



Debates

WEEKLY HANSARD

Legislative Assembly for the ACT

NINTH ASSEMBLY

10 MAY 2019

www.hansard.act.gov.au

Friday, 10 May 2019

Distinguished visitors.....	1507
Visitors.....	1508
Self-government in the territory—30th anniversary.....	1508
Mark of reconciliation—gift of possum skin cloak (Statement by Speaker).....	1522
Adjournment	1522

Friday, 10 May 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.

Distinguished visitors

MADAM SPEAKER: Members, before I call the Chief Minister I would like to acknowledge the presence in the gallery of a number of former members. I would like to acknowledge:

Chris Bourke

Bernard Collaery

Helen Watchirs, representing the late Terry Connolly

Greg Cornwell AO

Rosemary Follett AO

Ellnor Grassby

Harold Hird OAM

Lucy Horodny

Gary Humphries AO

Dorothy and son Kevin Jeffery, representing the late Val Jeffery

Norm Jensen

Sandy Kaine, representing the late Trevor Kaine

Louise Littlewood

Karin MacDonald

Roberta McRae OAM

Michael Moore AM

Richard Mulcahy

Paul Osborne

Mary Porter AM

David Prowse

Marion Reilly

Dave Rugendyke

Brendan Smyth

Bill Stefaniak AM
Helen Szuty
Andrew Whitecross
Bill Wood

On behalf of all members, I extend a warm welcome to you. I welcome all former members joining us in this quite significant celebration.

Visitors

MADAM SPEAKER: I would also like to acknowledge the two former clerks, Don Piper and Mark McRae.

Members, I would also like to acknowledge the presence in the gallery of a number of distinguished guests. From the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community, I would like to acknowledge Aunty Agnes Shea, Lillian Bell, Louise Brown, Roslyn Brown, Loretta Halloran and Matilda House. Other members, if I have not recognised you, please accept my absolute appreciation of your presence here today. In addition I would like to acknowledge members of the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community, senior executives of the ACT government and community members.

I acknowledge from the ACT region Councillor Rowena Abbey, Mayor of the Yass Valley Council, and John Rooney, Mayor of the Snowy Monaro Regional Council.

To one and all and to all in the gallery, this is a significant day—30 years of self-government. I appreciate you all being here to help us celebrate.

Self-government in the territory—30th anniversary

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) (10.04): I move:

That this Assembly:

- (1) notes that Saturday, 11 May 2019, marks the 30th anniversary of self-government for the Australian Capital Territory;
- (2) expresses its appreciation of the Ngunnawal people and pays respects to the custodians of the land that we call home;
- (3) acknowledges the responsibilities of this and future Assemblies in ensuring strong, democratic and responsible government for the people of the Territory;
- (4) acknowledges the growth and diversity of the Territory constituency since the establishment of self-government in 1989; and
- (5) recognises that the Territory has matured into a progressive, inclusive and connected jurisdiction, which is demonstrating leadership at a national and international level in many important fields.

I would like to begin by acknowledging the traditional custodians of the land on which we meet today, the Ngunnawal people, and pay my respects to elders past, present and emerging, and in doing so also acknowledge the Ngunnawal people's culture and continuing contribution to the life of this city and this region.

Madam Speaker, the ACT has been a territory of the Commonwealth of Australia for 108 years. We have been self-governing, as we are celebrating today, for 30 years. The Legislative Assembly has been in this building for around 25 years. But this is just our very recent history. We should always remember that this land has been an important place for people to meet, exchange and celebrate for tens of thousands of years.

Earlier this year, the territory government signed the ACT Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander agreement with our elected body. This agreement lays out our joint vision and framework for recognising Australia's First Peoples and for respecting and supporting their right to self-determination and equality of opportunity.

Later today a possum skin cloak made by 16 strong Ngunnawal women and elders, led by Elder Tina Brown, will be permanently displayed outside the entrance to this Assembly chamber. This is an important symbol of reconciliation and respect between the Ngunnawal people, the Legislative Assembly and the people of many different backgrounds and cultures who form the ACT community. On behalf of the ACT government and the Legislative Assembly, members and the people of Canberra, we are humbled and thankful to receive this gift and would like to express our deep gratitude to the Ngunnawal women who contributed to the cloak.

