister Gillard in helping to set up this commission of inquiry.

The commission helped our nation to get an insight into the suffering of some of our most vulnerable citizens, providing a pathway forward and, importantly, allowing survivors and their families to have their voices heard. The territory government has accepted the findings of the commission, and I look forward to seeing progress being made.

This bill takes us a step forward in implementing the 19 recommendations of the commission relating to the non-government school sector. The recommendations of the commission concerned information sharing, record keeping, responses to incidents, child safety standards and complaint handling.

Specifically, the bill allows the non-government sector to have more clarity on what is required for registration of schools in the territory. This is achieved through the bill enabling the minister to make regulations that will set out what is required for registration, including what policies and procedures in relation to child safety should be in place. Implementing the recommendations of the commission must be a collaborative effort, and I am pleased that the bill provides a commitment to the non-government school sector from the ACT government to do just this.

The bill also enables the Education Directorate to share information about students in certain circumstances. Overall this is a commendable bill and I hope this place agrees to its passage.

As this bill relates to the education sector, I also want to take the opportunity to make a few remarks about the importance of education. Too often in this place we have negativity about the education sector and those who seek to teach and inspire our students. Every day our teachers inspire, care for and help children across the territory.

They are able to do this because of the work of our very hardworking Minister for Education and Childhood Development. It is this minister who fights for and delivers so much for our education sector.

The results speak for themselves. Our public education sector is first class and helps to prepare our students for the new world that is emerging. In my capacity as the Minister assisting the Chief Minister on Advanced Technology and Space Industries, I meet with academics across a range of fields and, time after time, I have heard stories of the inspirational things occurring in our public schools, how our students are some of the best prepared in STEM and other fields.

To all the hardworking teachers, I want to say thank you, and I commend this bill to the Assembly.

MS CHEYNE (Ginninderra) (11.26): I am also pleased to contribute to the debate on the Education (Child Safety in Schools) Legislation Amendment Bill 2018. While we will be hearing about the specifics of the amendments, I would like to speak about child safety more broadly, and I will also reflect on some of the important points raised in the explanatory statement.

As a human rights jurisdiction, the ACT is committed to protecting the rights of children and young people, including their right to special protection because of their vulnerability to exploitation and abuse. The issue has been highlighted with respect to family safety and child sexual abuse in a number of recent reports that my colleagues have touched on, including the *Report of the inquiry: review into the system level responses to family violence in the ACT* by Laurie Glanfield AM, the *Review of domestic and family violence deaths in the ACT* by the Domestic Violence Prevention Council, and, of course, the very important final report of the Royal Commission into Institutional Responses to Child Sexual Abuse.

The ACT government has responded strongly to the royal commission, in particular, and committed to addressing each and every recommendation from the Royal Commission into Institutional Responses to Child Sexual Abuse. As a provider of services to children and as a maker of public policy, the ACT government acknowledges its responsibility to ensure that children are properly cared for, and to protect them from violence, abuse and neglect by institutions who look after them.

The bill that was introduced by the Minister for Education and Early Childhood Development in November last year enhances the safety and protection of children and young people in our schools. I want to take a moment to acknowledge the minister for her strong leadership in this portfolio, for stepping up on important principles, and for taking mature, measured action, particularly in this area, where it is more than warranted.

When parents and carers send their children and young people to schools in the ACT they want to know that they are protected and that they are safe. They want to know that our schools are doing everything they can to meet the child safe standards. They want to know that teachers meet the appropriate registration requirements to be working with their children. They want to know that those who register our teachers

have access to all the information they need to make robust and well-informed decisions.

They also want to know that we take our duty of care towards their children and young people seriously, that we will take the time to follow up if we are concerned about a student who is unenrolled from a public school, and work with other jurisdictions to ensure that they have access to education.

As noted, the bill makes amendments to the Education Act and ACT Teacher Quality Institute Act, or the TQI Act, to make sure that these expectations are met. The ACT community can have confidence that this government and this minister are doing what is required to keep students safe at school.

The release of the recent reports that I mentioned before has highlighted the importance of ensuring that the youngest members of our community are protected and that schools are safe and secure environments for them. The ACT government is committed to implementing the recommendations of the royal commission and the Glanfield inquiry. The amendments in this bill will enable this important work to occur. Implementation of strengthened protections for children and young people in schools should not be negotiable. The bill makes sure they are not.

I note that experience with the operation of section 67 of the current TQI Act has shown that the process regarding the obligations on employers of ACT teachers to notify the institute in situations where there may have been a breach by a teacher of their conditions of registration has not necessarily always worked as it was intended. Since 2011 circumstances have occurred where a teacher employer has notified the institute of a situation fitting the requirement of reasonable grounds for believing the teacher has contravened a condition of registration but has not provided further information.

Some teacher employers also currently interpret section 67 as meaning employers can only provide information about a teacher once an investigation regarding that teacher is fully completed, including the report and giving the teacher the right of reply. On the basis of this interpretation, employers have not notified the institute about a teacher who is under investigation on the basis that they do not have reasonable grounds for believing the teacher has contravened a condition of registration. It is only when the investigation is totally finalised that employers believe they can form reasonable grounds that the teacher has contravened a condition of registration.

We also understand that instances in the history of the TQI Act have occurred where a teacher employer instigates an investigation, the teacher is informed and then resigns, the investigation is consequently terminated, and the institute is not notified. The institute has no information and is therefore unable to make a decision about the teacher's registration status. A possible result of the institute's lack of access to critical information is that the teacher who may pose a risk to children is free to work in another ACT sector or another jurisdiction.

The bill remedies these operational problems by making it clear to employers that notifying TQI at the beginning of a process examining a teacher's conduct is

authorised and codified under the provisions of the TQI Act and that they have a positive obligation to do so. I am sure that the minister will expand on some of the other very important amendments that are contained in this bill.

The changes brought by this bill provide the ACT government and the Education Directorate with the opportunity to work together with other agencies and service providers and, importantly, across sectors and jurisdictions. They also create the environment for genuine collaboration to implement the child safe standards, which can act as a springboard to continue the conversation about ways in which we can collaborate.

I note the scrutiny committee's report No 26, regarding their views on some instances in this legislation of privacy and reputation and right to the presumption of innocence, and I acknowledge that it appears that we have struck the right balance with these important provisions when considering human rights obligations.

As has been pointed out by other speakers today, this has been nation-leading work. Each improvement adopted through this bill will provide a strengthened environment to ensure the safety of children in our schools. I commend the bill today.

MS BERRY (Ginninderra—Deputy Chief Minister, Minister for Education and Early Childhood Development, Minister for Housing and Suburban Development, Minister for the Prevention of Domestic and Family Violence, Minister for Sport and Recreation and Minister for Women) (11.35), in reply: I am happy to have the chance to speak today on the debate on the Education (Child Safety in Schools) Legislation Amendment Bill, which I introduced to the Assembly in November last year. The ACT government intends to bring more clarity to the roles and responsibilities of people carrying a duty of care to children and young people in schools. We do this by making a number of key changes to both the ACT Quality Institute Act 2010 and the Education Act 2004.

Since becoming education minister, I have had a conversation with the community about what they wanted for the future of education in the ACT. Through this conversation, I heard that our community values education. I heard that our community values its teachers and school leaders. I also heard that our community had confidence in its schools, yet at the same time had ideas about how they could be even better. The ACT government is firmly committed to making sure schools are safe, and we are strengthening child safety in schools as we also work on nation-leading improvements to ensure the safety of teachers and other school staff.

The Royal Commission into Institutional Responses to Child Sexual Abuse made clear that all institutions should uphold the rights of a child. An important contribution to achieving this is through the implementation of the child safe standards identified by the royal commission. The royal commission also made clear that state and territory governments should require all institutions in their jurisdiction that engage in child-related work to meet the child safe standards.

The review into the system-level responses to family violence in the ACT by Laurie Glanfield AM made clear that there is a need for and opportunities to improve

information sharing, communication, trust and collaboration between agencies, service providers and across jurisdictions. For the ACT government, the safety and welfare of children and young people in our education system is paramount. This is why we listened to these reviews and why we are making changes.

This bill will provide more clarity about child safety in our schools and place the ACT on the front foot in creating solutions to these problems. As I have said, the bill amends two acts: the Education Act 2004 and the ACT Teacher Quality Institute Act. Through an amendment to the TQI Act, the ACT government will enhance the robustness of teacher registration decisions. This will be achieved by allowing the ACT Teacher Quality Institute to require a teacher employer to provide certain information to the institute to protect child safety and welfare.

The bill proposes amendments to the act that make it clear to employers that notifying the institute of investigations into a teacher's conduct or disciplinary action taken is authorised under the provisions of the TQI Act, and that they have a positive obligation to do so, as the outcome of these investigations can be relevant to a teacher's registration status.

The bill strengthens the requirements around working with vulnerable people registration as a condition of teacher registration through an amendment to the TQI Act. This ensures that teachers are required to always maintain a current working with vulnerable people registration if they wish to retain their teacher registration status, closing a loophole.

The bill also proposes an amendment to the Education Act which will commence work on the implementation of agreed recommendations of the royal commission in non-government schools. The bill enables regulations to be made to specify the criteria and conditions that non-government schools must meet in order to be registered as a non-government school in the ACT. This approach allows for ongoing implementation of the royal commission's recommendations over time and allows for sustained engagement and participation by the non-government school sector over the longer term.

Through an amendment to the Education Act, we will also enable the cross-jurisdiction sharing of information about children and young people in relation to their education in certain circumstances. This implements a recommendation of the Glanfield review and other reports so that when a child is un-enrolled from a school, and the school has had concerns about that particular child, the Education Directorate should confirm the move with the family and confirm enrolment in the new jurisdiction.

The ACT government is committed to working to share information with other jurisdictions, to ensure that children at risk stay safe and connected within the education system. We have stepped out first in making this amendment to our law to make it clear to other states and territories that we are ready to work with them on this important change. As the government's future of education policy is implemented, some big changes to our education system identified in it will be supported through

legislation. This important work has now begun, starting with a focus on child safety in our schools.

Madam Assistant Speaker, I want to acknowledge and thank a number of organisations and colleagues who have been engaged in the conversation leading to the development of this bill. I acknowledge and thank the Greens political party and the Canberra Liberals for their comments today on the bill as well as my own colleagues, Michael Pettersson, Mick Gentleman and Tara Cheyne, for their thoughtful comments about this bill and what it means for child safety in our schools. I want to acknowledge Coralie McAlister and the Education Directorate for all their work in developing this bill; the Australian Education Union, in particular Jacqui Agius and Patrick Judge, who provided valuable critical feedback during the development of this important bill; Anne Ellis and her team at TQI, including Michael Bateman and Jane Curnow; Ross Fox and the Catholic Education Office; and Andrew Wrigley of the Association of Independent Schools of the ACT.

I thank members for their support of this important legislation, and I commend the bill to the Assembly.

Question resolved in the affirmative.

Bill agreed to in principle.

Leave granted to dispense with the detail stage.

Bill agreed to.

Sitting suspended from 11.42 am to 2.00 pm.

Ministerial arrangements

MR BARR: In the continued absence of Minister Fitzharris, questions in the health portfolio will be taken by Mr Rattenbury, in the transport portfolio by Minister Steel and in the higher education portfolio by Minister Stephen-Smith.

Questions without notice

Taxis—regulation

MR COE: My question is to the Chief Minister and Treasurer. It is specifically in relation to the fine contribution and significant investments made by Canberra's taxi industry and its many owners. In September 2018, following the release of a government report titled *Evaluation of the 2015 innovation reforms to the on-demand transport industry in the ACT*, your government announced that it would release a further 142 plates to the taxi market. The value of existing perpetual plates is expected to fall to as low as \$45,000, if, indeed, buyers can be found. This is down from well over \$200,000 prior to the reforms. Chief Minister, given that the report that you commissioned clearly states that demand for taxi services has fallen, how can you justify releasing more than 100 plates to the market?

