



Debates

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Tuesday, 13 August 2019

Petition: Roller derby facilities—petition 20-19	2723
Motion to take note of petition.....	2723
Standing orders—suspension.....	2723
Justice and Community Safety—Standing Committee.....	2723
Hydrotherapy services in south Canberra (Ministerial statement)	2724
Estimates 2019-2020—Select Committee	2732
Estimates 2019-2020—Select Committee	2732
Appropriation Bill 2019-2020.....	2733
Questions without notice:	
ACT Health—SPIRE project.....	2758
Employment—rights	2758
Health—inter-agency communication.....	2759
Government—services	2760
Mental health—disability access	2761
Health—adult mental health unit.....	2762
Homelessness—government policy	2764
Hospitals—emergency waiting times	2765
Hospitals—radiation therapy waiting times	2767
Budget—health funding	2768
Hospitals—oncology treatment waiting times	2770
Aboriginals and Torres Strait Islanders—rehabilitation facility	2771
Budget—emergency services	2771
Aboriginals and Torres Strait Islanders—Ngunnawal Bush Healing Farm ..	2773
ACT Health—SPIRE project.....	2775
Municipal services—shopping centre upgrades	2776
Supplementary answers to questions without notice:	
Aboriginals and Torres Strait Islanders—Ngunnawal Bush Healing Farm ..	2778
ACT Health—SPIRE project.....	2778
Papers.....	2779
Appropriation Bill 2019-2020.....	2780
Adjournment:	
Ms Meredith Hinchliffe	2835
Assembly—work experience.....	2836

Tuesday, 13 August 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.

Petition

The following petition was lodged for presentation:

Roller derby facilities—petition 20-19

By Ms J Burch, from 542 residents:

To the Speaker and Members of the Legislative Assembly for the Australian Capital Territory

The following residents of the ACT draw to the attention of the Assembly the lack of indoor facilities for training and competition games for roller derby in The ACT (both Canberra Roller Derby League and Varsity Derby League).

Your petitioners, therefore, request the Assembly to urgently review existing facilities in both public and private ownership and to ensure that roller derby in the ACT has the required facilities for future growth and demand.

The Clerk having announced that the terms of the petition would be recorded in Hansard and a copy referred to the appropriate minister for response pursuant to standing order 100, the petition was received.

Pursuant to standing order 99A, the petition, having more than 500 signatories, was referred to the Standing Committee on Environment and Transport and City Services.

Motion to take note of petition

Motion (by **Madam Speaker**) agreed to:

That the petition so lodged be noted.

Standing orders—suspension

Motion (by **Mr Gentleman**) agreed to, with the concurrence of an absolute majority:

That so much of standing orders be suspended as would prevent matters of public importance being discussed this day and Thursday, 15 August 2019.

Justice and Community Safety—Standing Committee Scrutiny report 33

MRS JONES (Murrumbidgee) (10.03): I present the following report:

Justice and Community Safety—Standing Committee (Legislative Scrutiny Role)—Scrutiny Report 33, dated 6 August 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 No 33 contains the committee's comments on 134 pieces of subordinate legislation and three government responses. The report was circulated to members when the Assembly was not sitting. I commend the report to the Assembly.

Hydrotherapy services in south Canberra Ministerial statement

MS STEPHEN-SMITH (Kurrajong—Minister for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Affairs, Minister for Children, Youth and Families, Minister for Disability, Minister for Employment and Workplace Safety, Minister for Health and Minister for Urban Renewal) (10.03): I rise today in response to the Assembly's resolution about hydrotherapy services in south Canberra. Members will recall that the resolution called on the ACT government to agree not to close the Canberra Hospital pool until an appropriate level of access at other suitable locations, readily accessible for those on Canberra's south side, can be continued, and to continue to work collaboratively with local stakeholders to include their input in the work that is currently underway to determine the current demand and usage of hydrotherapy and warm-water facilities across the ACT.

At that time the ACT Health Directorate had recently engaged an external adviser, Nous Group, to undertake an assessment of access to hydrotherapy in the ACT. Today I will provide members with an update on the work undertaken by Nous, the outcomes of that work and the actions being taken to address their recommendations.

I would firstly like to confirm that, in line with the government's commitment to keep the Canberra Hospital hydrotherapy pool open until access at other suitable locations could be found, Canberra Health Services extended the hydrotherapy pool user agreement with Arthritis ACT until the end of September 2019. This ensured continuity of access for the pool users while the Nous work was underway, and until a way forward could be identified.

I can further confirm that this arrangement will continue until the work to secure access at other suitable locations is completed. However, it is also now in everyone's interest to resolve the situation as quickly as possible to give pool users certainty. For the information of the Assembly, I present the following papers:

Hydrotherapy services in South Canberra—Ministerial statement, 13 August 2019.

Access to Hydrotherapy in the ACT, prepared by the Nous Group, dated 2 July 2019.

The report was released last week. For the sake of brevity I will continue to refer to it simply as the Nous report.

To inform its work, Nous Group considered a range of documentation and consulted with a variety of stakeholders. The primary stakeholder consultations involved Arthritis ACT members and users of the Canberra Hospital hydrotherapy pool. Community groups such as Weston Creek Community Council and Sharing Places were also included. Government officials from the ACT Health Directorate, Canberra Health Services and Education were consulted, and the views of a range of clinical and allied health professionals were additionally sought and incorporated.

Through these stakeholder consultations Nous identified that a fundamental challenge in having a conversation about the management of access to hydrotherapy in the current environment is that “hydrotherapy means different things to different people”. Indeed, Nous found that the only commonality between the differing views is often the physical facility.

To explain, officials from Canberra Health Services have been considering hydrotherapy as a prescribed form of time-limited treatment for a range of specific medical conditions and, in line with the Australian Physiotherapy Association, summarise that this form of hydrotherapy can best be referred to as “aquatic physiotherapy”. Other stakeholder groups perceive hydrotherapy to be a preventive health measure, undertaken over a long period of time or on an ongoing basis, that can thus be referred to as “maintenance therapy”.