Madam Speaker, many younger Canberrans may not believe that ACT self-government is a relatively new concept. In 1989 it was a hotly contested move towards proper democratic representation for this city's residents. For most of us old-timers, though, it does not seem that long ago that a unilateral decision by the commonwealth thrust self-government upon a somewhat sceptical and certainly bemused Canberra.

Despite this, Canberrans chose to engage with self-government in a uniquely Canberra way: by running for elected office in record numbers on a wide array of platforms, including the abolition of the very institution being created. Ballot papers rarely match the one handed to voters in that first ACT election. It contained 117 candidates from 22 parties, some with party names that will forever remain in democratic folklore.

The establishment of this Assembly was tumultuous. After taking two months to determine the election result under that wonderful modified D'Hondt electoral system, the members and the parties were given less than a week to decide who would form government, necessitating a hastily constructed coalition.

Governing coalitions, of course, have been the norm rather than the exception in the intervening years. The nearly 2,100 bills passed by this place have generally been better for this. In an early sign of the nation-leading progressive approach that has

become a hallmark of government in the ACT, Rosemary Follett was elected our first Chief Minister. Rosemary was the first woman to lead an Australian state or territory government. Similarly, the Liberal Party's first leader to win an election in the ACT and form government was Kate Carnell. Kate was Chief Minister when we became the first jurisdiction to apologise to the stolen generations.

I will confess that my first engagement with this place was in 1989, as a 16 year old, when the newly minted education minister, Paul Whalan, conducted a school visit to Lyneham High School, where in 1989 I was the school captain. This visit involved having to be up at 6 am for breakfast with the new minister, and then spending the day conducting a tour of our school.

I think that that was a first and interesting insight into what self-government would mean here in the ACT and that we would get a whole lot more attention from democratically elected members working more closely with our communities. I would have to say that that first encounter with Paul Whalan was the beginning of my engagement with politics. Not too many years later I joined the Labor Party and proceeded to work, as many members are aware, for former members who are in the gallery, including Ellnor Grassby, the late Terry Connolly and John Hargreaves, before being elected to this place.

We moved into this building in 1994. Some of the earliest issues passionately debated by the First Assembly included the establishment of a casino and fluoride in the water supply, reflecting the community's concerns at that time. Since then 80 people have had the honour of serving as members of the ACT Legislative Assembly, and 30 of them have had the privilege of serving in executive government.

I would like to acknowledge everyone who has served their community in this place, particularly those who have passed away and are unable to celebrate this milestone with us today. I would also like to particularly acknowledge the six women and men who have served in the role of Chief Minister before me.

This role involves taking on the responsibility of both a state premier and a capital city lord mayor simultaneously. From one moment to the next, the issues to which we are asked to turn our attention can stretch from international, national and regional to the most local of matters. There is perhaps no better example of the diversity of issues that we face than what you hear on Chief Minister's talkback on the ABC each fortnight. I believe it is the most interesting job in Australian politics. Each Chief Minister has brought their own style and approach to the role. Today I would like to acknowledge their contribution to our city.

Madam Speaker, 30 years ago Canberra's population was around 270,000. Today it is over 420,000. Within a decade we will reach half a million people. More and more people are choosing to make Canberra and the region their home. We proudly host the seat of commonwealth government and we are, of course, the home to the Australian public service, something we must value and protect.

We are a place where intelligent, creative and dedicated Australians can make a lasting contribution to our nation. We have also developed a reputation for being an

innovative jurisdiction where people with big ideas can get the support that they need to realise their dreams. We have grown into a service and employment hub for the wider region, a community now of around 800,000 people.

But despite all of this growth and change we have been able to retain the many distinct bush and rural settings that make Canberra such a unique place to live, work and play. No doubt getting this balance right will continue to be part of the Canberra conversation for many years to come.

As we have grown, we have become a more diverse city. At the time of self-government, around a quarter of the ACT's population was born overseas. Today that number is over a third. With that, the number of languages other than English spoken at home has nearly doubled. This is most evident through our incredible National Multicultural Festival which, from its official beginnings in the mid-1990s, has grown to be one of Australia's great annual events, and probably the most popular event in our city's annual events calendar.