MR BARR: The government's primary interest is in consumers of transport services in the territory. We have a view, that would be very clearly shared by the overwhelming majority of Canberrans, that the taxi services in this city prior to reforms going back four or five years were not meeting the needs of consumers in terms of either the availability of service or the price of service. The government has, through a series of reviews, undertaken to improve on-demand transport and demand-responsive transport for Canberra residents and for visitors to our city. As part of that policy approach, we have also reflected the reality of new entrants into the marketplace and sought to regulate those appropriately. The government remains committed to a consumer-first approach to the delivery of on-demand transport services in Canberra.

MR COE: Chief Minister, will you meet with, look at or at least acknowledge the people in the gallery today and answer the question: why are you releasing more taxi plates in the ACT when there are dozens of licences left on the shelf?

MR BARR: The government recognises that this is an industry in transition, that there are a number of forces that are impacting upon what was previously a highly regulated, highly controlled market. No-one in this life is guaranteed a return on any capital investment and no-one is guaranteed a certain level of return on their investments in an industry in any context.

The government has as its primary focus the needs of consumers, the hundreds of thousands of people who need transport services. They come first for us. We are also particularly concerned about incomes for drivers of taxis and other on-demand transport forms. So our reforms have also been focused on ensuring that the costs of driving in the industry are reduced, the costs of leasing plates and participating in the industry are reduced. This is essential to ensure that consumers benefit, because the entire industry exists for consumers; not for capitalists, for consumers.

Members interjecting—

MADAM SPEAKER: Members, please!

An incident having occurred in the gallery—

MADAM SPEAKER: I also remind folk in the gallery, please, to refrain.

MISS C BURCH: Chief Minister, how can you continue to claim that your government stands for fairness and social inclusion when your government's policy has decimated the retirement savings of so many hardworking Canberrans?

MR BARR: The government remains focused on the interests of consumers of transport services in the ACT. No government can ever guarantee a return on investment for any investor in any area of capital investment.

Mr Wall interjecting—

MADAM SPEAKER: Mr Wall, enough!

MR BARR: We, like every other government, will assess conditions within an industry and we have not sold a taxi plate for decades. This government has never sold them. The last government to do so was back in the 1990s. We lease plates and we will lease plates in accordance with market conditions with a focus on consumers, the hundreds of thousands of people who utilise on-demand transport services, whether they are taxis, Ubers or other forms of hire car and taxi services. That will be our focus and that will remain our focus.

Canberra Institute of Technology—Woden campus

MS LE COUTEUR: My question is to the minister for suburban development and relates to the demolition of Woden’s CIT. The budget review says the demolition is for “the renewal of the site for future community and development uses”. Minister, what development and community uses are being considered?

MS STEPHEN-SMITH: I am taking this question, as Minister for Urban Renewal. I thank Ms Le Couteur for the question. It is absolutely too early to say. This budget measure is really about demolishing buildings on the site that include asbestos and hazardous materials, to ensure that they do not become subject to vandalism or a danger to the public.

MS LE COUTEUR: Minister, given that, will the community be given a say in terms of what uses are actually put on the site, and what land is retained for community use?

MS STEPHEN-SMITH: Absolutely.

Taxis—regulation

MISS C BURCH: My question is to the Chief Minister. Chief Minister, in discussions with the ACT Taxi Plate Owners Association at a formal meeting on 31 January 2019, the ACTTPOA were advised by your department that neither your cabinet nor your department undertook a regulatory impact statement or a triple bottom line assessment with regard to your decision to release 142 additional taxi plates. Why was neither of these undertaken?

MR BARR: The government has undertaken extensive research and evaluation of the transition away from a highly regulated market, a transition that began many decades ago and that has been the subject of numerous pieces of research work and engagement. I repeat: we remain focused on the interests of consumers. That is what the industry is about. Without consumers, there is no industry. Consumers must come first.

MISS C BURCH: Chief Minister, what detailed consideration was given to the economic and social impacts for existing taxi plate owners?

MR BARR: The evaluations looked at those issues and provided advice to government that government has followed.

MR WALL: Chief Minister, what do you have against hardworking families who invest their hard-earned money into providing services for local Canberrans? Will you implement a compensation scheme or a government buyback scheme as has occurred in other states and territories?

MR BARR: Nothing. And I will not be announcing government policy in question time.

Taxis—government assistance

MR WALL: My question is to the Chief Minister and Treasurer. Chief Minister, in 2015 your government introduced reforms to the taxi industry which have since resulted in the value of perpetual taxi plates falling from approximately a quarter of a million dollars, or \$250,000, to currently less than \$80,000. How many taxi plate owners have to lose their livelihoods before your government admits that you got the policy wrong?

MR BARR: The government's policy intent was to ensure that, as new entrants came into the marketplace with new technologies—something that is not unique to Canberra but has in fact been occurring around the world—there would be a regulatory response by this jurisdiction. We were in fact the first in the world to regulate the arrival of rideshare services before they commenced operations. The difference here, as opposed to every other market in the world, is that we regulated in advance.

Through that process we have seen, from a consumer perspective, the number of rides taken—taxi, Uber and other services—increase, because service levels have improved as a result of competition, and prices have fallen. Consumers must come first. There is no industry without consumers and there is no world in which government will guarantee a return on investment regardless of changing economic circumstances, regardless of changing technologies and changing service delivery methods. It is very straightforward. The government cannot and will not guarantee returns on people's investments in any industry.

MR WALL: Chief Minister, how can the government continue to defend a policy that you knew would destroy—and it has destroyed—the livelihoods of many Canberrans, all lost using ACT taxpayer dollars?

MR BARR: Because we support the interests of consumers, who were not being well served by the previous models, and because of the reality of change and innovation in service delivery. It is as straightforward as that. Uber was coming regardless. The industry had to adjust, and we sought to regulate the arrival of rideshare ahead of its commencement of operations. That is the difference between here and everywhere else. Again, no-one—no-one—is guaranteed a return on their investments by any government anywhere, and we are not going to entertain that here in the ACT.

MS CHEYNE: Chief Minister, how many perpetual plate holders actually reside in the ACT, and how many of those who bought their plate directly off the government fully recouped their investment?

MR BARR: I am advised now that there are 89 perpetual plate holders who are resident in the ACT. The ACT government has not sold a perpetual plate for some time; many decades, in fact. The ACT government has not been engaged in selling perpetual plates. But it would be fair to observe that over many years of operation in a highly regulated market there were significant returns to owners of perpetual plates through the lack of competition and a strangled, regulated market that did not serve the interests of consumers.

Mr Wall interjecting—

MR BARR: That is something that was changing, anyway, as a result of Uber's entry, and was being overwhelmingly demanded by consumers: by those hundreds of thousands of Canberrans who thought their taxi service was ordinary and by most of the visitors to the ACT who thought their taxi service was ordinary. It has improved dramatically as a result of competition and innovation, just as you would expect a properly functioning market to deliver. So for all of the catcalls of socialism from those opposite, we are seeing a market in operation and in markets there is not a guarantee of return on capital. Markets are competitive, and no government will ever guarantee a return on investment for the rest of time, particularly when there are so many forces impacting on a market, as is the case with on-demand transport.

Opposition members interjecting—

Ms Berry: Madam Speaker, a point of order.

Mr Coe interjecting—

MADAM SPEAKER: Resume your seat. Mr Coe!

Ms Berry: Seriously, I am sure that the people in the gallery here today are interested in hearing the Chief Minister's response. They might not agree with it but they are interested in hearing it. The continuous interjections by those opposite are interfering with them hearing the information that the Chief Minister is trying to provide.

MADAM SPEAKER: I remind members on my left that there has been a high level of interjection. When the minister is on his feet he should be heard in peace.

Gaming—poker machines

MS CHEYNE: My question is to the Attorney-General. Can the Minister give the Assembly an update on the government's work to reduce the number of poker machine licences in Canberra?

MR RAMSAY: I thank Ms Cheyne for the question. Certainly this government is demonstrating very clearly that we can reduce the number of gaming machine authorisations, we can achieve stronger harm minimisation and we can develop a stronger clubs sector all at the same time. That is because we know that our clubs are places that support their local communities through sport, through culture and through social connections, not primarily as places to gamble.

That is why last year we passed legislation to create an incentives packages for clubs, backed by a strong framework for reaching 4,000 gaming machine authorisations by 2020. I am pleased to say that all of the clubs that are required to surrender authorisations engaged with the government and took up the incentives. As of now there are only 4,012 gaming machine authorisations in the territory, down from 4,981 at April 2018. Every single club with 20 gaming machine authorisations or more participated in the program.

This government's view is that reliance on gaming machines as a primary source of revenue is clearly not sustainable. The ACT Liberals spokesperson for poker machines, Mr Parton, may shrug his shoulders and disagree, as he does in public, but his comments on this policy again have made clear that he does not see the importance of reducing the number of poker machines in the territory at all. This is not about helping people eat fewer chocolates; this is not about losing a bet at the races. Our policy is clear and is about engaging constructively, reducing gambling harm and strengthening our clubs all at the same time.

MS CHEYNE: Attorney, how is the government able to achieve such a high level of participation by clubs in the incentives package?

MR RAMSAY: I thank Ms Cheyne for the supplementary question. From the outset, this government focused on transparency and good faith engagement with the clubs. We engaged Neville Stevens AO both to develop recommendations for incentives and also to help clubs make decisions about taking up a package. His work resulted in an independent report to government on how to achieve 4,000 authorisations and independent advice to clubs about how to engage.

An independent and transparent framework for this incentives package meant that clubs could make decisions with full information and with certainty. This government provided clubs with the exact number of authorisations that they would have to surrender last August, along with the dollar value of incentives for doing so voluntarily. We also published a clear time line for the process. Our legislation, introduced and passed last year, met those commitments precisely.

This government values its partnership with the clubs and with the community. We have worked closely with the industry, with community advocates, with unions and with individuals who have lived experience of gambling harm to develop these reforms. On the basis of our shared commitment to reducing gambling harm, and through our clear vision for supporting clubs, we enabled them to deal with us from a position of trust and confidence. The results have been, and will continue to be, fantastic for this community.

MR PETTERSSON: Minister, how will this package of reforms help clubs be less dependent on poker machine revenue into the future?

MR RAMSAY: I thank Mr Pettersson for the supplementary question. A key feature of our incentives package was to promote opportunities for income diversification through redevelopment. That is why the value of offsets for new land-related work was prioritised over cash in the package.

Mr Coe: Why don't you give incentives to taxi plate owners? You give compensation to poker machine owners but not to taxi plate owners.

Mr Wall: He's got a conflict of interest when it comes to a club, hasn't he?

MADAM SPEAKER: Mr Coe and Mr Wall, you've been asked to stop interjecting.

MR RAMSAY: Yet again we hear from the Canberra Liberals their absolute lack of interest in reducing the impact of gambling harm and helping clubs to be vibrant and supported as they move—

Mr Coe: If the Labor Party operated taxis they might have got a better deal.

Mr Wall: How much money are you putting into the CFMEU and the Labor Club's coffers?

MADAM SPEAKER: Mr Coe, Mr Wall, one more time and you will be warned.

MR RAMSAY: Again: no interest in supporting clubs, no interest in supporting community, no interest in helping people move away from gambling harm. Canberra deserves so much better from the Canberra Liberals.

Access to this support will make it easier for clubs to appropriately redevelop their land to create new revenue opportunities that will reduce their reliance on gaming machine revenue. We are going to be doing more to support clubs, of course. This year the government will be creating a diversification support fund for clubs. We'll be providing training for staff, executives and board members of clubs to improve the capacity of clubs to develop and operate new businesses. This measure will work hand in hand with the incentives that have already been made.

I am pleased to see that our clubs are engaging so positively with the government to reduce the number of gaming machine authorisations, to strengthen the harm minimisation framework and to provide even better services to the community. We know that Canberra clubs are here for the sake of the community. We will assist them to do that and to build a strong, vibrant club sector and a strong, vibrant community.