Senior medical professionals support both of these definitions, with their opinions suggesting that hydrotherapy is beneficial for both targeted rehabilitative treatment and as a form of maintenance treatment for people with some forms of chronic disease. However, this means there is no “one size fits all”, and the needs of those seeking access to a hydrotherapy or warm-water pool through the public health system are varied.

The Nous report outlines the contributing factors that have led to the current situation and makes clear the points of disagreement and contention. One of these is the current status of the Canberra Hospital pool. Recommendation 1 of the report therefore is:

Canberra Health Services and the ACT Health Directorate should engage quickly and in enough depth with Arthritis ACT to make clear the basis on which it has drawn its conclusions regarding the safety and fit for purpose condition of the Canberra Hospital pool. This should be a defined and time-bounded process, of weeks at most.

This recommendation arises from Nous’s observation that there is a clear difference in opinion amongst the users of the hydrotherapy pool and those responsible for maintaining it. Whilst the visual appearance of the pool may give users the impression that it is fit for purpose, safe and not suffering from extensive maintenance issues, the infrastructure supporting the pool’s operation presents a very different picture.

The hydrotherapy pool at Canberra Hospital was built in the 1970s and is more than 40 years old. In 2009 the pool was closed to allow for significant remedial works to address water leaking from the pool, through the concrete slab and into the plant room. The works to rectify the issue resulted in the removal and replacement of tiles, the replacement of tanking, remedial works on the lintel, upgrade works to the electrical switchboard, upgrading the access ladder to the plant room, and the installation of a new elevated walkway in the plant room. These works were undertaken to ensure that the pool was operational for a further time-limited period. At that time a significant infrastructure program had just commenced at the Canberra Hospital campus and the building housing the pool was being considered for demolition and rebuild. This is no longer the case.

In 2015 the pool was again closed to allow for further remedial works to be undertaken. These works were varied, and ranged from rectifying leaking chemical injectors and leaking pipes, the removal of a redundant water tank due to the confined space risks, lighting replacements, bathroom repairs, painting and safety improvements.

The closure of the Canberra Hospital hydrotherapy pool was proposed in 2014 and 2015 as part of the broader University of Canberra Hospital service delivery plan public consultation. The proposed closure at this time was based on several factors, including the relocation of all public rehabilitation health services to UCH, and that ACT Health would no longer provide a service at the Canberra Hospital that required the use of this pool.

At the time the then health minister made a commitment that the Canberra Hospital pool would not be closed until a replacement public hydrotherapy pool was available. This commitment was met with the opening of a new state-of-the-art hydrotherapy pool at the University of Canberra Hospital in 2018.

Notwithstanding the remedial works, there continue to be significant infrastructure issues associated with the Canberra Hospital pool. The plant and equipment supporting the pool are located underneath the pool area in a confined space that has a single egress point that presents suboptimal maintenance access compared with contemporary pool plant room designs. The infrastructure supporting the pool, particularly the electrical and heating, ventilation and air conditioning or HVAC plant, is aged and without spare part backup in the event of likely failure of aged equipment.

Advice from the Canberra Health Services infrastructure team, noted in the *Nous* report, is that the current situation presents an increased staff safety risk in the event of emergency, such as a fire or pool chemical spill. Further, the report states:

In addition to the concerns regarding the mechanics of the pool, it has also been suggested that the pool is no longer fit for purpose. This view is not restricted to infrastructure and management officials, it is also the view shared by senior medical professionals. This observation is supported when comparing the current specifications for the pool with the Australian Standard for hydrotherapy pools and the Australasian Health Facility Guidelines for hydrotherapy pools.

It is abundantly clear that the Canberra Hospital hydrotherapy pool is at the end of its life. The ACT government has continued to invest in this ageing asset for several years to ensure it could continue to be accessed by those who benefit from it and until a replacement was available at UCH.

The pool is no longer up to standard, does not fit the design of a contemporary hydrotherapy pool and is not sustainable to maintain into the future. To quote the Nous report:

... representatives of Canberra Health Services have indicated that the risk to personnel safety is unacceptable and is not one that the organisation can continue to carry.

In line with recommendation 1, the ACT Health Directorate held a briefing for Arthritis ACT members and users of the Canberra Hospital hydrotherapy pool on 7 August 2019 to present the Nous report and enable Canberra Health Services to directly outline their concerns about the current condition and safety issues with the pool.

The presentation provided the opportunity to explain the infrastructure and safety issues in detail. Arthritis ACT's members and users of the pool were able to ask questions and have their concerns heard by me and senior executives from the ACT Health Directorate and Canberra Health Services. The briefing aimed to get everyone on the same page about the current state of the Canberra Hospital hydrotherapy pool and the risks involved in keeping it open. To this end, members of the Legislative Assembly who had previously expressed an interest in this matter were invited and they also had the opportunity to ask questions. Unfortunately, those MLAs who attended the briefing have continued to question the information provided by public servants, including regarding work health and safety.

I note that I had the opportunity to speak with one of the maintenance workers for the TCH pool after the briefing last week. I was pleased to hear that he does not consider himself to be at risk in maintaining the pool, as workers wear a harness and monitoring devices while in the plant room to ensure that if something goes wrong it will become quickly apparent and a swift response will be facilitated. While these are sensible precautionary measures, the fact that they are necessary does not speak to a safe working environment. Canberra Health Services has concluded that this risk is not sustainable, even with mitigation in place, and the Nous report has supported this position. It is hard to see how anyone in this place could take a different view. The present risks are not isolated to the pool's infrastructure.

The Nous report outlines risks associated with the current supervision arrangements and the funding agreement with Arthritis ACT. Recommendation 2 of the report is:

ACT Health Directorate should immediately conduct a review of the funding agreement with Arthritis ACT, with a view to constructively resolve the set of issues identified within it.