Our commitment as a community to social inclusion extends to all cultures, races, genders, sexualities and ages. Through leadership from this Assembly over these three decades we do not discriminate; instead, we embrace and we celebrate. We are proud of our achievements in making Canberra a place where everyone is welcome, where everyone gets an opportunity and where everyone can make their own contribution to our city's life.

We have always been a national leader when it comes to civil liberties, women's rights, the rights of LGBTIQ Australians, health and education outcomes, economic reform, environmental protection, regulatory reform, innovation and responding to climate change. When others have turned inwards or sought to turn back the clock, Canberra has faced the future with optimism and with a sense of possibility.

We are the first jurisdiction in Australia to commit to a 100 per cent renewable electricity target, and we are on track to meet this target by the end of next year. We were the first jurisdiction to introduce pill testing, an important health intervention that can and will save young Canberrans' lives. We were the first jurisdiction to introduce a bill of rights, with the passage of the ACT Human Rights Act in 2000.

We were the first to recognise same-sex domestic partnerships in 1994 and the first to end sexuality-based discrimination in 2003. Famously, this Assembly legislated for same-sex marriage before any other Australian jurisdiction; and this community returned an emphatic 75 per cent yes vote in the marriage equality survey, cementing Canberra as Australia's most LGBTIQ friendly city.

We have embraced welcoming and supporting new migrants and people seeking asylum in our country, fleeing circumstances that for many of us are impossible to fathom. All of this has happened over a period when it seems that communities around the world have become more defined by what divides than what connects.

Madam Speaker, since self-government we have opened ourselves up to the world. For too long travelling to Canberra from overseas meant flying to almost any other capital city in Australia first. But with the commencement of direct international flights to Canberra, our city changed forever. We are now firmly focused on taking advantage of all of the opportunities available to us, whether they are here at home or abroad. With this more outward looking focus has come a more resilient territory economy.

I can proudly report today that Canberrans are Australia's greatest exporters. We have seen a significant growth in service exports and our international education sector has doubled in size in recent years. We are home to around 1½ per cent of Australia's population but we now account for 2½ per cent of Australia's service exports. Our economy has nearly doubled in size during the self-government period.

Madam Speaker, these are not the only things that matter. When we talk about economic growth, we must not forget to ask the question: why? To what end do we pursue economic growth? Governments in the ACT have always had an eye to the kind of society they want to foster and encourage.

There is so much more to living a good life than what is in your bank account or the value of your home. Quality of life and everything that a quality life entails are also important. That is why we are working to be the first jurisdiction in Australia to publish social wellbeing indicators alongside our annual budget papers.

Madam Speaker, it is not just this city's successes that have built our identity. Canberrans have a selflessness and a social spirit that have grown from our shared hardships. We have a strong sense of camaraderie and an unfailing willingness to help each other in tough times, through fires, through droughts, through floods and through other natural disasters.

Through our triumphs and our tribulations, I believe that the defining achievement of self-government has been our capacity to unify the community behind the shared passion of Canberra's future. The ACT Legislative Assembly has been, and always will be, made up of different political parties. But there is more that unifies us than divides us. As long as we never lose sight of that, Canberra will continue to prosper.

Madam Speaker, days such as today provide an important opportunity to take the time to reflect on the events of the past and to look to the future with a sense of optimism and a sense of renewed purpose. We are committed to building on the 30 years of dedicated service and achievement of this place and to guiding this city and our community into a bright and successful future.

In closing this morning, I would like to thank the speakers, ministers and members of the current Assembly and all of those who have contributed in this place over 30 years: past and present members of the Assembly and the advisory bodies that preceded it. I acknowledge the clerks and all of the other Assembly officials who do so much to ensure the smooth operation of this place.

I thank the ACT public service, which has served the community and the Assembly, providing quality, frank and fearless advice. And I acknowledge the Ngunnawal people, the ACT Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Elected Body and other community members present here today.

Most importantly, I acknowledge the ACT community for their strong and vocal participation in our democratic process. This place draws its strength from the community that it serves. Without that community and without that support, we would not be here today.

MR COE (Yerrabi—Leader of the Opposition) (10.21): I too rise in recognition of the 30th anniversary of the Legislative Assembly of the Australia Capital Territory. But before I continue I would like to pass on the apology of my colleague Nicole Lawder, who cannot be with us. She is interstate with an unwell family member.