Opposition members interjecting—

MADAM SPEAKER: Before I call Mrs Kikkert, members, no interjections, please.

Taxis—government assistance

MRS KIKKERT: My question is to the Minister for Business and Regulatory Services. Minister, in 2015 your government introduced reforms to the taxi industry which have since resulted in the value of perpetual taxi plates falling from approximately \$250,000 to less than \$80,000. Following your announcement of an additional 142 taxi plates, these values are expected to fall further, to around \$45,000, while these new plates are expected to raise additional revenue of \$710,000 a year for government. Why are you allowing small business owners to go broke while the government reaps the benefits?

MR RAMSAY: It is important to make sure that the information that is before the Assembly is correct. Twice today, the Canberra Liberals have quoted incorrect numbers. By doing that, I fear that they have guided the Assembly into a space that is neither accurate nor helpful for us considering this matter, including the matter for tomorrow. Twice now, they have said that we have released 142 additional taxi licences into the market. That is not true. What we have done is increase the regulated cap by that amount. The number of licences—

Opposition members interjecting—

MADAM SPEAKER: Members!

Mrs Jones: Point of order, Madam Speaker.

MADAM SPEAKER: Point of order, Mrs Jones

Mrs Jones: On relevance, the question was why he is allowing small business owners to go broke, not why he thinks our interpretation of data is a bit different from his.

MADAM SPEAKER: There is no point of order. He is answering the question on the policy. And on a point of order, I have called members on my left to order and called on them not to interject a number of times. Perhaps you could consider that point of order, Mrs Jones.

MR RAMSAY: Continuing to correct the opposition, what happened is that there are 80 that have been or will be released into—

Mrs Dunne: Point of order. The standing orders require that the minister answering a question be directly relevant to the question. The question was: “Why have you allowed small business owners to go broke?” We are not talking about 80 or 142; we are asking about the policy effect of causing people to go broke. I ask you to require the minister, under the standing orders, to be directly relevant to the question or sit him down.

MADAM SPEAKER: The time has expired.

MRS KIKKERT: Minister, given that a regulatory impact statement or a triple bottom line assessment was never completed, what then informed your decision not to provide compensation or a buy-back scheme?

MR RAMSAY: As has already been indicated by the Chief Minister, there was the report on the evaluation of the reforms that was received in early 2018. That report and its associated analysis are available on the your say website. I am sure that we will be continuing this debate, this conversation, tomorrow in the debate on the substantive motion on this matter that has already been lodged.

The government has undertaken extensive industry and community consultation. It undertook extensive research and analysis prior to the reforms to determine the full range of the potential impacts to stakeholders, noting, of course, that the primary focus of this government is the increased number of people who are using on-demand transport, not only those who are using taxis but also those who are using a whole range rideshare services.

We note that there has been a significant increase. There is a new cohort of people who are using on-demand transport. That has been a key part of our focus. What we will continue to do is a range of ongoing policy work that benefits consumers, those people who are here, the significantly increasing number of people living in the ACT and the substantially increasing number of people who are travelling to the ACT.

We have, as has also been noted in this chamber a number of times, arranged, as this is an industry in transition, for people to receive access to counselling through the Woden Community Service.

MR COE: Minister, what changes to regulations or policies did you make in response to the consultation that you had with taxi owners?

MR RAMSAY: I met with taxi owners on a number of occasions throughout the process as well as meeting with a range of other organisations, a range of other individuals. So too did government more broadly. This was all part of the consideration as we worked through the reforms. I again refer Mr Coe and others to the report on the evaluation that is available on the website.

Mr Coe: On a point of order, on relevance, the question was specifically: what changes to policy or regulations did he make in relation to the consultation? He cited consultation in his response to the first supplementary question. I think it is reasonable that he answer the question.

MADAM SPEAKER: In the time you have left you may want to outline any changes that you made.

MR RAMSAY: I refer to the position that we are in at the moment and the position that we were in beforehand. They are the changes that were made.

Taxis—regulation

MR HANSON: My question is to the Minister for Business and Regulatory Services. Minister, the government report titled *Evaluation of the 2015 innovation reforms to the on-demand transport industry in the ACT*, released in September 2018, showed that demand for taxi services has declined and demand for taxi licences has remained static. Following the release of this report, you announced that the government would release further plates to market. Given this analysis, why did the government not choose to pursue taxi industry policies that would ensure that owners and operators remained profitable?

MR RAMSAY: I note that the reforms that have been implemented, the reforms made on the basis of the evaluation, have always been on the basis of ensuring that we have a strong, vibrant and diverse on-demand transport industry. We have said that that is an important part of the industry. It is a matter of ensuring that that is available not only to consumers. As the Chief Minister has also commented today, we wanted to make sure that those people who are operating the taxis, the drivers of the taxis, are able to do so in an increasingly deregulated space. We wanted to make sure that we were careful with that. We did so, and we will continue to do so.

MR HANSON: My supplementary question to the minister is: why will you not admit that your decision to release additional taxi plates is simply a revenue raising measure?

MR RAMSAY: Because it is not.

MR COE: How many people, such as Antonia, Ado, Sok, Stanley and William, and the dozens of other people here, have to lose their livelihoods and their life savings before your government finally acknowledge that they are the cause of the harm?

An incident having occurred in the gallery—

MADAM SPEAKER: I say to our good community folk in the gallery, there is to be no noise, thanks.

MR RAMSAY: The ongoing reforms are for the overall benefit of Canberrans. We have made that very clear. We note, as the Chief Minister has said, that the government has not sold any perpetual plates since 1995. The evidence is also clear, on the basis of the evaluations that have been done, that any person who has owned a plate since 2005 has already received a positive return on their investment.

Economy—outlook

MR PETTERSSON: My question is to the Chief Minister. Chief Minister, what is the ACT's economic outlook for 2019, and how does this compare with the national outlook?

MR BARR: Last year our economy grew by four per cent, which was the fastest growth rate of any state or territory in Australia. It builds on nation-leading growth in recent years, bringing the real economic growth for the territory over the three years to June 2018 to 12 per cent. Over the same period, real gross state product per capita has also grown, rising 5.6 per cent to \$94,831.

This demonstrates that, as our population grows and our economy grows, we are becoming materially better off. This growing prosperity is an important part of the government's economic growth and diversification agenda. This year, the ACT is projected to continue to grow significantly above the national rate, with economic growth at 3.5 per cent and jobs growth around two per cent.

At a time when much of the national and international economic commentary is focused on emerging risks and uncertainties, it is important that we keep an eye on what happens nationally and internationally. But it is also important that we recognise the good position that the ACT is in because of our increasingly diverse, services-driven economy, the strength of our economic growth outlook for the year ahead and the opportunities that this will create for Canberrans to find a good job and to get a pay rise in 2019.

MR PETTERSSON: Chief Minister, which sectors have seen particularly strong growth in recent times and are projected to contribute strongly to the ACT's growth and job creation going forward?

MR BARR: On a per capita basis the ACT is now Australia's leader in service exports. We are home to around 1.7 per cent of Australia's population but we are now exporting 2.5 per cent of Australia's service exports. Over the last decade service exports from Canberra have grown by more than 150 per cent, as we have been engaged in a very active promotion of what our city has to offer international markets.

This growth has been particularly strong in two sectors: education and tourism. International education is Canberra's largest export and generated \$977 million for our economy in 2017-18, which is an increase of more than 100 per cent over the past five years. This is leading to the creation of many more high-wage jobs in our city and around one in 10 Canberrans are employed in the education sector.

Our tourism sector is currently the second fastest growing in Australia, after our friends in Tasmania, and we are experiencing an all-time record level of both domestic and international visitors to our city. Some time ago we set the target of achieving \$2.5 billion in overnight visitor expenditure in the ACT by 2020 and total annual overnight visitor spending is now at \$2.37 billion. So we are on track to achieve this goal.

The ACT government has supported and championed the growth of these service export sectors, along with the broader service sector more generally, because we know that a more diverse economy is a more resilient one and one that will continue to create more good jobs for Canberrans.

MS CODY: Chief Minister, the construction sector is a major contributor to the ACT's economy and employs thousands of Canberrans. What is the outlook for this important sector in 2019?

MR BARR: The construction sector is set for a period of strong activity through 2019. There is an extensive pipeline of both private and public sector projects and ongoing growth in residential construction. It all contributes to a positive outlook.

In last week's budget review we updated the government's own capital program, which now includes over \$2.8 billion worth of infrastructure projects to be delivered over the next four years, including \$753 million this year alone. We are getting on with the construction of the new health, education, transport and community infrastructure that our fast-growing city needs, thus supporting good local jobs in the process. The latest monthly data shows that residential building approvals are up more than 35 per cent compared to the same time last year. This is the strongest result nationally, particularly worth noting at a time when approvals fell by 22½ per cent nationally.

Although we have seen a record period of residential approvals and building across Canberra in recent years, it is clear that our strong economic fundamentals, like employment and population growth, are providing the foundation for continued growth of the construction sector in our local economy. Workers and business owners in the construction sector can look forward to the year ahead with more confidence and optimism than their counterparts elsewhere in Australia because our local market continues to perform strongly.

Taxis—government assistance

MS LAWDER: My question is to the Minister for Seniors and Veterans. Minister, Narelle and her husband invested in five ACT taxi plates to fund their retirement. Now, after her lifetime of work, three of Narelle's plates are on the shelf and virtually worthless because your government has flooded the taxi plate market. Narelle has had her income reduced by over 75 per cent in just 12 months and now has to continue working at the age of 75. Minister, what do you have to say to Narelle?

MR RAMSAY: I thank Ms Lawder for the question. Before I come to the details of the question, I want to deal with the premise of the question. It is based on a flawed premise, which is that there has been a flooding of the market. That is not true. There has been a gradual release of extra taxi plates into the market over a number of years. It is important for there to be accuracy on that.

For people affected by the transition there has been some impact and, again, I draw people's attention to the counselling and support services that the government is providing through Woden Community Service.

MS LAWDER: Minister, what do you have to say to the dozens of Canberrans who have lost more than 75 per cent of their retirement income as a direct result of your government's taxi plate policies?

MR RAMSAY: Again, I note that for people who are affected through this transition there is support that is being provided. I refer them to that.

MISS C BURCH: Minister, what will you do, as minister for seniors, for the dozens of senior Canberrans who saved for their retirements by investing in the ACT transport industry?

MR RAMSAY: Again, echoing the words of the Chief Minister earlier on, it is not the position of the ACT government to be guaranteeing any particular investment. It is certainly not our position to do that. I refer people to the Woden Community Service.

Taxis—government assistance

MRS DUNNE: My question is to the Minister for Justice, Consumer Affairs and Road Safety. Minister, for decades the ACT government has encouraged private investment in the ACT taxi sector, with auctions and the direct sale of perpetual plates. Has the ACT government misled Canberrans who own taxis, like Ibrahim and Sok, who have acted in good faith by investing in this government's regulated industry?

MR RATTENBURY: I do not believe so. I believe that this industry has been in a state of flux for some considerable period of time. As the Chief Minister has outlined, the ACT government has not released a perpetual plate since 1995. Since that time there has been a steady number of reviews, regulatory reform considerations and the like, as well as external forces well beyond the control of the government, that have reshaped this industry. I think that owners and potential investors have had a series of points of information and external reference points to consider in weighing up their investment options.

MRS DUNNE: Minister, why did you support the government implementation of these substantial changes, which had a potential social and economic impact on people like Bobby, David and William and which may amount to tens of millions of dollars to that community, without ensuring that there was a proper cabinet process involved?

MR RATTENBURY: I think the very premise of Mrs Dunne's question is not the case. As outlined earlier by both the Chief Minister and the Attorney-General, there have been extensive reviews, there have been economic papers commissioned by the government and the matters did go before cabinet in the normal way.