One of the primary issues to be addressed is the arrangements under which the hydrotherapy sessions are managed. Nous has identified that:

The current workforce supervising Arthritis ACT's use of the different hydrotherapy pools is drawn from the same cohort of individuals who are accessing hydrotherapy as a way of managing their own health problems. This can include individuals with severe arthritis and other physical ailments.

While greatly appreciating the involvement and commitment of volunteer supervisors, Arthritis ACT has accepted that they do not have appropriate training and capacity in terms of basic life support and pool rescue training. The Australian Physiotherapy Association guidelines do not recommend that volunteers are used for the supervision of water-based exercises as they do not usually meet the minimum training standards expected of professionals. This is a risk for the users of the pools, Arthritis ACT, the ACT Health Directorate and Canberra Health Services and is one that all parties are seeking to resolve as part of the actions being taken to address recommendation 2.

The Health Directorate will work with Arthritis ACT to discuss the terms of the existing service funding agreement to ensure both parties' future interests are addressed. I wish to emphasise that this is not intended as a criticism of Arthritis ACT or its volunteers, but now that the risk has been identified it is important that it is addressed, for everyone's sake.

So where to from here in terms of continuing access to appropriate hydrotherapy pool facilities for Canberra Hospital pool users? The Nous report provides details on how the ACT Health Directorate and Canberra Health Services may be able to assist Arthritis ACT and its members in accessing services that best suit their needs.

Recommendation 3 of the Nous report is that the ACT Health Directorate and Canberra Health Services:

... should quickly select one of the options presented in this report to collect enough data on the users of hydrotherapy services for health maintenance purposes to assess the best alternatives for the individual, outline support the individual may need to access this service and determine whether there are some people who can self-manage their hydrotherapy without health system support.

Option 1 would be for each member of Arthritis ACT seeking access to hydrotherapy sessions to work with a physiotherapist and/or general practitioner to outline their current treatment needs. This option would require a broad clinical set of criteria to be developed for those in the maintenance therapy category to define what ACT Health should continue to fund through the public system and which user needs can reasonably be accepted to be self-managed.

Option 2 would be for the ACT Health Directorate to work with members of Arthritis ACT to provide access to suitable clinical assessments for maintenance therapy to determine respective treatment needs. The ACT Health Directorate would also work with Arthritis ACT to explore access to suitable hydrotherapy treatment and alternative facilities as part of this process. I can confirm that the ACT Health

Directorate will work with Arthritis ACT on a modified version of option 2 to support members to identify suitable access to alternative hydrotherapy.

Yesterday, I wrote to the CEO of Arthritis ACT to confirm that we heard clearly from the recent community briefing that members had already had clinical assessments undertaken to access Arthritis ACT sessions. Rather than duplicate this work, I have asked the directorate to focus on mapping the current services provided through existing sessions to build a holistic assessment of need. The directorate will work with Arthritis ACT to determine the best methodology for this work, understanding that our aim is to provide continuity of support for individuals and groups to the greatest extent possible, rather than simply undertaking a clinical assessment exercise.

The CEO of Arthritis ACT has publicly acknowledged that this work is necessary to identify a short-term solution, accepting that the Canberra Hospital pool must close in the not too distant future. Longer term arrangements are the subject of recommendation 4, which is:

ACT Health Directorate should conduct a study of the costs and benefits and different models for the longer term establishment of a hydrotherapy facility in the south of Canberra.

Again, we will start work on this straight away. As a first step, the ACT Health Directorate will undertake a process of market sounding to determine whether there are non-government organisations who may be interested in working with the ACT government on the development of a new public hydrotherapy pool in Canberra's south.

This process will take account of the very clear finding from Nous's work and the community feedback that any new hydrotherapy pool should not be based at a hospital or acute health facility but rather in a community setting. This recognises hydrotherapy as an ongoing therapeutic activity for many people with chronic illness and/or chronic pain to maintain their mobility, manage their pain and gain important mental health benefits.

In developing the market sounding process, the ACT Health Directorate will work with Arthritis ACT and its members as well as the other major non-government users of public hydrotherapy facilities, the Cerebral Palsy Alliance, and the Health Care Consumers Association.

The government acknowledges the importance of access to both aquatic physiotherapy and maintenance therapy services in the ACT. The closure of the hydrotherapy pool at Canberra Hospital is not a decision that has been taken lightly. It would be much easier for me to stand here today and say we will just keep it open. However, this is simply not a safe or sustainable option. We cannot put off the pool's closure indefinitely knowing that we are potentially putting its users and maintainers at risk. This is not something this government is willing to do; it is not something I can ask Canberra Health Services to do.

We understand how much the users of the Canberra Hospital hydrotherapy pool have benefitted from this asset over the years and how emotionally attached many people are to it. But it is not fair to these Canberrans that we continue to argue about the facts to create confusion and anxiety rather accepting the reality and finding a path forward.

The ACT government maintain our commitment to working with Arthritis ACT to ensure hydrotherapy pool users' needs can be met across the ACT. I thank Arthritis ACT and its members for the positive way in which they engaged with the Nous Group consultants for this work and for their attendance, interest and feedback at last week's briefing. We will ensure that the process going forward engages pool users proactively and constructively, based on a shared understanding of the issues and with a primary focus on their needs.

I move:

That the Assembly take note of the ministerial statement.

MRS DUNNE (Ginninderra) (10.19): I note that the minister has presented a statement which indicates that she learnt nothing from the consultation last week. She is very big on talking about consultation, but what the minister heard last week from the arthritis community—one of the users of hydrotherapy—is that the services are essential and ongoing; there is no end to the need for service. In a sense, there is a fairly limitless supply of people who would benefit from hydrotherapy services.

I note—and I will encourage the minister to do this tomorrow—that the minister apologised to the hydrotherapy community for the lack of communication and understanding manifested by ACT Health in this whole process. But I am not convinced—and I do not think Mrs Jones is yet convinced—that anyone has learnt from the process.

It is quite clear—and it was quite clearly articulated last week by the Nous consultant—that people have been speaking at cross-purposes. Mrs Jones and I and our staff clearly understood what had been articulated by Arthritis ACT about their needs, and it is astounding that the highly paid professionals in ACT Health could not similarly understand the needs expressed by Arthritis ACT. It is not rocket science; it is simply about health needs.