We are all fortunate to live in this wonderful city. For thousands of years this has been a home; it has been cherished and we are all charged with the responsibility of ensuring that it continues to be a place of opportunity.

Later this morning Elder Tina Brown is to lead a group of Aboriginal women in the presentation of a possum skin cloak. This is a very rare occurrence and one that I look forward to witnessing. This significant and strong symbol is a reminder that we are part of something bigger than ourselves. I also recognise Lillian Bell, Louise Brown, Roslyn Brown, Loretta Halloran, Matilda Howes and Agnes Shae.

The people of this region have always been resourceful, be it the Indigenous people, the early European settlers, the federation pioneers, the city planners, the builders, the civil servants who made it their home or the industry which helps sustain it. Canberra is a resourceful place and one that is yet to reach its full potential.

Of course, like so many institutions in Australia, the Assembly did not start from square one. We were fortunate to import or inherit so many traditions, conventions, rules and laws from the commonwealth parliament and other jurisdictions. We also inherited much from the ACT Advisory Council and the Australian Capital Territory House of Assembly. People including Jim Leedman, Paul Whalan, Trevor Kaine, Greg Cornwell, Elizabeth Grant, Ros Kelly and Susan Ryan are familiar names that served in these predecessor bodies.

The study of history is important. It helps us learn lessons from the past and, importantly, honour those that came before us. By honouring older and past generations we actively recognise that we have the opportunities that we have today because of the contribution of those before us.

Canberra is a fortunate city, and we are also an island in a region. It is wonderful to have mayors of neighbouring councils with us today. Whilst people may need to cross the border to go to work or buy a block of land, at least for the past 92 years you have been able to buy a drink in the capital territory. And we are coming up to that important centenary in 2027.

There is no doubt that Canberra is one of the most affluent cities on earth. However, this average or median wealth must be looked at with some relativity. We must be mindful of the thousands of Canberrans who struggle to keep up with the average. We must ensure that this is a community that does not price people out of the market and is truly a place where hard work is rewarded and people are supported.

While city-states are not uncommon around the world, we are one of a kind in our federation. And whilst there are many other self-governing cities around the world, I think that the collective attributes of the ACT make this jurisdiction unique. For instance, there would be few jurisdictions in the world where a sub-national government has the broad level of autonomy that we have, including schools, hospitals, corrections and many other issues.

We have extraordinary economies of distance. We do not have regional schools or one-person police stations. We should be an efficient small jurisdiction. We have a city-dwelling, largely suburban population. We have generous commonwealth funding that supports our annual budget and we have well over 50,000 employees from a single employer. Add to this a legislature that is unicameral and comprises just 25 members. This creates the conditions for an efficient, dynamic, fair and prosperous community.

Furthermore, we have received endowments in the form of NCDC infrastructure and assets, institutions such as the ANU, UC, CIT and ADFA, and national institutions such as the library, the War Memorial, the archives, the gallery and many others. We have a wonderful environment and a great legacy of civil engineering that has sculpted our lakes and vistas.

The reason I make mention of this history is that we know our place in the federation and we know our place in the world, because we need to know that we are part of something bigger than ourselves.

Today in the gallery we have many luminaries of the capital. They have served or serve our city with distinction.

Madam Speaker, I note that you have already acknowledged the attendance of many former members and let me join you in paying respect to all these members. I also pay respect to a person elected to the Ninth Assembly, our friend Steve Doszpot. I also acknowledge the families of former members here with us today: Helen Watchirs and Dorothy and Kevin Jeffery.

The past 30 years have sometimes been rocky. I have witnessed about a third of this history in the Assembly. Of course, 1989 was the beginning of the Assembly but not the start of our traditions. We built upon and imported many conventions, as I mentioned earlier.

However, I am not sure that many of the former members who are with us today appreciate just how formative the First, Second and Third Assemblies were. Because of their trailblazing, so many words, phrases, props and stunts are now banned in the

chamber. They set precedents that will last in perpetuity. They have certainly left a legacy. Those early years of the Assembly really must have been a golden era for interjections. Without any precedents, seemingly everything went.