MISS C BURCH: Minister, what do you say to the dozens of Canberrans who have lost more than 75 per cent of their retirement income as a result of this ACT government's policies?

MR RATTENBURY: I can say that the government is giving careful consideration to the competing interests here. We need to ensure that we deal with the changing shape of the on-demand transport industry; we need to ensure that we deal with the needs of consumers, particularly with the significant increase in both the population of

Canberra and tourism numbers; and we need to try to ensure that there is clear information available to all of the people with various interests in this discussion.

Taxis—government assistance

MRS JONES: My question is to the Minister for Justice, Consumer Affairs and Road Safety. Minister, in December 2018 you were provided by ACTTPOA with a detailed report and evidence of massive social and economic impacts to these small business owners in the ACT taxi industry. Despite your commitment both to review the material and to meet with the representatives in January 2019, you denied the meeting with the ACTTPOA and proceeded to support the government's policy that issued 30 new ACT government taxi plates. Why did you refuse the meeting?

MR RATTENBURY: As Mrs Jones has outlined, I did meet with the ACTTPOA in December and we had a number of discussions then. At that time, the government had already indicated its intent to issue a series of taxi plate licences—80, not the 142 the opposition has claimed. It was 80. We had given an indication of a time line for that.

In light of the meeting I had with the Taxi Plate Owners Association, I further considered the material, and the date of release of some of those plates did take a bit longer as I sought to review some of that material. To go to Mrs Jones's question directly as to why I did not take the second meeting in January, in the intervening period I was threatened with legal action by the Taxi Plate Owners Association. On legal advice, I declined to take a further meeting.

MRS JONES: Minister, will you now meet with taxi plate owners like Ibrahim, Sok, Simeon, Bozna, Antonia and Ado?

MR RATTENBURY: As I outlined in my previous answer, given the circumstances that have now been forming and the threats of litigation, I have been advised that those meetings should not take place.

MISS C BURCH: Minister, will you apologise to the taxi plate owners who are sitting in the gallery today for knowingly misleading them into thinking that you stand for fairness and social justice when you continue to support a government policy that is neither fair nor just?

MR RATTENBURY: All I can say is that we have thought about these matters very carefully. These are not black and white matters; they are difficult matters to work through. I have thought about this quite carefully and we are trying to proceed in a way that takes into account the range of interests that are present in this debate.

Mr Steel: Point of order, Madam Speaker. In her question, Miss C Burch used the word "misleading" in reference to Minister Rattenbury. I understand that that is unparliamentary language. I ask her to withdraw.

MADAM SPEAKER: I will review *Hansard* on it, but it is my understanding that the premise was about misleading the taxi community, which is within the scope of being

a right question to ask, rather than an individual member misleading the Assembly. I will check *Hansard* just to be sure.

Taxis—government assistance

MR PARTON: My question is to the Chief Minister. Chief Minister, do taxi owner-operators like Stanley, who is with us today, deserve to lose hundreds of thousands of dollars simply because they trusted the ACT government?

MR BARR: As I have indicated on numerous occasions during this line of questioning from the opposition, there is no guarantee of investment return in any industry. No government will ever, or can ever, give that guarantee.

Mr Wall interjecting—

MADAM SPEAKER: Mr Wall.

Mr Wall interjecting—

MADAM SPEAKER: Mr Wall, you are now warned.

MR BARR: It remains a fact that this government has not sold any perpetual taxi licences—none. It has not sold any.

Mrs Jones: It's released more.

MR BARR: We have not sold any—absolutely none.

MR PARTON: Chief Minister, was Stanley wrong to put his trust in ACT government regulations?

MR BARR: Everyone who makes an investment decision based on a perception that government policy or circumstances in a market will never change would not be making an astute investment because everything changes all of the time in almost every industry ever in the history of the world. There is no guarantee on any investment. There cannot be, because circumstances change, and this industry is no different from hundreds of other industries around the world over the history of time where things have changed. The devaluation of a taxi plate licence to the extent that that is a real phenomenon in the market is impacted by so—

Mrs Dunne: Turn around and ask them whether it is a real phenomenon.

MR BARR: You are asking me to breach the standing orders, Mrs Dunne, and not address the chair. You are the standing order Nazi—Mrs Dunne is—all the time.

Mrs Dunne: On a point of order, Madam Speaker; two points of order—

MR BARR: I withdraw. Mrs Dunne is fastidious about standing orders.

Mrs Dunne: I take the point that the Chief Minister has withdrawn the term “Nazi” but, on a separate point of order, the standing orders require that the chair be addressed, that you do not talk to a member opposite. It does not require you to specifically have your eyes locked on the chair at all times.

Opposition members interjecting—

MADAM SPEAKER: Thank you, Mrs Dunne. But the standing orders are very clear on interjections. Let us be clear on that one. To my left: how about no further interjections?

Mr Parton interjecting—

MADAM SPEAKER: You are warned, Mr Parton. That was unnecessary, frivolous, cheeky and certainly not in character. Perhaps in character. Chief Minister.

MR BARR: Thank you, Madam Speaker. There can be no guarantee in any industry. And this government has not sold a perpetual taxi licence. It is as simple and straightforward as that. There are many factors that will impact on the value of people’s investments in many industries. But in the end, as I have indicated, the government’s priority is consumers because in the end there is no industry without consumers.

MS CODY: Chief Minister, given that Uber was entering the market regardless—

Ms Lawder: I raise a point of order, Madam Speaker.

MADAM SPEAKER: On the preamble?

Ms Lawder: Yes.

MADAM SPEAKER: I was about to stop Ms Cody and ask her to go straight to the question. There is no preamble in a supplementary question.

MS CODY: What work did the government undertake to assist transition while protecting consumers?

MR BARR: There was a considerable amount of work prior to the entry of Uber into the ACT market. That included significant regulatory changes and the reduction of ACT government fees for those operating in the industry, as well as the application of regulation to Uber in the ACT that did not occur in other parts of Australia.

But there is the simple fact that that competition was coming and that competition was only coming, and would only be utilised, because of the high levels of dissatisfaction from consumers. If there had been no problem at all with our taxi service prior to Uber’s introduction, no-one would have used Uber. But people do, because they believe they get a better service. That is the market operating.

The government is not in a position to hold back the tide of global events as they relate to on-demand transport industries. It is as simple and straightforward as that. We have put in place a series of measures to appropriately regulate the entry of a new form of transport and a new on-demand transport operator and, indeed, others, into the marketplace. But we cannot and will not provide an investment return guarantee for anyone who bought a licence from the ACT government in the last century. We cannot and will not do that.

Taxis—government assistance

MR MILLIGAN: My question is to the Minister for Business and Regulatory Services. Does the ACT government have a philosophical or ideological objection to providing compensation to the taxi industry?

MR RAMSAY: As part of the evaluation and looking at broader matters, it was considered whether people would have some form of compensation or some sort of buyback. The evaluation and the evidence—and the government agrees with the evidence-based evaluation—indicated that individuals who purchased their licences from the government from 1995 and who held on to them will have achieved full return on their investments.

Further, the CIE report indicates that around half of the licences have not changed hands since 1995. On the basis of the evidence, the government has not decided to proceed with a buyback.

MR MILLIGAN: Minister, why is the ACT government providing compensation incentives for poker machine owners but treating the taxi industry completely differently?

MR RAMSAY: Again there are so many false premises in the questions that are being asked today. There is not compensation being provided regarding gaming machine authorisations. We are working closely on this. I presume that the opposition paid attention—they do not always pay attention to the answers to questions—and I hope that they noticed, in the answer to a question that I was asked today, that it is an incentive scheme to help people to diversify their income away from a reliance on gaming machine authorisations. We have continued to do that. We are working very closely with clubs. I am proud of the way that we are working with them so that we have a strong, vibrant clubs sector. We also believe that having a vibrant and strong on-demand transport sector is important, and we are working with that sector, given that they are quite different matters. Given that the clubs are a not-for-profit industry, given that the taxi plate owners—

Opposition members interjecting—

MR RAMSAY: It is not our role to guarantee business income.

MR COE: Minister, if the test is whether the capital has been repaid, why is it that you are providing \$12,000 to \$25,000 for poker machine licences that also probably have been repaid in full?

MR RAMSAY: The Canberra Liberals: grabbing selective quotes as they are wont to do. I note that part of the test in relation to the taxi plate owners, a for-profit industry, is on the basis of the evidence-based evaluation, which is available for people to see. I refer the—

Opposition members interjecting—

Mr Gentleman: Madam Speaker—

MADAM SPEAKER: Point of order?

Mr Gentleman: You have warned both Mr Wall and Mr Parton. Mr Wall continues to interject across the chamber after you have warned him. I ask that the member be named.

Mrs Jones interjecting—

MADAM SPEAKER: Members on my left, including Mrs Jones, please be careful of how you interject. Mr Wall, the next time you will be warned and you will be named. You have been warned. Mr Parton, I suggest that you refrain from any further contributions.

MR RAMSAY: Again, I simply draw attention to the fact that this government works on evidence-based policy. We do that. It is important for us to have a chance to make that clear here. We will work on the evidence that is here. The evidence that is here in relation to on-demand transport is the CIE report. It is available for people. The evidence in relation to the clubs and the gaming machine authorisation incentives was provided in relation to the specific report that was provided through Neville Stephens. We will continue to work with the evidence.

Housing—affordable home ownership

MS CODY: My question is to the Minister for Housing and Suburban Development. Minister, in a growing city such as Canberra, where our economy is one of the strongest in the country and we experience very low unemployment rates, how does the ACT government forward-plan and supply land for residential development?

MS BERRY: I thank Ms Cody for the question. As members will know, there is a significant amount of planning and analysis that goes into the forward planning of land supply for current and future Canberrans. The work is complex. It requires considerable analysis, and it does take many years to complete.

I can confirm that it is not just a matter of driving down a street and identifying an empty paddock. Included in the required analysis, as we did with Tuggeranong in site identification prior to 2016, the government speaks to the community to find out what they think before final decisions are made. In the case of west Tuggeranong, by way of a reminder, the government went further, and established a community panel, which determined that urban development in the area was not supported.

As a government we talk to the community, as we have done with Molonglo, as we have done with west Belconnen and as we have done with Gungahlin. There is a range of different things that happen to supply land for residential development. To facilitate the development of land for residential purposes, due diligence processes mean that it can take many years to undertake further planning and environmental studies to satisfy both the commonwealth government and the ACT planning authority; and, of course, there is engaging with the Canberra community.

Once the work is completed, the government can start to look at developing the area of land, which, again, has a significant lead-in time to being sale-ready. As members will know, there is a detailed process through the planning authority to get a suburb approved, as is appropriate, and then sell the blocks to buyers. At that stage, when it is sold, it is sold in a number of different ways to the buyer, which now includes an option for buyers to go in and get it over the counter.

As reflected in the ACT housing strategy released in October last year, I remind members that the first objective is to model and publish housing supply and demand projections—*(Time expired.)*

MS CODY: Minister, what are the different ways that Canberrans can choose to purchase land in the ACT?

MS BERRY: There are a number of ways. At the moment there is a lot of land in the pipeline to be sold in a range of ways to prospective buyers from both private sellers and the ACT government. It is important to remind members that it is not only the government that hold the levers of land sales. At this time there are some 20,460 greenfield dwelling sites in the planners' pipeline, over 9,300 dwelling sites in the developers' pipeline and more than 6,000 dwellings in the builders' pipeline.

Sometimes, depending on the location or development type, the government decides to develop through a joint venture arrangement as we have done in west Belconnen and in the past with Crace and Forde. Sometimes it is sold as englobo, a whole area or suburb to a developer, as is the case in Denman Prospect and Lawson, and sometimes the government develops the land for release to the community through a range of sale methods such as auction or tender.