The previous minister used to talk about hydrotherapy and warm water based exercise, which sounded completely and utterly condescending, I have to say. The new minister has come up with a different nomenclature, but we are talking about hydrotherapy. It is therapy in water. That is what it means. Whether it is rehabilitation or ongoing health maintenance, it does not matter—it is hydrotherapy. The minister can shake her head and say, “Mrs Dunne doesn't understand,” but that is what hydrotherapy means.

For years the ACT government has taken the narrow view that hydrotherapy is associated with six or eight weeks of post-operative rehabilitation and that is it. Well, it is not it, and that is the whole point. This government has successively, over years, failed to understand the needs of people in the community beyond postoperative rehabilitation.

We have some recognition now that there has been a misunderstanding, and the health minister and the Health Directorate need to learn from that and get on with the job. I note that the minister and the officials are very keen to emphasise that the hydrotherapy pool at the hospital will be closing sooner rather than later. That is the emphasis, and the emphasis is clearly in here. On page 5 of her statement the minister says that the pool will be made operational for a further time-limited period. No-one has the courage to say what that is, and the minister needs to come clean with the community very quickly.

Four activities are highlighted in this report, and the most important one is the fourth recommendation. The ACT community cannot wait for the government to get into election mode or the next budget mode before there is an answer to recommendation 4. I have previously described the limitations of the *Nous* report, which in many ways was disappointing and did not live up to the commitment made in this place by the previous minister. A lot of stuff is missing that we expected to see in it. But the clear message is that there is a strong need for ongoing hydrotherapy services on the south side of Canberra which cannot be met by the current arrangements.

At the same time, it is quite clear that ACT Health is trying to cobble together some sort of alternative process of bussing people from place to place to meet their hydrotherapy needs. That will not be sufficient. I support the original intent of the motion moved in May, and supported by the government, that the hospital hydrotherapy pool remain open until there is another fit-for-purpose hydrotherapy facility on the south side of Canberra. The government needs to accelerate the work it is doing to ensure that that is the case.

There are people in the non-government who are prepared to work with the government on this, and the minister and the government have to be very responsive to that. But even if they were responsive to it today, a hydrotherapy facility would not be built in Canberra in the next 12 months. The planning process and everything associated with that would take at least 12 months, in the most optimistic environment with the most committed work plan. This government therefore needs to extend the contract for Arthritis ACT beyond September for at least a year. They need to be given that certainty.

The minister is shaking her head, indicating that she does not intend to do that. The minister needs to come clean. There will be an opportunity for her, tomorrow, to tell the community when she proposes to close the hydrotherapy pool. The result of the *Nous* report and this statement today is that there is as much uncertainty as there was before May. The minister again shakes her head; she is not in agreement.

The minister does not intend to keep the hydrotherapy pool open until there is a new hydrotherapy pool. She can have this argument over and over again, but the Canberra Liberals will not draw back from our commitment to keeping the Canberra Hospital pool open until a new facility is built on the south side. Get used to it, minister—find a solution and find it now.

Question resolved in the affirmative.

Estimates 2019-2020—Select Committee Report—government response

MR BARR (Kurrajong—Chief Minister, Treasurer, Minister for Social Inclusion and Equality, Minister for Tertiary Education, Minister for Tourism and Special Events and Minister for Trade, Industry and Investment) (10.27): Madam Speaker, for the information of members, I present the following paper:

*Estimates 2019-2020—Select Committee—Report—Appropriation Bill
2019-2020 and Appropriation (Office of the Legislative Assembly) Bill
2019-2020—Government response, dated August 2019.*

I move:

That the Assembly take note of the paper.

I thank the committee for its analysis of the 2019-20 budget and its report on the appropriation bills. I note that it has been ably supported by its secretariat team in preparation of the report. I acknowledge this morning the collegiate manner in which the committee conducted its hearings and thank the committee, the secretariat, my ministerial colleagues and all of the government officials for their active engagement in responding to the committee's investigations. The government respects and values the important role played by the select committee in scrutinising the proposed expenditure.

Madam Speaker, to the relief of many, I am sure, I will not respond verbally to each of the 207 recommendations in this speech this morning. The government's response that I have just tabled fulfils that purpose. In summary, the government has agreed to 90 recommendations, agreed in principle to 45 and in part to two, noted 62 and not agreed to seven. There was one recommendation that related to a government initiative that has ceased, so it is not possible to respond to that.

In summary, I do not consider that the report of the estimates committee raises any issues that would prevent the passage of the Appropriation Bill or the Appropriation (Office of the Legislative Assembly) Bill. On behalf of the government, I thank the committee for its detailed scrutiny of the budget and the accompanying appropriation and for its report. I have presented the government's response to the Assembly. We can now look forward to two weeks of detailed debate on the budget.

Question resolved in the affirmative.

Estimates 2019-2020—Select Committee Response

MADAM SPEAKER: For the information of members, I present the following paper:

*Estimates 2019-2020—Select Committee—Report—Appropriation Bill
2019-2020 and Appropriation (Office of the Legislative Assembly) Bill
2019-2020—Speaker's response to Recommendations 16, 17 and 18, dated
12 August 2019.*

Appropriation Bill 2019-2020

[Cognate bill:

Appropriation (Office of the Legislative Assembly) Bill 2019-2020

Cognate papers:

Estimates 2019-2020—Select Committee report

Estimates 2019-2020—Select Committee—government response]

Debate resumed from 4 June 2019.

MADAM SPEAKER: I remind members that in debating order of the day No 1, executive business, they may also address their remarks to executive business order of the day No 2 and Assembly business order of the day relating to the government response to the report of the Select Committee on Estimates 2019-2020.