As everyone here knows too well, there have been many points of order. And points of order are very important for oppositions because we do not win motions or legislation. So points of order are sometimes all we have. In fact, one could be forgiven for thinking that bills, motions and questions are just incidentals between points of order.

To support this theory, I have undertaken a little research. Some might call it the highlights reel of the Assembly; that is, the memorable moments of usually late night sittings. This was a point of order from Mr Duby, in response to a speech by Bill Wood, who is with us today, on 1 May 1990:

Mr Stevenson and I are being tarred with the same brush and we both object to it.

On 18 May 1994 Mr Stevenson took a point of order:

I raise a point of order, Madam Speaker. I think that calling me a politician was not fair; it was not a nice thing to say at all.

On 21 May 1996 Gary Humphries, who is with us today, took a point of order:

On a point of order, Mr Speaker. Mr Berry said mine was the worst budget. I resent his denying me that special place in the pantheon.

On 9 March 2000 Simon Corbell took a point of order:

He used the term “loony left” ... I certainly take it as an imputation against me.

On 23 October 2003, in quintessential Steve Pratt language, he took a point of order:

On the point of order, I claim that that is an imputation—and lower than a snake’s belly in a wheel rut ...

On 9 December 2003 Mr Stanhope took a point of order:

On a point of order, Mr Deputy Speaker: Mrs Dunne just referred to me as a pathetic little worm. I take objection to being regarded as little.

Madam Speaker, regardless of the theatre of this place, albeit mostly with no audience, I think Canberra has been served well by the ACT Assembly. But there is room for improvements as to how this place operates.

Firstly, I think the role of committees is still evolving. I think that the committee office—and each committee—needs further resources if it is truly to be a permanent and consistent force in our parliamentary process. Such resources are required in research, specialist advice, in legal and accounting services and in monitoring roles. I also think that there have to be resources to follow the progress and implementation of

past committee recommendations and reports. The unicameral form of this Assembly means that a strong committee system is in the ACT's interest.

Secondly, I am of the view that there is a need for a stronger provision for capital works oversight in the ACT. There is inadequate reporting, and this needs to change.

Thirdly, the detailed and expert scrutiny of legislation is something that desperately requires more attention. This area of law is highly specialised and requires considerable expertise, and it needs to be resourced appropriately.

Fourthly and finally, how MLAs communicate with their electorate is still very difficult, as everyone here knows. Whilst there are multiple-member electorates we still need to service and represent the full electorate. We do not divvy up the electorate by five. I would expect that the level of awareness and engagement in a single-member electorate is probably higher than in our multi-member electorates. Whilst it is a structural issue, it is also a tangible logistics and resources issue as well. If we are to properly engage with over 80,000 people each, we do have to be resourced appropriately.

The Assembly is a dynamic place. On any given day we can bounce around a dozen issues pretty quickly, especially for new members of this place. We get experiences and opportunities that members of other parliaments could not dream of.

I would like to thank the staff of the Assembly who for over 30 years have served this place with distinction, be they in chamber support, Hansard, the committee office, the library, finance, HR, IT, building services, the Clerk's office or in education.

I would also like to pay tribute to the unsung heroes of members of the Assembly, and that is MLA staff. We ask each member's staff to be a speechwriter, a telephone counsellor, an event organiser, an accountant, a lawyer, a drafter, a letter-boxer, an author, a graphic designer and much, much more. They are truly talented people. They are all dedicated, and all past and present members owe these staff a great deal.

A lot of people contribute to making this place tick and, whilst I am yet to experience life on level 2 of this building, as a non-executive member of this place I have been honoured to be here. We are all part of something bigger than ourselves, and everyone comes here to make Canberra even better. We all look forward to strengthening democracy in the years to come.

MR RATTENBURY (Kurrajong) (10.36): It is an honour to speak on behalf of the ACT Greens on this special occasion of the 30th anniversary of self-government in the ACT.

I acknowledge the traditional custodians of the land we are gathering on today and pay my respects to the many Ngunnawal elders in the room here today, as well as elders past and elders emerging. The Greens acknowledge Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people's long and continuing relationship with the land and water. Their rights and obligations as traditional custodians must be respected. European settlers arrived in the district almost 200 years ago and set up farms over land that had

been managed by local tribes for well over 20,000 years. As we meet here today, we also acknowledge that sovereignty was never ceded and that this always was and always will be Aboriginal land.