In terms of pipelines, private developers will make decisions, usually based on market conditions, on what they might release or construct at any time. But I also want to remind members that that land is also available over the counter. Currently there are 396 single residential blocks available for sale over the counter from the Suburban Land Agency. These blocks are available in Taylor, Throsby, Coombs and Wright.

An objective of the four-year indicative land release program is to make sure that enough residential commercial, mixed use, industrial and community land is released to the market to cater for the city's growth. It is a simplistic assessment to say that raising prices is all we do in our land release. Through all of the work that has been done with the community to develop the housing strategy over the past decade, we have delivered all these initiatives through previous affordable housing strategies as well as new ones in the current strategy.

MR PARTON: Minister, has the government absolutely ruled out future residential development in west Tuggeranong and Kowen Forest?

MS BERRY: I refer the member to my first answer. There was significant feedback from the community, as well as analysis that was done by the government, that, at this time, there are no plans for development in those areas.

Drugs—pill testing

MS ORR: My question is to the Chief Minister. Chief Minister, why is the ACT government supporting pill testing at the Groovin the Moo festival?

MR BARR: I thank Ms Orr for the question. The government is determined to reduce the negative health and social consequences associated with the use of drugs, for the user, for their families and for the wider community. Drugs are dangerous and illegal. Our clear message is that people should not take them. But we recognise that people do take drugs, and they will continue to, no matter what their parents or the government say. The government is going to do as much as it can to stop the senseless loss of life of our young people and the devastation caused to too many families by one stupid mistake.

Following the work of Minister Fitzharris to assess the proposal, the government has decided to support a further pill testing trial at the upcoming Groovin the Moo music festival in April. The trial will be run by Pill Testing Australia. We were the first jurisdiction to run a pill testing trial in Australia, at the same festival last year, with dozens of potentially lethal pills discarded following testing. This can save lives on the day and give people another opportunity to make the right decision.

This is the last line of defence. We recognise that it is not a silver bullet, but it is one more important step to protect Canberrans. We will not be jeopardising their lives to make a political point. This is a sensible, structured and thoroughly assessed testing process. The data that came out of the first pilot was incredibly informative for our health and emergency services in the event that someone does fall ill at one of these festivals.

MS ORR: Chief Minister, what other harm minimisation strategies is the government pursuing?

MR BARR: The government's drug strategy action plan outlines 43 actions to tackle harms from alcohol, tobacco and other drugs. The action plan is based on three pillars of harm minimisation: demand reduction, supply reduction and harm reduction. We are willing to explore and implement innovative ways to save lives and we are willing to engage in a political debate, particularly with those opposite, if it means that more people do not take drugs or are able to get healthy outside of the criminal justice system.

To prevent and reduce fatal and near fatal overdoses, including those associated with pharmaceuticals, we plan to address and expand access to Naloxone and access to opioid maintenance treatment. We are investigating the feasibility and effectiveness of

establishing a medically supervised injecting facility in the ACT. We are working to integrate more effective responses within alcohol and other drug services for people who either experience domestic and family violence or who are at risk of using it.

This government is putting people first and not judging and punishing them for their addiction. That is what the majority of people in Canberra, our progressive and compassionate community, expect. We are not afraid to think about and to trial innovative programs and policies that can reduce harm from drugs and alcohol use, particularly when we know that that will contribute to saving lives.

An incident having occurred in the gallery—

MADAM SPEAKER: There should be no disorderly conduct coming from the gallery, thank you.

An incident having occurred in the gallery—

MADAM SPEAKER: That is really disorderly and unacceptable behaviour here. It is more telling about yourself than anything else.

MS CHEYNE: Chief Minister, how is the ACT government sharing information about the benefits of the pill testing trial and its harm minimisation strategies with other jurisdictions?

MR BARR: I am pleased to advise that, following on from the trial that was conducted last year, jurisdictions across the country are interested in learning more about it. The previous trial triggered a tremendous amount of interest from other jurisdictions as they work through their own policy on pill testing and harm minimisation strategies.

To help other Australian states and territories better understand the benefits and the findings from the trial, Minister Fitzharris is inviting government representatives from the other states and territories to come to the ACT to observe the trial and to make up their own minds based on the evidence. This invitation is extended to those sitting opposite, if they are also interested in participating and observing the trial.

We will be commissioning an independent evaluation of the trial, to remove it, we hope, from the party-political debate that we have seen in this place over recent months and years. The ACT government has also provided a paper to the December 2018 Australian Health Ministers Advisory Council meeting, and Minister Fitzharris plans to take a paper to the next COAG Health Council meeting.

The ACT intends to lead the nation on drug law reform and harm minimisation. Pill testing is one way we are saying to Canberra parents that we will do everything we can to keep their sons and daughters safe. We do not, and we will not, apologise for that. We will keep encouraging other jurisdictions to follow our lead so that young people right around our country can make the best and most informed choice to stay safe.

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

Legislative Assembly—conduct Statement by Speaker

MADAM SPEAKER: I just remind members that it is inappropriate—and I am not suggesting it has happened—for members to encourage disorderly behaviour from people who come into the gallery. Today I also remind members, and I draw members' attention to an email that was distributed to all MLAs today, about an activity that happened in the exhibition room this afternoon, that that is not acceptable within this place either.

Leave of absence

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

That leave of absence be granted to Ms Lee for today and tomorrow due to illness.

Papers

Mr Gentleman presented the following papers:

Planning and Urban Renewal—Standing Committee—Report 6—*Draft Variation to the Territory Plan No 345 Mawson Group Centre: Zone Changes and Amendments to the Mawson Precinct Map and Code*—Government Response.

ACT Road Safety Strategy 2011-2020—Road Safety Report Card 2019.

Subordinate legislation (including explanatory statements unless otherwise stated)

Legislation Act, pursuant to section 64—

ACT Teacher Quality Institute Act and Financial Management Act—ACT Teacher Quality Institute Board Appointment 2019 (No 1)—Disallowable Instrument DI2019-11 (LR, 7 February 2019).

Electricity Feed-in (Renewable Energy Premium) Act—Electricity Feed-in (Renewable Energy Premium) Requirements of Audit Determination 2019—Disallowable Instrument DI2019-9 (LR, 7 February 2019).

Road Transport (General) Act—Road Transport (General) (Application of Road Transport Legislation) Declaration 2019 (No 1)—Disallowable Instrument DI2019-10 (LR, 7 February 2019).

Planning and Urban Renewal—Standing Committee

MR GENTLEMAN (Brindabella—Minister for the Environment and Heritage, Minister for Planning and Land Management, Minister for Police and Emergency Services and Minister assisting the Chief Minister on Advanced Technology and Space Industries) (3.10): Pursuant to standing order 211, I move:

That the Assembly take note of the following paper:

Planning and Urban Renewal—Standing Committee—Report 6—*Draft Variation to the Territory Plan No 345 Mawson Group Centre: Zone Changes and Amendments to the Mawson Precinct Map and Code*—Government Response.

I am pleased to be tabling the government response to the Standing Committee on Planning and Urban Renewal report No 6. The report provided 12 recommendations as an outcome of the standing committee inquiry into Territory Plan draft variation 345 for the Mawson group centre, also known as DV345. The government thanks the committee for their consideration of the matters raised in the course of the inquiry and has carefully considered the recommendations provided by the committee. Of the 12 recommendations, the ACT government has agreed to five, agreed in part to one and noted six recommendations.

It is gratifying that the committee agrees that the draft variation should be approved, as the changes made to the Territory Plan through DV345 will encourage revitalisation of the centre through moderate increases in development density, while retaining the unique character of the centre.

The five committee recommendations agreed to are generally minor amendments that, while departing from the master plan recommendations, will result in greater amenity for users of the centre, with only moderate reductions in development rights for commercial lessees within the centre. The agreed recommendations will retain higher levels of solar access to public spaces by introducing a height limit around the courtyard areas and will provide a new courtyard area as part of any future development of the surface car parks. In addition, the changes will make it easier for users of any redeveloped public car parks to access the centre, rather than being confined to the development, through requiring direct pedestrian access to and from public land.

The government also agreed with the recommendation to meet with the owners of the 7-Eleven service station to discuss the concerns they raised in their submission to the standing committee.

The single recommendation that was agreed in part was to ensure that all existing public car parking spaces are replaced if the surface car parks are developed in the future. I note that this was already a requirement of the previous Mawson precinct code and is being retained in the amended precinct code. The requirement does not include an associated criterion to provide a necessary measure of flexibility where a future development can adequately demonstrate there is significant and sufficient parking within the centre to accommodate the anticipated demand in the centre. It is necessary to retain the criterion, particularly given that the car parks are not likely to be redeveloped for some years, as changing transport needs in the future may have an effect on the parking demand within the centre.

The six noted recommendations include recommendations to approve the variation, to retain a proposed solar access provision and to continue with consideration of a second supermarket for a surface car park in the centre. I am pleased to advise that

there are no recommendations made by the standing committee that were not agreed by the government.

Question resolved in the affirmative.

Road safety report card

MR GENTLEMAN (Brindabella—Minister for the Environment and Heritage, Minister for Planning and Land Management, Minister for Police and Emergency Services and Minister assisting the Chief Minister on Advanced Technology and Space Industries) (3.13): Pursuant to standing order 211, I move:

That the Assembly take note of the following paper:

ACT Road Safety Strategy 2011-2020—Road Safety Report Card 2019.

MR RATTENBURY (Kurrajong—Minister for Climate Change and Sustainability, Minister for Corrections and Justice Health, Minister for Justice, Consumer Affairs and Road Safety and Minister for Mental Health) (3.14): The 2019 ACT road safety report card is intended to provide information to the public on ACT government responses to road safety, including progress of the implementation of the national and jurisdictional road safety strategies. It includes a summary of the ACT government's key road safety achievements over the 2018 calendar year, an update of the implementation status of our road safety commitments, and statistical reporting against national road safety performance indicators. Commitments made by the ACT government on road safety are summarised in the appendices of the report card.

The report monitors progress against recommendations and action items under the road safety action plan 2016-20, the Legislative Assembly inquiry into vulnerable road users, the ACT Auditor-General's audit report on speed cameras and the ACT road safety camera strategy. A total of 93 commitments were made by this government in the four areas I just mentioned; 63 of these commitments are complete and another 18 are either well advanced or progressing well.

From this year the report card will also include information about the ACT road safety education strategy published in May 2018. The education strategy is an eight-year plan for delivery of road safety education across all ages, with clear goals and 31 action items set to improve the knowledge and behaviours of all road users. As at December 2018 five of these items had already been completed.

The implementation of these recommendations due to the government's commitment to road safety has helped us achieve a reduction in fatalities on ACT roads. In 2017 the number of deaths resulting from road crashes decreased by over 50 per cent from 11 to five, and the number of deaths per 10,000 registered vehicles in 2017 decreased by 6.5 per cent when compared to 2016.

I will briefly highlight some of the key road safety achievements for 2018 that demonstrate our commitment to maintaining a lower number of fatalities per capita than the national average, with a target of zero road deaths and serious injuries. In

April 2018 the review of the ACT graduated licensing scheme commenced with community consultation. Significant feedback was received, which influenced the design of a final model that was published for further feedback in October 2018.

National Road Safety Week was launched in Canberra on 30 April 2018, in partnership with the Canberra Raiders, including a live game sponsored by the ACT government. There was additional promotion by Canberra Raiders social media and bus-back advertising featuring well-known players alongside emergency services workers and ACT Policing members wearing yellow ribbons in support of road safety.

As in previous years, a number of prominent buildings around Canberra were illuminated in yellow for the week. These included the National Carillon, Kings Avenue overpass over Parkes Way, Old Parliament House, Canberra International Airport, the Royal Australian Mint, Questacon, Malcolm Fraser Bridge and the Ian Potter Foundation building.

The third annual ACT road safety fund grant round received 16 applications last year, with eight projects sharing in nearly \$280,000. The funding goes toward initiatives that support the advancement of road safety research, education and road trauma prevention. The majority of funding this year went to projects supporting the safety of vulnerable road users.