Detail stage

MADAM SPEAKER: Standing order 180 sets down the order in which this bill will be considered—that is, that in the detail stage any schedule expressing the services for which the appropriation is to be made must be considered before the clauses and, unless the Assembly otherwise orders, the schedules will be considered by proposed expenditure in the order shown. With the concurrence of the Assembly, I am proposing that the Assembly consider schedule 1 by each part, consisting of net cost of outputs, capital injection and payments on behalf of territory. Is this the wish of the Assembly?

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

That Parts 1.1, 1.2 and 1.3 be debated cognately.

Schedule 1—Appropriations—Proposed expenditure.

ACT Local Hospital Network—Part 1.1

ACT Health Directorate—Part 1.2

Canberra Health Services—Part 1.3

MS LE COUTEUR (Murrumbidgee) (10.33): I am surprised to be the first speaker, but you never know your luck on a good day. Madam Speaker, you will be pleased to know that I intend to speak only briefly about our health system in general. As an Australian, it has been my expectation that our public health system will take care of any major medical issues. As members may well be aware, my husband recently had some medical issues. The emergency department at Woden was brilliant. He was in a bed there within less than 10 minutes of arriving at the hospital. He came to the hospital in the late evening and by the time I was back in the morning he had been transferred to a ward—also good—where he was told that if he wanted his operation done quickly he should go to national capital. He did. He was operated on that evening.

We were very fortunate. We are both well paid and have private medical insurance, so for us it was not a financial issue. In fact, for people in our position—in the position of everyone here—the crazy situation is that it is cheaper to have private medical insurance than not to have private medical insurance. It is 100 per cent paid for by the tax system; otherwise you pay an extra one per cent tax.

I remember when Peter Costello introduced this. After a few years I thought it was so inequitable that I did not have private insurance. But eventually the financial incentives for giving money to the private health system overcame my scruples and I succumbed. But this is really wrong. We are subsidising private health insurance for the well off. It is inequitable.

It also does not seem to be working. Private health insurance has been described as being in a death spiral. I actually think that we should let it die, and not a slow lingering death, which is what seems to be happening. It should be a quick death and the money should be put into an equitable public health system. While I am not a health guru, going to hospital has really made me reflect more than usual on what seems to be an increasingly inequitable health system. In saying this, I am not pointing the finger at the ACT government. I know that health is the biggest item in our budget. That is why we are talking about it first.

There are lots of other reasons for this problem—for example, vertical fiscal imbalance. The commonwealth government has more income than the states that have the responsibility for things like health and education, our ageing population, new medical treatments and, as I mentioned, the private health insurance system, which serves the interests of the private health insurance funds probably number one, and some doctors. But it is not clear that it serves the interests of the Australian population as a whole.

I appreciate that the ACT government is doing what it can with initiatives like the nurse-led walk-in centres, which is one thing to make health care more accessible to all of us. I am not suggesting that there is an easy answer, but I think it is something that we all need to pay more attention to. I was going to call it the Australian dream, but it is not the Australian dream. It was the Australian reality. A public health system that is free and accessible to everyone is becoming not a reality for an awful lot of us.

MRS DUNNE (Ginninderra) (10.37): I understand that there have been discussions between the whips and that there is going to be some latitude for me to conclude my comments on all three of the items bound up together. In anticipation, I thank the Assembly for that indulgence. After all, the health budget is one-third of the ACT government's budget. Although we have decided to deal with this cognately, which is not a bad thing, the standing orders, if strictly applied, would not allow us the opportunity to speak as the budget and the importance of this item would demand.

The 2019-20 budget was delivered on 4 June. Already two significant events have changed the health budget significantly. The first occurred when the Chief Minister signed a brief creating the major projects agency, as part of CMTEDD, on 7 June, just

ACT Labor was hanging its hat on a Shorten Labor government coming to power at the federal election in May and that being the saviour for all the Labor-Greens government's infrastructure woes. It soon became clear that there would be a Morrison-led government in power across the lake, for the next three years at least, and the ACT government realised that it needed to take responsibility after all. And so it began the work to create the major projects agency.

ACT Health was first contacted about the major projects agency on 5 June, verbally, and was contacted by email the next day. The day after the budget came down, the concept of the major projects agency was being launched with ACT Health. However, that did not go all the way. ACT Health was told that SPIRE, the largest capital works project in the health budget, would be transferred to the major projects initiative. The CEO of Canberra Health Services, who will be running SPIRE when it is built, was not contacted until 18 June, nearly a fortnight later, and only after the media had published the story about the establishment of the major projects initiative and that SPIRE would be the first project. Canberra Health Services were kept out of the loop both by the major projects team and by the ACT Health Directorate.

It confirms my fears that Canberra Health Services are being excluded from the decision-making process in relation to SPIRE. It is especially irksome in the case of SPIRE, because this project will have a significant impact on Canberra Health Services' ability to deliver front-line health services from day one of the project. Doctors, nurses and other health professionals, it seems to me, will have very little say in how SPIRE is developed. This government considers that the unions are more important than Canberra Health Services, because they were the first to be consulted on the communications plan, long before Canberra Health Services.

As at 11 June there was only one person working full time on the SPIRE project in ACT Health: one person for something which is now approaching a half-billion dollar project and which is supposed to be delivered in a fairly tight time frame. It has been said that it will be very difficult for the ACT government to actually deliver in this time frame. There was no-one at all working on SPIRE in the infrastructure and capital works area of Treasury.

What I said before about this project being developed on the back of a drinks coaster has been really and truly confirmed. It was on the back of a drinks coaster because there is no room for more than one person at a time to write on the back of a drinks coaster, and that is what has been happening in ACT Health and the ACT bureaucracy generally.

We have to remember that SPIRE was developed as a "me too" response to the Canberra Liberals' 2016 election commitment to redevelop buildings 2 and 3 on the hospital campus. It was a response that started off with the then Minister for Health saying, "We don't need this new development and we won't need it for at least 10 years." We do know that the ACT government were bleeding over the whole issue of health infrastructure during the last election, so they hurriedly pulled together this project, which will not be delivered for 10 years, beyond the commitment. That means that Mr Corbell will be proved right.