The ACT Greens acknowledge and recognise that to become a truly reconciled nation we must act to empower, listen to and support Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people and their families. This week Ms Le Couteur and I officially launched our reconciliation action plan for our offices. We see this as an important part of our journey and a clear demonstration of our commitment to reconciliation and honouring Aboriginal traditional custodians. We know that reconciliation is hard work and will require determination and effort. This plan provides us with a clear framework and lays the foundations for an ongoing reconciliation journey alongside Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples into the future. We are committed to reconciliation and treaties, and we look forward to the long journey that we all must take to learn and share as we walk on this path.

We are very excited to see the possum skin cloak that is being gifted to the Assembly today to commemorate this 30th anniversary. It is a significant gift. I understand that 16 strong Ngunawal women, led by Elder Tina Brown, have been working very hard to create this cloak over a long time in preparation for today. Madam Speaker has already acknowledged them, and I personally thank the women who have worked to make the cloak, which I believe is made up of very many possum skins indeed—something some of Canberra's keen gardeners may well welcome.

Madam Speaker has also acknowledged the many former MLAs who have joined us today on this special occasion. In particular I note the presence of Lucy Horodny, who, along with Kerrie Tucker, was the first Greens MLA elected in 1995.

The ACT Greens did not even exist in 1989, when self-government was introduced in the territory. I myself was still in high school. I watched with great interest as the debate rolled on about whether the ACT should have self-government. The debate of course finally landed as we saw it. I was then a little frustrated to still be just 17 and not quite able to vote when the first ACT election was held in 1989. However, I fear that at that age I might have been seduced by the Party! Party! Party! Party, the Surprise Party or the Sun-Ripened Warm Tomato Party.

The concept of self-government was once a very contentious thing in the ACT. In the referendum in 1978, 63 per cent of residents voted against it. Now there is a whole new generation of people who have grown up with the ACT having its own government and are simply not aware of the battles that were fought to get representation and self-determination for the people of the ACT over the majority of last century, right back to the foundations of this city.

Even at the very establishment of the territory, ACT residents were disenfranchised, with no representation in any parliament. Previously residents of New South Wales, they had lost their vote for the New South Wales government but had insufficient numbers to warrant a seat in the new federal parliament. Getting a representative from the ACT into the federal parliament did not happen until 1949, and even then with limited powers, only allowing the members to vote on issues that affected the territory.

Over the first seven years of the territory's existence there were various committees and commissions established to oversee the growth of the new nation's capital and manage the affairs of the people here in Canberra. The debate about how much say local residents should have over the management of the small town, which then over time grew into a small city, was protracted. Various pre-self-government structures enabled some local representation, including committees, councils and the Legislative Assembly of the 1970s. The House of Assembly of the 1980s was even an elected version. But all of these bodies were still, at best, only to advise a federal minister for the territory.

From the early 1970s there had been much discussion about Canberra self-governing and about the many complexities of the financial arrangements, noting that the federal government funded the costs of developing and servicing the territory and its residents. There was a fear that the high level of servicing would fall and taxes would rise if self-government came in. Given the structural financial arrangements for the territory, this was always going to be a challenge for a small territory that was half national park.

When the Hawke government came to power in 1983, a clear commitment was made for the ACT to take charge of its own affairs. Minister Scholes was intent on shifting management of the territory from federal cabinet and on establishing a municipal government for the ACT to manage a range of state level responsibilities such as housing and community services and, over time, take control of all government functions that could be extracted from the commonwealth.

The proposed 1985 model for territory governance was quite similar to what we have today, with a single chamber council of 13 members, elected by optional preferential voting for four-year terms, the key difference being the 13 separate electorates. A key part of the model was not being a sole municipal government, meaning we would be part of state-federal financial relations and not have a lord mayor. Hence we are the only capital city today in Australia without a lord mayor, at least in a formal sense.

There were many years of detailed debate about exactly what self-government would look like and whether it should even happen at all. The Greens are pleased that we are now able to self-govern, and we believe that we are better and stronger as a territory as a result.