In May 2018 Access Canberra successfully implemented a new traffic camera adjudication system that provides numerous road safety, customer service and operational benefits. The system replaces one that was almost 20 years old, and adjudication staff are able to verify images against vehicle registration records and create infringement files more efficiently. To further assist motorists to manage infringement notices, images and videos regarding an offence are now available online. To protect privacy the vehicle operator is provided with an image reference number that must be used in order to view the images.

The permanent inclusion of motorcycle lane filtering laws was announced on 9 October 2018, following the results of an evaluation of the trial by the Sunshine Coast university. The original trial conditions were expanded to include that motorcycle lane filtering not be permitted in any 40-kilometre an hour speed zone. The trial exclusion was specific only to roadworks and school zones.

On 25 October 2018 I tabled the evaluation of the safer cycling reforms trial and announced that the conditions would be included permanently in ACT road rules. The requirements are for drivers to maintain an overtaking distance of at least one metre when passing a cyclist at 60 kilometres an hour or less, and when driving at a speed over 60 kilometres an hour the minimum distance increases to 1.5 metres. The reforms also included conditions allowing cyclists to ride across pedestrian crossings in a safe manner.

Through one of the grants that will further improve road user understanding of the safer cycling reforms, Pedal Power received funding to produce minimum passing distance mats which give a visual demonstration of the distance motorists are required to provide when overtaking cyclists.

The 2017 ACT road safety fund provided strategic funding for a safe system audit of the ACT road network based on assessment of the fatal and serious injury crashes over the last 10 years. The safe system approach focuses on safe speeds, safe roads and roadsides, safe vehicles as well as safe people and behaviours. Implementation of safe system components provides the means to meet our goal of vision zero—of no deaths or serious injuries on our roads.

The safe-system audit aims to determine which parts or part of the safe system failed to provide the necessary protection to prevent a crash from resulting in a death or serious injury. The report is due to me early this year and will inform the development of the next ACT road safety strategy and action plan.

Most of the deaths we see on our roads are preventable. We as a community should not have to endure the heartbreak associated with road trauma. To avoid it we must share the responsibility for road safety and all strive for vision zero.

Question resolved in the affirmative.

Laws of the ACT

Discussion of matter of public importance

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

The importance of ACT laws which are constitutional, evidence based and human rights compliant.

MS CODY (Murrumbidgee) (3.21): Thank you, Madam Speaker, for selecting me to make another MPI speech today. I feel like the luckiest member here. Today's MPI, though, is not about luck. Today's MPI is about facts. Whilst they may not carry such weight in every parliamentary building in Canberra this week, facts are most important to how this government operates. It is how we have stayed in government for so long and how we will continue to do so—by making government policy and laws that are constitutional, evidence based and human rights compliant. Those are always things, not just sometimes things.

Just because someone else has a cooler looking motorbike jacket does not mean they should have harsher laws applied to them, no matter how jealous it makes you. Or just because someone's construction business was a failure does not mean we should make special laws and send the police out to harass others in the construction industry. Or just because someone owns a dozen houses, that does not mean that the rights of tenants should be curtailed or that that person should get tax breaks that are not available to others without such high personal wealth.

I could go on; this is fun. Just because someone believes in one or many gods does not mean gay kids should get bullied. I probably should stop there before this gets out of hand. Madam Speaker, there is a point to this, I promise. When we are making laws, when we are making policy, when we are proposing motions, we should always start from the point of their being constitutional, evidence based and human rights compliant.

Those are, of course, very different things. I will quickly go to each of them—firstly, their being constitutional. The accusation that one thing or another is unconstitutional is shouted almost as often in this country as it is in the United States, often with less accuracy. Whilst I do not claim to be an expert, I also note how horribly wrong it went for everyone who did claim to be an expert in the section 44 debacle. Congratulations again go to Mr Barr for leading the only strong, stable government in Canberra these last few years.

As well as enjoying the circus act across the lake, the other times I have heard the constitution come up recently have been in this place, in the case of the jobs code. On the jobs code, some Liberals argued that the ACT government should not be allowed to take care of workers, because it is the vibe; it is the constitution; it is the vibe—or something like that. After we passed the jobs code, they ran off to the feds and my understanding is that they were told where to put their vibes. I think the real vibe was that they just do not like unions almost as much as they do not like paying a fair day's wage for a fair day's work.

On political finance laws—I do not want to steal Mr Ramsay's thunder—the constitution protects freedom of political communication. Just because someone or a group of people do manual work for a living rather than live off an inheritance of real estate and fossil fuel shares does not mean they should not be able to make their voice heard too.

Secondly, I turn to evidence based. I am not always a fan of the idea of evidence-based policy when the term is used loosely. "Evidence based" was a term borrowed from medicine. Evidence-based medicine is the practice of looking at the outcomes of what you are doing and doing what gets the best outcome. The best outcomes in medicine are easier to define than they are in politics.

In medicine, the idea is that the patient is alive for as long as possible with the best quality of life possible. Our goals in government can be a little more complicated and contested. Some politicians—the crony capitalist variety—try to make wealth healthier. All they end up doing is taking all the money off working people, putting it in the boss's pockets and destroying the customers. We are seeing this in Australia today with low wage growth.

On the other hand—I will admit this—we do need working capital for factories, buildings and businesses. We can do both and we should do both. The balance between those things is not evidence based but values based. My values base says that an extra dollar in the pocket of the working class will be better spent than in the pocket of someone who has already got a dozen houses.

Evidence also matters. The evidence turns out to be that banks have been ripping off Australians. The evidence turns out to be that electricity privatisation pushed up prices and that competition policy was a dud. The evidence—

Mr Hanson: Madam Speaker, this is a little unusual perhaps for a point of order—

MADAM SPEAKER: Resume your seat. Stop the clock.

Mr Hanson: but the MPI is specifically about the importance of ACT laws that are constitutional, evidence based and human rights compliant. Ms Cody has been talking for quite a while now about federal laws. Given that the matter of importance has to relate to ACT laws, I wonder whether what she is saying is in any way relevant to the debate. I ask that you rule on this as a matter of relevance.

MADAM SPEAKER: I think the MPI is broad based. She is talking about laws and the impacts of ACT laws, but I also think she is talking—

Mr Hanson: No, it is ACT laws—

MADAM SPEAKER: She is talking about ACT laws but also about the other laws that impact on the ACT community. Ms Cody.

MS CODY: Thank you, Madam Speaker. The evidence turns out to be that, despite spending millions on the trade union royal commission and millions more on the punitive policing of trade unions, the effect of unions is to push up wages, improve workplace safety and increase productivity in the process. That will not stop some Liberals making fools of themselves by repeating disproven slurs about OMCG connections, but the evidence does not matter to them. They prefer the fantasy version.

Thirdly, I turn to human rights. Having seen a lot of protests and a lot of politics in this town, I am blown away by how frequently people's human rights are put second to the ideological adventures of one group or another. That may be the enthusiasm for anti-consorting laws, the disregard shown by some environmentalists to loggers, coal or power workers, or the great national shame of how our first nations people or those who come by boat have been treated. If your idea fails the human rights test, do not write an exemption for yourself. Instead, think about it some more and come up with a solution that respects human rights and ACT laws.

MR HANSON (Murrumbidgee) (3.30): Wow, Madam Speaker; here we go again. What a dog's breakfast of a speech. That was just extraordinary. That was an incoherent ramble through a whole adventure playground of issues, mostly pertaining to federal laws, which have nothing relevant at all to the MPI.

Getting to the substance of the issues, the Canberra Liberals agree with the importance of laws being constitutional, evidence based, and human rights compliant. As Ms Cody leaves the chamber, let me say that this is one of the most ironic motions from this government ever brought into this place. It is interesting that Ms Cody, in one of her rambling adventures, talked about section 44 and compliance with the

constitution. It was former Senator Gallagher from the Labor Party who was not compliant. That is called leading with your chin, Ms Cody, through you, Madam Speaker.

For the Labor Party in this place to be lecturing about the importance of laws being constitutional, evidence based and human rights compliant borders on mockery. Ignoring these issues is actually the hallmark of this government. There are many issues where this government ignores constitutional clashes. It cherrypicks selective pieces of evidence and ignores human rights issues. I could not fit them all into the 10 minutes that I have got, so I will keep it relatively brief.

Let me go to anti-consorting laws, because they were raised. We have raised this issue of the need to stem the outlaw gang violence since 2009. The need to respond to this issue is blindingly obvious. The refusal by this government is bewildering. We have tried to bring in laws before. I did so in 2017. They were constitutional, evidence based, human rights compliant and vitally needed.

Anti-consorting laws are constitutional. The New South Wales laws have been to the High Court. Let me talk about the comment made:

New South Wales submitted that the legitimate object or end of s 93X is to prevent or impede criminal conduct by deterring non-criminals from consorting in a criminal milieu and deterring criminals from establishing or building up a criminal network. That submission should be accepted.

They are also human rights compliant. The High Court said:

... it was submitted that the Parliament of New South Wales could not enact a law infringing upon the “right to freedom of association with others” set out in Art 22 ... to which Australia is a party. There is no authority which would support such a proposition.

It also said:

No reasonable and equally practicable alternatives having a lesser effect on the freedom have been identified.

These have been to the High Court. They are constitutional. The legislation that I tabled in this place in 2017 was described by the ACT Human Rights Commissioner as the best of its kind in the country.

Section 28 of the ACT Human Rights Act sets out when rights can be limited. Almost all the time, rights are limited. They were with egg labelling last week. That is what the scrutiny of bills committee looks at. But if they are proportionate, if they are appropriate and if they are in the interests of the community, they would be acceptable. That is a judgement that we have to make.

That is in the context of headlines like this: “Outlaw bikie gangs heading to Canberra because of the ACT’s soft laws on consorting”, from the *Daily Telegraph*; “Bikies drawn to Canberra due to lack of anti-gang laws”, from the ABC; “Canberra

becoming a bikie mecca”, from the *Daily Telegraph*; “Front lawn set alight at house next door to childcare centre”; “Three cars torched, shots fired in Kambah”; “Cars, house shot at with high-powered rifle in Waramanga”; “Bullets fired into home next to childcare centre”; and “Man shot twice in the leg in Kambah”. There was a front page headed “War zone”.

Gangs have increased in this territory from one to at least four. We have had another that has tried to establish itself. The number of activities has increased. Just last week, we saw the shooting in Kambah. We have heard about alleged assaults in a restaurant in Phillip.

This government has ignored the evidence that these laws are effective. Clearly they are effective, because bikie gangs have multiplied; they have quadrupled. They are human rights compliant, or they can be, if we make that assessment under section 28. The last laws I tabled in this place were deemed human rights compliant by the Human Rights Commissioner, and the New South Wales laws have been to the High Court.

It is ironic, isn't it? This is a government that is about to support cannabis legislation tomorrow. They have said that they are going to support the cannabis legislation. Let me be very clear that it is problematic in terms of the evidence. The evidence from the AMA in their submission on the cannabis laws is that there is potentially a five times increase in the rate of psychosis from cannabis users. That is the AMA submission. The AMA submission says they should not be supporting the legalisation of cannabis, but that has been ignored. The evidence there is being cherrypicked: “We will ignore the AMA when it comes to the cannabis laws.” It also looks as though they are going to ignore the constitutional issues, because section 109 of the constitution states that where a law of a state is inconsistent with laws of the commonwealth, commonwealth laws will prevail and state law will be invalid.

We know there is a constitutional problem here. Lawyers from the Law Society have come forward and said, “This is going to be incompatible because it is going to be in conflict with federal laws.” “No; we will ignore that. We will cherrypick. We will ignore the AMA and we will ignore the advice from people in the Law Society that these laws are in conflict. When it suits us, we will cherrypick advice; when it does not suit us, we will just ignore it.”