As I have said, one person in the ACT government is assigned to a project that is supposedly the top priority for both ACT Health and the entire government. This government thinks it is more important to have media advisers and public relations officers in ACT Health and ACT Health Services than it is to have a competent team putting together this most important infrastructure project. There is, comparatively speaking, an army of media advisers and public relations people across ACT Health. Some of the three dozen people working there could be perhaps better allocated to working on ensuring that SPIRE is built on time and on budget, or perhaps ahead of time, given that the timetable has already blown out.

The second major event that has taken place since the ACT budget was handed down is the resignation of Minister Fitzharris. On 27 June she announced that she would be resigning from the ministry and leaving the Assembly on 1 July. Minister Fitzharris had responsibility for Health and for Transport and City Services. Together, these portfolios represented 44 per cent of the ACT budget. In addition, Ms Fitzharris was responsible for two of the biggest capital works projects in the history of self-government: light rail and SPIRE. It was a huge workload, and it was clear to me and others that Ms Fitzharris was not across her portfolios. When Minister Steel became the Minister for City Services, that relieved some of the pressure on Minister Fitzharris, but it was clearly not enough.

Now, Minister Stephen-Smith, in her health and community services portfolios, holds responsibility for 38 per cent of the ACT budget, again with the biggest capital works project in the budget. The Chief Minister should have a close look at ministerial portfolios and the workload borne by ministers.

It is now more than 10 months since the establishment of ACT Health and Canberra Health Services as separate agencies, and that restructure is yet to bear fruit. This is confirmed by a large range of performance indicators.

Two years ago, the former Minister for Health and Wellbeing claimed in this place that emergency department waiting times were coming down. She claimed it repeatedly. But they have not been coming down; they have been going up. ED waiting times blew out badly in 2017-18, due, we were told, to a bad 2017 flu season. There was a slight recovery in 2018 due to a milder flu season, or so it seems, but the quarterly performance report for the third quarter of 2018-19 showed that waiting times in emergency departments increased across the board.

We had an early start to the flu season this year, with the Chief Health Officer advising that the flu season had arrived fully two months earlier than anticipated. There were nearly 1,000 presentations at the Canberra Hospital between 11 May and 20 June, and patients were being kept in the corridors of the emergency departments at both the Canberra Hospital and Calvary Public Hospital. The flu season started in mid-May, yet the winter bed strategy did not start until 11 July, more than two months after the onset of the flu season. This is a result of ongoing capacity issues at the Canberra Hospital. Things were not quite as bad at Calvary hospital, where the winter bed strategy started on 25 June.

The estimates committee has recommended that the Minister for Health report to the Assembly on the effectiveness of preparation for the flu season. It is important for both the Health Directorate and Canberra Health Services to consider how their response to the flu season could be better in the future and how a response to the flu season should not automatically and axiomatically result in an increase in poor performance by the emergency department. The figures in the next quarterly report and the annual report will undoubtedly be poor as well, regardless of how often this government, whichever minister has responsibility for health, wants to tell the ACT community that we are heading in the right direction and things are getting better. *(Second speaking period taken.)*

Regardless of how often this government and whichever minister has responsibility for health wants to tell the ACT community that we are heading in the right direction, that things are getting better or that we have a plan, the sad likelihood is that the ACT will continue to have the worst performance in emergency departments in the country.

We have to remember that 18 years ago we had the best emergency department performance in the country. It is this Labor-Greens government that has failed the people of Canberra and it certainly has failed them in the area of health. It has failed in infrastructure maintenance, it has failed to provide sufficient resources and it has failed to foster a respectful, supportive and tolerant workplace culture. In short, the ACT government has failed.

But, worst of all, this Labor-Greens government has failed the people who work in our health system: the hardworking, overworked, under-resourced nurses, doctors, allied health professionals and health support workers right through the organisation, all the way to facilities management. This Labor government trumpets those wonderful people—and they are truly wonderful—but the Labor-Greens government fails to support them.

Why do we have failure after failure of accreditation reviews? Why is much of our professional training accreditation under a cloud? Why have we got our most senior people leaving? Why have we got radiologists who cannot get proper training? Why is there such a toxic work culture for our staff? Why is the adult mental health unit running at over capacity? Why are adolescent health services totally inadequate? Why is the new adolescent mental health facility, which was promised at the last election for 2019, now not scheduled until 2023?

Why are there such yawning gaps in specialist services? Why does a person have to wait five years just to get an initial appointment with a specialist, let alone get on a waiting list for surgery? Why are we not replacing equipment before it breaks down or even catches fire? Why are we not tapping into the resources of the private sector for public health service delivery?

These and many other areas are where this Labor-Greens government is failing the wonderful people who work in our health system. Their rhetoric about our people is just that, rhetoric, because it is not followed up by action or support.

Another area where the ACT continues to perform poorly is elective surgery. The ACT has had the worst performance in elective surgery for several years now. It has got even worse over the past six months. On 1 October 2018 there were 410 patients overdue for surgery. On 31 March this year that number had grown to 712 patients overdue for surgery. The number of patients overdue for elective surgery has blown out by 74 per cent. It is unlikely that there will be any relief in the fourth quarter of 2018-19. The number of elective surgeries performed in public hospitals could fall as more beds are used for patients presenting at ED.

The Minister for Health will no doubt claim how wonderful the timely healthcare strategy will be. There have been a few healthcare strategies announced by successive health ministers over the years. There are several areas where Canberrans must wait a long time for elective surgery. There is yet to be a strategy that results in a sustained improvement in performance in emergency department and elective surgery waiting times. Once again, there is rhetoric, not action, and this is the hallmark of the Labor-Greens government.

Ear, nose and throat patients wait for 387 days, or over a year. Ophthalmology patients wait for nearly a year, while orthopaedics and plastic surgery patients face long waits as well. However, there has been some relief in the orthopaedics space because there has been some outsourcing to the John James Calvary facility. If a child needs surgery they must wait for over 200 days.