Since the ACT government first sat in May 1989, many things have happened locally, nationally and internationally, and the ACT has had to grow and evolve to adapt to these challenges. One major challenge continues to be managing public expectations against the capabilities of an ACT budget, noting that the federal government previously funded a very high level of amenity and services. The ACT also has a legacy of federally funded things like playgrounds more generously installed than in other states and creating an ongoing maintenance pressure that we will manage for decades to come. There are certainly difficulties in managing the territory budget without having a large amount of land like other states, thus having few royalties from natural resources and no large land bank for future income.

We are all acutely aware of how much Canberra has changed in the past 30 years. Our population has grown from 279,000 people in 1989 to over 420,000 now. Our suburban footprint has grown dramatically. Infill is well underway. Light rail, which has been talked about since well before the inception of the Assembly, has now had its first stage rolled out.

I believe that Canberra as a city has finally come of age. I think that this happened a lot during the centenary of Canberra in 2013, when we were all proud to celebrate the centenary of this fine city. I am pleased that since then there seems to be significantly less Canberra bashing by our own population—perhaps others still do it—and a lot more true Canberra pride in what we have in our city.

We are lucky to have an Assembly that is so highly functioning and suitable for the ACT. In particular, being a small jurisdiction and largely a city-state means that all our MLAs are very accessible year round for the public. We all have our offices here in the Assembly, right in the city, and members do not need to spend half their time travelling to their electorates at far distances, as is the case in other states. I am sure members' families are quite happy about this arrangement as well. Instead of the previous single minister responsible for the ACT who lived somewhere else in the country, we now have local ministers who are easily accessible in our local community and are seen regularly at the local shops, sporting fields, cafes and other venues about town.

The Greens have also had quite a journey over that period, forming after the Second Assembly election and running for the first time in the 1995 election. We have had continuous representation in this place since then and we have been proud to play a role in helping shape the democratic landscape of this place over this period. From our perspective, we understand that the most effective way to implement change in minority government situations is to first strengthen parliamentary processes, allowing policy changes to then be made more easily.

Improving the integrity and transparency frameworks and measures has been particularly important to us, and the introduction in the first parliamentary agreement of the Latimer House principles on the three branches of government, we believe, is especially key to improving accountability and practice in the relationship between the executive, parliament and the judiciary in the ACT. These principles have formed the basis of many reforms that shape our democratic system, such as creating officers of the parliament to ensure that our oversight institutions are given the space and support for playing their independent role as a fourth arm of government. And our ACT Independent Integrity Commission will hopefully commence in just a few months time.

Another example of parliamentary reforms from the 2008 parliamentary agreement is the requirement that no bill will be debated in the same sitting period as it was introduced. This might not seem like a major thing in the scale of things, but for the earlier life of the Assembly up to this period legislation could be brought in on the Tuesday of a sitting period and debated on Thursday, not leaving sufficient time for non-government members to analyse the bill, perhaps liaise with stakeholders, seek the views of the community and negotiate improved outcomes.

Over the 30 years of the Assembly there has only been one term of majority government, from 2004 to 2008. Before then there was always a combination of independents and minor parties as well as the major parties. As a result, the people in the ACT tend to be more comfortable with minority governments and how they work than perhaps people in other parts of the country. People here can see that minority government does not necessarily lead to instability but can in fact lead to improved scrutiny and a diversity of ideas and debate and perspectives that are brought to this place.

In some part, as a reflection of that, since its inception at self-government the ACT has led the way on the national stage in many ways, and the Chief Minister made this point earlier. The very first point of note, of course, was Rosemary Follett becoming Australia's first female head of government. Having now had three female chief ministers, we still lead the nation, and we have managed to do this within 30 years, where states have had many more decades and have not achieved this. In percentage terms, this means that around 45 per cent of the time we have had a female chief minister and, for that, the territory can be proud. Interestingly, for two years ACT residents were represented by a female chief minister, a female prime minister, a female governor-general and a queen. Only Tasmanians can match that.

Other national firsts include decriminalising cannabis use in 1992, legally recognising same-sex couples in 1994, decriminalising abortion in 2002, passing Australia's first human rights act in 2004, passing anti-SLAPP legislation in 2008 to ensure that corporations cannot use legal actions to stop activists protesting, Australia's first pill-testing trial in 2018 and of course the creation of the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Elected Body, again a step that no other jurisdiction has yet taken.