A great example of ignoring constitutional advice was that of the same-sex marriage debate. I supported same-sex marriage; I was part of the Liberal-Nationals campaign for same-sex marriage. When they brought laws into this place, those opposite were warned that the laws were unconstitutional; they were warned by the Solicitor-General of the Commonwealth of Australia. They ignored it. They ignored that advice. They brought the laws into this place, at great expense. The High Court ruled unanimously that the laws were invalid, as I said in this place during that debate. The High Court said:

... the absence of a provision permitting same sex marriage does not mean that the Territory legislature may make such a provision.

It said:

Because the ACT Act does not validly provide for the formation of same sex marriages, its provisions about the rights of parties to such marriages cannot have separate operation and are also of no effect.

It was invalid in its entirety, and the ACT—the poor old ACT taxpayer, people like those we saw from the taxi industry here today—had to foot the bill for what was grandstanding, ignoring advice and bringing to this place unconstitutional laws.

Another example is the anti-protest law that this government brought in. They said it was completely valid to stop people's right to protest or freedom of speech. They said that it was important to stop people from being able to walk past the health clinic and pray or sit silently. They thought that was a reasonable human right that they could limit. The government said at the time:

... reasonable limits may be placed on the right to freedom of expression (and related rights) with the aim of balancing competing interests.

They are very happy to trample over human rights when it suits their agenda, and they will cherrypick those. As I understand it, people in their 70s walking silently down the street were arrested. They are quite happy to trample over people's human rights when it suits them, but if you have bikies marauding through the suburbs, they will take a very literal interpretation of the Human Rights Act and ignore section 28.

What is this actually about? We heard some of it in Ms Cody's expression about the unions. This is quite clearly much more aimed at making sure that Ms Cody sends a message to the CFMEU: "I will be with you regardless of what you want. That is the constitution I will adhere to." She said in her maiden speech:

To the CFMEU, the TWU and all the union officials who worked so hard to put me here ... I pledge to always defend you, promote your goals, and strive to deliver for your members.

This is not about evidence; this is not about what is constitutional; this is not about human rights. This is about Ms Cody doing whatever the CFMEU and those other unions she mentioned tell her to do.

MR RAMSAY (Ginninderra—Attorney-General, Minister for the Arts and Cultural Events, Minister for Building Quality Improvement, Minister for Business and Regulatory Services and Minister for Seniors and Veterans) (3.40): Today's matter of importance absolutely calls on us to reflect on our role as legislators, and I certainly thank and commend Ms Cody for bringing the matter to the attention of the Assembly. It is important that we all strive to make laws that serve the interests of Canberrans. Good lawmaking improves life in our community.

Legislation gives people a set of rules to resolve their disputes. It recognises our rights, our responsibilities. It creates a framework for people to participate in public life. Legislation should always reflect and embody the values that this community stands for: inclusion, equality and fairness. The legal framework that we sit in provides a

solid foundation for evaluating proposed laws against those values. We are a territory that is established under a national constitution with its own core legal framework, including rights, responsibilities and rules for governance that apply across the country.

Our foundational act sets out a framework for self-government here in Canberra. It recognises the importance of participation in the democratic process and it sets out the powers of this government and this Assembly to govern and make laws for Canberrans. It is unfortunate that Mr Hanson has again today demonstrated a surprising misunderstanding of the way that Australia's legal framework operates, especially as it comes to the interrelationship between the constitution and territory laws and, as he has referred to, section 109. But we will leave that for another time.

As an Assembly, we have adopted a Human Rights Act. That act sets out our most fundamental civil and political rights. It guides our consideration of competing rights. Each sitting period we draw on those legal frameworks to consider bills and other important legal issues. And of course it is critical that in making these judgements we do so from a thorough evidence base.

Again Mr Hanson today has spoken of the way that he seems to look for someone to express his own opinion back to him, and by the time he has got two opinions he calls it data or evidence. But that is not the case. It is critical that we do so with a true evidence base and not just look around to try to find people who agree with us. Constitutional and human rights judgements cannot be made in a vacuum. The tangible impact on the lives of Canberrans is how we measure the success of our legislation.

The government takes its commitment to evidence-based human rights and constitutionally sound legislation very seriously. We will not accept that the statute book should be a place for generating headlines or, as was suggested by the Canberra Liberals last year, that we should just try to pass new laws and see what happens next. Over this term we have demonstrated our commitment again and again. We have enacted evidence-based laws to make Canberra a better place to live, and we will keep listening to the evidence about how those laws work even more.

One of the most important examples of our work to turn evidence into action this term follows from the Royal Commission into Institutional Responses to Child Sexual Abuse. The Gillard government set Australia down the path of examining clear, ongoing and unacceptable failures to protect children from harm. And that commission also gave us the latest psychological, criminological and legal evidence about how to best support survivors of sexual abuse. The royal commission's final report, delivered in December 2017, represents a comprehensive evidence base for reforming our laws to protect children.

The ACT is uniquely based, as Australia's first human rights jurisdiction, to take action to prevent abuse and to provide redress and justice for survivors. The Human Rights Act gives us a framework for evaluating the competing rights and interests that were so evident in the royal commission's report.

What we now know from the royal commission is that the traditional, adversarial methods of cross-examination and testing evidence in court can yield an unfair bias against vulnerable witnesses, including child survivors of sexual abuse. The royal commission has given us a road map to eliminate that bias and to ensure that the evidence that judges and juries consider is presented in a way that aligns with what we know about survivor testimony.

The ACT has long been a leader in adopting survivor-focused criminal laws. The use of pre-recorded evidence by child survivors in child sexual assault trials was introduced here in 2008 and since then it has been expanded to all sexual assault and family violence matters. The royal commission recommended that all jurisdictions should pursue similar matters. This government will keep up its momentum to make our court process even fairer, evidence based and sensitive to the needs of survivors. We have introduced and we will continue to introduce legislation that implements the findings of that royal commission.

Across our criminal justice system, knowing the latest evidence is critical to keeping Canberra safe. We are committed to introducing laws and investing resources in methods that are proven to combat crime and deprive gangs of their financial incentives that motivate their illegal activities. That is why over this term we have strengthened police powers to set up crime scenes and preserve evidence. And that is a law that has already been used to help build cases against criminal gangs in relation to shootings. We have provided funding for the Director of Public Prosecutions to seize criminal assets. And that is a program that has resulted in millions of dollars in cash, real estate and other assets being seized in the last year, which is an amount that continues to grow.

That is why we have introduced laws to prevent gangs putting up fortifications that could be used to hinder a lawful search by police. And that is why we have invested millions of dollars into ACT Policing's Taskforce Nemesis. We will continue to keep Canberra safe from crime with proven, hard-hitting legislation to combat organised crime and we will do it in a way that respects the rights of our whole community. We will do it in ways that are based on the evidence that is here and available more broadly.

There are many more legal and policy issues that will come before this Assembly over the next two years that will continue to challenge us to focus on human rights, on our now national legal context and, most importantly, on evidence.

The government has still more work to do in implementing its response to the select committee inquiry into the 2016 ACT election. The constitutional issues, as we discussed in the chamber last week, are absolutely central to ensuring that we deliver a fair and legally sound process leading up to the next election. As Attorney-General, I would like to reiterate that changes to our electoral framework cannot simply be accepted or negotiated between members here. Drafting changes is not simply a matter of working out what the parties in this chamber may think of the politics of election funding.

There are clear constitutional limits on what we can and cannot do when it comes to electoral laws. And those limits, along with the limits in our Human Rights Act, must be worked through in detail as we consider any changes that affect the rights of Canberrans to vote and participate in elections. This government will continue to ensure that the Assembly is mindful of our legal and our human rights and our evidence context for each issue that we consider. We will continue to work to deliver legislation that helps make Canberra a place where everyone belongs, where everyone is valued and where everyone can participate

MS LE COUTEUR (Murrumbidgee) (3.48): I want to talk mainly about the issue which I am totally surprised nobody has yet mentioned. The evidence base is clear for the principal threat to the people of the ACT, the people of Australia, the people of the world and all the species of the world. You all know what I am going to say because I have said it so many times before: climate change. This should be our number one priority. The evidence base is quite clear. I am not going to bother reiterating things I and other people have said before; I will just make a few points.

One thing that has struck me particularly over the last couple of years is insects, to wit, the lack of them. I continually marvel at the fact that I no longer need a flyscreen. When I grew up, as a child in Canberra you did not really eat outside because the flies were everywhere. People's backs were covered with flies.

Mr Hanson interjecting—

MS LE COUTEUR: Mr Hanson, this is unfortunately not funny. Germany has done some extensive monitoring of insect quantities and they are down to about only 30 per cent of what they were just after World War II. This is a real problem for the world. And a real problem for the ACT was the heat wave we recently had. It is unprecedented to have four days in a row over 40 degrees. I hesitate to say that this is the new normal because the problem is that it is not the new normal. The new normal would suggest we are at a stable point, and there is absolutely no evidence to suggest we are at a stable point.

The atmospheric concentrations of greenhouse gases are increasing. I spent a bit of time googling what temperatures we can expect by the end of the century. The world's temperature has probably risen in the order of one degree Centigrade. Googling tells me from numerous resources that there is an over 90 per cent chance that global warming will be more than four degrees by the end of the century. A really depressing thing is that even if every country fulfils their Paris agreements, by the end of the century we will still have a temperature rise of over 3.2 degrees Centigrade. You have to remember that the United States has made it abundantly clear that it has no intention whatsoever of fulfilling its Paris agreements. I am not totally sure what our federal government's intentions are, but I will leave that for a bit.

One of the more depressing things about this is that, clearly, there is political pressure in terms of how we report the evidence. Two or three weeks ago the local ABC did a four-minute special on the heatwave in Canberra. People may not have noticed that it talked about increasing temperatures but it never once mentioned the words "climate

change”. My husband, in fact, pointed out the program to me and said, “You should watch it.” For various reasons we do not have a working TV in our house, but when I had the opportunity to watch it I asked him, “Did you realise those words were not mentioned?”

It is quite subtle, but the political discourse from some parts of Australian politics is leaving out this principal evidence base that we are getting hotter. There is a reason for it—it is climate change and it is human induced. We as legislators in the ACT should see this as one of the primary things we need to work on. But perhaps that is enough of me ranting on that.

Mr Parton: No way. Give us more; give us more.

MS LE COUTEUR: I am not sure if you are totally serious in saying that, Mr Parton.

Mr Hanson: Well picked.

MS LE COUTEUR: I am not sure if I should say thank you, Mr Hanson. I want to briefly talk about the thing Mr Ramsay spoke about at the end of his speech: the constitutionality of making changes to our donations laws. I totally agree that the constitutionality of this is a considerable issue. We passed very strong laws in 2012 which were reversed in the Eighth Assembly, with one of the reasons being the perception that they could be unconstitutional. I point out that there was, in fact, no constitutional challenge to them.

The New South Wales Electoral Act 2018 bans donations from property developers, tobacco companies and liquor and gambling industry business entities. The latter are defined in section 53 as a corporation engaged in a business undertaking that is mainly concerned with wagering, betting or other gambling, including the manufacture of machines used primarily for that purpose. This is wider than the Greens’ proposed amendments.

I noted in the Assembly last week the McCloy case, which focused on the validity of the New South Wales ban on property developer donations and which clearly established that categories of donors can be banned where they give rise to an unacceptable risk to the political process. This is quite clear. This was a constitutional challenge, and that is what the McCloy case said.

Looking at both the legislation put forward by the government and the amendments put forward by the Greens, these are areas where we can well argue that there is significant evidence of potential interference in electoral processes. I note that the New South Wales legislation does not include any restrictions as to the type of entity that is a property developer that then donates. Our only amendment as far as that is concerned is that whether you are a property developer or not does not depend on the structure of your business.