I look forward with eager anticipation to the briefing I am to receive on the timely healthcare strategy and how that strategy is going to be the panacea for all the ACT health system's waiting time ills. This Labor-Greens government continues to fail in health and continues to fail the people who work in the health system, and it continues to fail the people of the ACT.

Yet another area of failure is the efficiency of health service delivery. The latest data shows that the cost of delivering health services is 120 per cent of the national efficient price and 130 per cent of what it costs to deliver services in peer hospitals. In 2014-15 the average price for an activity unit in the ACT was \$6,000, compared to \$5,007 for the national weighted average and \$4,680 for peer hospitals. That is slightly old data but it is the last data where we can give a proper comparison across the board.

The minister will claim that these are old figures but they are the most recent available. There are no grounds to claim that the situation has improved since then. It is interesting that on a number of occasions when I have asked about approaching the national efficient price it is the practice of health bureaucrats to basically shrug their shoulders, put their hands up in the air in a perplexed way and say, "The ACT will never approach the national efficient price."

I think that that is true, that there are issues associated with the national efficient price and delivering things in the ACT according to the national efficient price. But it has just become standard: "We can't do it, so we won't try." If the minister tells us again that we are heading in the right direction or that things are on the improve or that we

have a plan, the people of the ACT will have every right to treat those statements with the contempt that such rhetoric deserves. If we reduced the ACT to the national efficient price we would be able to generate huge savings that could be reinvested in our health system. We would be able to reduce waiting times for elective surgery and in the emergency department.

I am sure people in the ACT who are suffering cancer are another group who suffer more than they should because of the care provided under this Labor-Greens government. The Australian Institute of Health and Welfare recently released statistics showing that Canberrans faced the longest waits in the country to start cancer treatments and, furthermore, the waiting times to start cancer treatments have blown out significantly in recent years. The average time for 90 per cent of patients to start treatment in 2017-18 was 28 days. In 2016-17 it was half that, at 14 days. Fourteen days for a cancer patient can be a long time.

The government is blaming outdated equipment for such problems. One outdated linear accelerator was decommissioned in February and a new machine was to be installed or come online next month. I wonder why it has taken seven months to replace this machine. Didn't the government know it was nearing the end of its useful life? Didn't it plan for a replacement machine sooner? And why was the new machine not ready to be installed when the old one was decommissioned?

Why is it that money drives health service delivery in the ACT and not the needs of patients? The cost of delaying cancer treatment can be death or poor quality of life for patients or delay in returning to work.

Why is this Labor-Greens government unable to manage its assets? Why does this government have to wait for expensive independent reports to tell it that its assets register and maintenance program are inappropriate and that it should have had a better asset management and maintenance program long before it did?

Calvary Public Hospital is a prime example where we see a declining asset. In late May we learnt through documents obtained under freedom of information that 61 per cent of the assets at Calvary Public Hospital are nearing the end of their useful life. There was money in the budget for some upgrades to Calvary Public Hospital Bruce but nothing to address the issue of the chronically ageing infrastructure at the hospital.

Documents that the opposition obtained last year show that the intensive care unit at the Canberra Hospital needed an urgent and immediate increase in capacity because it was projected to be full by as early as October this year. That is two months away. *(Time expired.)*

In accordance with the agreement between the whips, I seek leave to conclude my comments. It is extensive but, in accordance with the agreement, I seek leave to move to continue my comments.

Leave granted.

MRS DUNNE: I thank members for their indulgence. As I have said before, this is an important matter.

The ICU does not meet current Australian standards. It is interesting to note—and I made this comment last week—that, when I raised the issue about the ICU not meeting current Australian standards, health officials told me, “Don’t worry, Mrs Dunne, when we built it, it was fine, it met standards, so it still meets standards.” Interestingly, Mrs Jones and I and the arthritis community were told that the hydrotherapy pool does not meet Australian standards anymore and therefore it needs to be closed. There are some contradictions there that could be contemplated.

It took funding from this year’s federal budget and this year’s Morrison government’s commitments at the election to get some action happening to upgrade the ICU. The upgrade to the Canberra Hospital ICU should have been finished by now, but it is not. Because this Labor government cannot manage its health system, and because of a confusion of conflicting statements and advice, the ICU continues to languish.

The Canberra Hospital coronary care unit does not meet Australian standards, nor do the cardiac catheter labs. But do not worry, Madam Assistant Speaker, it is okay. As we have been told, they met the standards at the time that they were built, so they can continue in their current state. As I have noted before, that is not the case for the hydrotherapy pool. We will of course use the cardiac catheter labs and the coronary care unit in their current state for at least five years until SPIRE eventually opens.

Let me dwell briefly on the hydrotherapy pool at the Canberra Hospital. The hydrotherapy pool is another example of the government’s failure to plan for assets that are nearing the end of their useful life, in this case because, even though it was built according to the relevant standards of the day, it does not meet today’s standards and therefore it must close. The hydrotherapy pool was originally planned to close when the Canberra University Hospital was opened last year, and this would have meant that residents living on the south side of Canberra would face hours of travel to and from the University of Canberra Hospital for treatment.

Arthritis ACT raised concerns about the impact of this decision on hundreds of Canberrans who now rely on hydrotherapy, and Minister Fitzharris then claimed that there would be a replacement hydrotherapy pool at Stromlo. She eventually had to correct the record when it became obvious that this claim was not true.

We now have the report from the Nous Group that the case for a new hydrotherapy pool is reasonable. The Nous Group recommended that the government collect data on the territory’s hydrotherapy users and the costs and benefits of a new facility in Canberra’s south. This work should have started many years ago. It should have started when ACT Health’s asset register and maintenance program told the government that the time for the decommissioning of the pool was approaching. Instead, we got confusing advice, uninformed statements, misinformation and obfuscation from this Labor-Greens government.

This has been going on for five years. For five years people like Arthritis ACT have not known what their future is. For five years there has been discussion. For five years there has been inconsistency from this Labor-Greens government. It is worth noting that for five years Arthritis ACT have been saying to anyone in government who would listen to them that the arrangement for peer monitoring of hydrotherapy sessions was not appropriate and that the position should change. But the government has not listened to what was said in this space.