The ACT is one of Australia's best jurisdictions for animal welfare and we have much to be proud of, including banning the use of wild animals in circuses since 1992, the banning of tail docking of dogs, being the first and only place to ban sow stalls, caged hens and debeaking and also banning greyhound racing just over a year ago.

The ACT Greens are proud to have helped make Canberra one of the most progressive, inclusive and sustainable cities. We have spent our time in this place standing up for the community and the environment, raising issues of sustainability and fair planning and standing up for vulnerable people.

Now climate change is the biggest challenge that we face, something recognised in key polling released this week. The ACT is nationally and internationally leading climate change targets. Our 40 per cent emissions reduction target by 2020 was legislated by the Seventh Assembly. It is a target to match the scientific advice and the ecological imperative. It is an ambitious target, one that many were sceptical that we might meet. But with the 100 per cent renewable electricity target being delivered by next year we are well on track.

The government has just rolled out the first stage of light rail, a transport network that will help change and shape this city for decades to come. This will help us address the very real challenge of coping with population growth over the coming decades, reduce

our transport emissions and ensure access to transport for everybody in our community.

Reflecting on why Canberra is such a progressive city, one of the central reasons is the electoral system and the shape of our parliament, although for former members it may look a little crowded with 25 people now on the benches. We are one of only a couple of jurisdictions in Australia with proportional representation, with more than one member in each electorate and therefore a higher chance of working with someone from a minor party or an independent. We do not support all the views of some of the minor parties and independents that have been represented here in Canberra but we do believe that they add value to our democracy and that they enrich the policy debates that we have in this place.

Reflecting on our hopes for the next 30 years, although the ACT has made substantial progress in managing the territory there are still significant issues facing us in relation to true self-determination. It is deeply frustrating when the federal government, or essentially MPs from other states, get to overturn or veto the right of the ACT to make decisions even when it is the majority opinion of our citizens. In 2006 the ACT parliament twice passed laws recognising civil unions and then later civil partnerships. But they were both vetoed by the federal government. Eventually we passed legislation that allowed for partnership recognition but without allowing a ceremony, which allowed it to pass the political will of the federal government of the day.

The right for us to even legislate on some issues is limited, with the federal government inserting specific restrictive clauses in the territory's self-government act in relation to dying with dignity—yet another inequality between the states and territories which needs to be addressed in the future.

The ACT is a unique place in Australia and in the world. Almost half of the territory is national park, with the city nestled into the valleys between our hills. This has shaped us as the bush capital and I believe it shapes the way we think as Canberrans. We may represent three different parties in this place but I believe that members work hard to represent the diverse views of Canberrans to strive for the best governance and democracy that we can have.

I look forward to seeing what the next 30 years bring, by which time we hope to see the ACT being a zero-emissions city, with our vulnerable people being supported in the best ways possible. We have many things to be proud of and, as a place with a strong community, we will keep working together towards an even better territory.

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) (10.53), in reply: I thank members for their contributions to the debate: the Leader of the Opposition and the leader of the Greens party. And I thank all members for getting through this: this would be the one debate in recent times without a point of order being taken. I thank all of those who travelled to be here with us today to celebrate this important occasion. Thank you for being with us.

Question resolved in the affirmative.

Mark of reconciliation—gift of possum skin cloak

Statement by Speaker

MADAM SPEAKER: Before I call Mr Gentleman to move the adjournment, after we adjourn I would like to invite all members and those in the gallery to join me outside in Civic Square for a traditional welcome to country and smoking ceremony before we move into the reception room for the unveiling of a possum skin cloak which has been created by local Ngunnawal women, led by Tina Brown, which is to be gifted to us here as part of reconciliation.

This is the first cloak that Ngunnawal women have made in over 150 years. This is a particularly generous and kind gift and I am delighted that all of us here today will be able to participate in that ceremony. The cloak will take pride of place at the entrance to the Assembly as an ongoing symbol of our shared journey of reconciliation and in recognition of the vitality and importance of our first Australians.

Adjournment

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

That the Assembly do now adjourn.

The Assembly adjourned at 10.55 am until Tuesday, 14 May 2019, at 10 am.