Unlike the New South Wales ban on donations from property developers, the ban on gambling donations has not been tested in the High Court. But from an ACT point of view I think there is a very arguable case. The value of pokies and other licensing is

based on ACT legislation. We have recently been discussing the fact that the ACT government is paying entities to buy back their poker machine licences. That in itself is the sort of thing that would go towards justifying such a ban, were the Assembly moved to implement one.

I believe Minister Ramsay may also have concerns about the Greens' consideration that non-party candidates should have a higher cap for expenditure than party candidates. In its response to *Unions NSW v NSW 2019*, in which the High Court found that caps on third-party campaigners were not constitutional, the New South Wales government did not change the differential expenditure caps on party and independent candidates. I assume they considered the constitutionality or otherwise of this. In terms of moving my amendments, I think that is a reasonable basis on which we can proceed. In summary, I would say evidence based, please, everybody. Climate change is number one, two, three and four.

MR GENTLEMAN (Brindabella—Minister for the Environment and Heritage, Minister for Planning and Land Management, Minister for Police and Emergency Services and Minister assisting the Chief Minister on Advanced Technology and Space Industries) (3.58): I thank Ms Cody for bringing this matter of public importance before the chamber. Her contribution again demonstrates that there is no better friend of workers in this place. I want to focus my remarks primarily on the need for us to be guided by evidence. Evidence-based policymaking is particularly important, and it is not just about having a go or giving it a try, as we have heard from Mr Hanson in this place many times.

Mr Hanson interjecting—

MR GENTLEMAN: He is interjecting again with the same comments. Members cannot simply ignore the self-government act, as Mr Wall attempted to do last year. Constitutional principles are important. And human rights are critical too. You cannot be for freedom of association of members of industry associations but trash the rights of workers. But, sadly, that is exactly what those opposite do day after day in this place.

But I want to return to evidence-based laws. Respecting evidence-based laws means accepting expert advice, and that is what this government does. We do not take the approach of Mrs Jones, the shadow minister for reckless endangerment, whose approach is to undertake prescribed burns—

MADAM DEPUTY SPEAKER: Order! You refer to members in this place by their title, their names. Joke names are not acceptable. I ask you to withdraw your reference to Mrs Jones as the minister for reckless endangerment.

MR GENTLEMAN: I will withdraw my comments regarding Mrs Jones, whose approach is to undertake prescribed burns regardless of weather and climatic conditions or to tell police how they should do their job and whom to arrest.

Time after time in this place those opposite have ignored expert advice and proceeded on the basis that they know best. Ignoring expert advice is the only way that those

opposite can support feral horses and the interests of the New South Wales National Party over the expert advice of scientists and territory rangers. Ignoring expert advice is the only way you can walk into this chamber and support the interests of irrigators in New South Wales over the expert science that shows the needs of the Murray-Darling Basin.

These debates in this place, combined with the Canberra Liberals' earlier discussions on the taxi industry, make it clear that those members are not here to represent the interests of Canberrans. Those opposite are not the Canberra Liberals; they are the members for special interests outside the ACT.

The Liberals have form on this matter; they have form on ignoring expert advice. Let us just take a look at the federal level. We have had a Liberal Prime Minister who has called climate change "crap". We have had the Abbott-Turnbull-Morrison federal government bury their heads in the sand and do everything possible to stop action on climate change and pretend it is not happening. We have Liberals who are running conspiracy theories against the Bureau of Meteorology. We have the federal Liberal government ignoring the economic evidence of renewable energy. Like the Liberals here, the federal Liberals pretend that the economy is not in transition.

An evidence-based approach in this place means being honest about the transitions and changes occurring in the economy. Pretending otherwise is failing all Canberrans. As this Ninth Assembly progresses, it is becoming clear that those opposite are not fit to govern. It is becoming clear that the Canberra Liberals are guided by interstate special interests.

Discussion concluded.

Adjournment

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

That the Assembly do now adjourn.

Canberra Indian community celebration

MRS KIKKERT (Ginninderra) (4.03): While late January and early February are still very much summertime in Canberra, in northern India and Bangladesh this is the time of year when people celebrate the arrival of spring. This occurs specifically on the fifth day of the lunar month that is called Magh or Magha. This day is also observed as the birthday of the Hindu goddess Saraswati.

I rise today to publicly thank the Canberra Sanatani Sangha for having invited me to join them at an event that they held recently to worship this goddess. The Saraswati Puja was held two Sundays ago at the Flynn Community Hub in my electorate of Ginninderra. Mr Coe also enjoyed it immensely.

Saraswati is the goddess of learning, knowledge, music, art, science and technology. Gathering together to worship on her birthday is an opportunity for participants to

seek wisdom, artistic and technical skill and academic excellence. I think we can all agree that it is a very good thing for a community not only to celebrate learning and wisdom but also to hold events and engage in activities specifically designed to strengthen those values in the community and to help children and young people make these values their own.

I have read that many parents will use this day to first introduce their young children to writing, teaching them the alphabet and helping them to inscribe their very first words. I know from my own experience as a mother of five kids the importance of introducing children to literacy as early as possible, because so much other learning depends on being able to read and write.

The evening was filled with skilful performances, rich colours and fragrant, delicious food, all of which reinforced the importance of having the skills necessary to create beauty. As I celebrated the Saraswati Puja with my fellow Canberrans, I felt their great faith, love and goodness. I understood at least in part the emphasis that their faith places upon academic and artistic excellence. I could see how much their devotion blesses their children and how much it enhances and enriches this entire nation, especially its capital city.

I extend special thanks to Dr Ajoy Kar for assisting me in being able to address the attendees in the Bengali language. I also wish to thank Mr Avijit Sircar, convenor of the Canberra Sanatani Sangha, for extending to me his warm welcome. Lastly I thank all the good families in Canberra who do so much to strengthen our community by strengthening their own families, by teaching their children to seek and to achieve excellence and by helping them learn to appreciate beauty and to become the kinds of people who can then create beauty and harmony in their own lives and in the lives of others.

We are truly blessed, all of us, to live in such a richly pluralistic society where we can learn from and be inspired by so many cultures and faith communities. In the spirit of Saraswati, I sincerely hope that all of us, including those of us who have been given the responsibility to serve the people of Canberra in this Legislative Assembly, will have our perceptions sharpened, our talents magnified, our wisdom enhanced and our capabilities increased.

Scullin Community Group

MS CHEYNE (Ginninderra) (4.06): It is my pleasure this afternoon to draw the Assembly's attention to the work of the Scullin Community Group. Late last year I was approached by Scullin resident Sue White about what could be done to create a greater sense of community in Scullin as well as what could be done to reinvigorate the struggling Scullin shops.

Together with other Scullin residents, like Rachel Howard, I met with Sue in the grounds of the Scullin shops. Their enthusiasm and motivation were contagious. Scullin residents are very proud of their suburb but are keen to be better connected with each other and to make it even better. That afternoon we talked about small ideas,

big ideas and everything in between. And then it was all systems go. Sue White is a doer. A Facebook group was established and a date was set for a community get-together at the shops for mid-December, partnering with La Casetta pizzeria to offer a deal to make it even more exciting for people.

I was very happy to sponsor the printing of flyers, but everything else was done by willing Scullin residents who immediately put their hands up, again ably organised by Sue and others. They letterboxed the community in a matter of days, alerting Scullin residents to the get-together and to the Facebook group. In just a few weeks the Facebook group boomed and many residents said they would be at the get-together, and they were.

On Friday, 14 December we met at the shops. Simply with the presence of people—of families, of children—and a few chairs and blankets, those struggling shops came alive. Add in some free and discounted pizza, the services of Neighbourhood Watch and Belconnen Community Service, chalk, bubbles, paper planes, ukulele singalongs and local businesses opening late, it was a huge success.

It has not stopped there. Despite the Christmas holidays in the mix there have been numerous street libraries, including a children's street library; new planter boxes planned at the shops; and discussions about murals. As well as this, an application for a coffee shop is in the works.

This has all happened in just three months, thanks to Scullin residents enthusiastically coming together but particularly due to the work of people like Sue, like Rachel, like Tiffany and Nicole and like Sharon Leigh-Hazell, who is technically a Florey resident but has been instrumental in providing advice, particularly on the Neighbourhood Watch aspects and how to bring a community together. There is also the Belconnen Community Service, who did not even hesitate when approached to come on board.

I have really loved collaborating with the Scullin community and will keenly continue to do so. Most of all I really look forward to updating the Assembly on what happens next. I expect that that will be in the very near future.

Better Renting

MR PARTON (Brindabella) (4.09): I rise today to alert this chamber and the rest of Canberra to the fact that you have been misled, you have been hoodwinked by the so-called renters' advocacy group known as Better Renting. Better Renting are masquerading as a renters' advocacy group when in fact they are very, very clearly a front for the Greens. Those who signed up to Better Renting in the belief that Mr Joel Dignam will be looking after their best interests have been sadly let down.

Better Renting of course has been in the news of late for releasing a report called *House of Lords: Landlords and Tenants in the Legislative Assembly*, which was completely incorrect in that it declared that Michael Pettersson was the only MLA who was renting. Indeed, at the time that the information for that report was gathered, my understanding is that three Liberal MLAs were renting. It must be said that Liberal

MLAs did not respond in great numbers when Joel Dignam from Better Renting sent out his questionnaire about home ownership and renting. Why did we not respond? Because we knew that Joel was probably gathering data for the Greens. I would urge you to do a Google search of “Joel Dignam Greens” and tell me what you find.

I have got a document from australianprogress.org.au where Mr Dignam is described as a lead organiser with the ACT Greens. There is a staff post from the page of Mark Parnell, who is a Greens member of parliament in South Australia, that was written by Joel Dignam. This is from just four months ago and it certainly appears as though he was pretty much running the campaign. He is very, very clearly a part of the Greens machine. I hear you say, “Surely being a hardworking operative for a political party should not preclude you being involved as a community advocate?” I think you would be right; you would be correct in saying that. But I think we need to look a little deeper. Anyone can get on the website of Better Renting and look through their board.

I am not going to go through the business of naming any names in here, but if you go through that exercise you will find, among the six board members, a lead Greens candidate from the 2016 ACT election—surprise, surprise. You will find an individual who is listed online as a Green election day booth volunteer trainer at the last election here, and a member of the Greens national policy coordinating committee. That is from the Greens’ website in late 2017. You will find an attendee from the Greens 2016 election thankyou drinks—and I am sure they were not thanking her for nothing—and a former staffer for Greens Senator Penny Wright.

Six of the seven players—six of the seven—in the Better Renting organisation have known, strong links to the Greens party. We are not just talking about members of the party; we are talking about hardcore party hacks who sit up at night plotting ways to install more Greens members into this parliament. And they have dreamt up a good way to do it.

I know Mr Dignam’s long online history with the web tool known as NationBuilder, which has been used for a number of years now as a data collection tool for political parties, including the Greens, and I note that Better Renting conducts its online petitions on NationBuilder. I think we can all guess where that data is going. I also note that when Mr Dignam has been asked in a public space whether or not the ever-increasing rates and land tax here in the ACT have contributed to high rent, he of course dismisses those factors. Why? Because he is not actually advocating for renters, ladies and gentlemen; he is pushing Greens policy.

I think one of the most important things to note here is the funding for Better Renting. Better Renting has secured a government grant from the ACT. What sort of grant do you think it would be? This renters’ advocacy group, the one that is gathering names and addresses of as many renters as it can, the one with these unmistakable links to hardcore Greens operatives—this group has secured a zero emissions grant, which, it is my understanding, would have been signed off by the environment and sustainability minister, Greens MLA Shane Rattenbury. No way! No, no!

I am sure that the report *House of Lords: Landlords and Tenants in the Legislative Assembly*, the one that was radically incorrect, has contributed to our push to zero

emissions. But I am not sure how. The advocacy group Better Renting is not an advocacy group. It is a front for the Greens. And when it is participating in such an important policy space I think they should just come clean and tell us who they are.

Question resolved in the affirmative.

The Assembly adjourned at 4.15 pm.