What is the real agenda? Why doesn't the government just come out and tell the community what it has on its mind—that is, that it wants to close the hydrotherapy pool as soon as it possibly can? It also needs to tell the community why the government has not been planning to fill the significant gap that that will create. Why did it take more than 3,000 signatures on a petition to keep the pool open for a short period?

The government has recently started work on developing a master plan for the Canberra Hospital campus—

MADAM ASSISTANT SPEAKER (Ms Cody): The member's time has expired.

MRS DUNNE: I thought that I had leave to conclude my statement.

Ms Cheyne interjecting—

MRS DUNNE: It is not the rest of the day. I actually sought leave to conclude my statement.

MADAM ASSISTANT SPEAKER: My understanding was that you sought leave to conclude your statement. My understanding was that the leave granted was to give you half as much time again.

MRS DUNNE: No, that is not what I asked for. To make it perfectly clear, Madam Assistant Speaker—

MADAM ASSISTANT SPEAKER: Can you give me a moment, Mrs Dunne? I was not in the chair at that time, so I will seek some advice. An extension of time was granted. An extension of time does not allow unlimited time; it allows half as much time as was originally granted.

MRS DUNNE: I seek leave to conclude my statement, which will take up more than that time. That was the agreement reached between the whips, because this area involves a third of the budget. My request is for leave to conclude my statement.

MADAM ASSISTANT SPEAKER: For an undefined amount of time?

MRS DUNNE: Yes. That is my understanding of what I asked for.

Ms Cheyne: That was granted on the condition that it was not forever.

MRS DUNNE: It is not forever, but it is lengthy, and it was made quite clear—

MADAM ASSISTANT SPEAKER: Mrs Dunne, do you have an approximate length of time so that we can all understand exactly where we are headed?

MRS DUNNE: No; I am sorry. It depends on how fast I can speak. It is probably nearly as much time as I have already taken; I will be perfectly honest. But if this was divided up between the three items, I would have an hour to speak, and I am not proposing to take an hour.

MADAM ASSISTANT SPEAKER: Is leave granted for Mrs Dunne to conclude her speech in an unlimited amount of time?

Leave granted.

MRS DUNNE: I am sorry that that was unclear the first time around, but I thank the Assembly very much for its indulgence.

The government has recently started work on developing a master plan for the Canberra Hospital campus. With a facility built half a century ago, this work should have been done years ago, and it should have been updated on a regular basis. A master plan should be a living document.

The government should have finished the master plan for the Canberra Hospital campus as part of the planning for SPIRE. It should not have worked the master plan around the already moved location for SPIRE. Instead, we have a piecemeal approach to what the Canberra Hospital will look like in the future.

I will come to SPIRE in due course, but there are other issues as well in relation to infrastructure. As the public health infrastructure of this city continues to crumble, maintenance has become more and more important. In 2015 we had the AECOM report showing the high number of urgent and high priority tasks that needed to be done to maintain the project.

The government authorised the UMAHA project—the upgrading and maintenance of ACT health assets—at an estimated cost of \$95 million. The upgrade of the hospital switchboards, which was estimated to cost \$12 million, ended up costing \$42 million, and I hope we are still not counting. We had a fire in the building 12 switchboard, forcing the evacuation of patients, at the beginning of the UMAHA project in 2017. As we speak today, the hospital switchboard project is still not finished. Canberra Hospital management did not understand the scale of the work required to upgrade the switchboard when they began the project, and this explains the cost blowouts and the delays in completing the project.

Last year an operating theatre at the Canberra Hospital was forced out of action for 12 weeks due to maintenance issues. It is not just the older buildings that have problems with maintenance but also newer infrastructure. It should be remembered that the operating theatres are in building 12, which was completed at about the turn

of the century. Newer infrastructure is also a problem, and we have problems in relation to the Centenary hospital, the University of Canberra Hospital and its hydrotherapy pool, which has been closed for unscheduled maintenance more often than the old hydrotherapy pool has in the last year, and the adult mental health unit.

Last year the Australian Medical Association, the *Canberra Times* and the Canberra Liberals were calling for an inquiry into health culture. Minister Fitzharris at the time dismissed those calls for an inquiry as “a stunt”. In response to our pressure, Minister Fitzharris eventually commissioned an independent review of health culture. The outcome of that review was damning. Sixty-one per cent of staff had witnessed bullying over the past year and 35 per cent of staff reported that they had directly experienced bullying.

Submissions to the report highlighted inappropriate behaviours and bullying and harassment in the workplace; inefficient procedures and processes, including complaints handling; inadequate training in dealing with inappropriate workplace practices; an inability to make timely decisions; poor leadership and management at many levels throughout the ACT public health system; and inefficient and inappropriate human resources practices, including recruitment.

The independent review did not identify the hotspots of bullying in the review itself. Instead, the chair of the independent panel wrote to both the Director-General of ACT Health and the CEO of Canberra Health Services identifying the problem areas. The former minister for health refused to tell the Assembly where the problem areas were.

I made an application for documents under the Freedom of Information Act. The documents that I received back had blacked-out sections related to the problem areas and plans to tackle bullying and harassment in these areas. It is unclear whether there will be public scrutiny to ensure that the issues raised in the independent review will actually be addressed by this government.

The government has tried to keep this issue under wraps for 18 years, and this approach has failed. Ten years ago, a former Minister for Health, Ms Gallagher, spoke of a 10-year war in obstetrics. This war is still going on. It is now a 20-year war.

We have had a series of staff surveys with very poor outcomes which the government has tried to cover up. In 2015 there was a KPMG report into clinical culture which was scathing. Minister Corbell vowed to act. A high-powered interdepartmental committee was set up—of course that was going to succeed—and when Mr Corbell was no longer minister, the committee ceased to meet.

During estimates, Ms Fitzharris stated that there would be a staff survey done later in the year and that the outcome would be released. I call on the new minister, Minister Stephen-Smith, to honour the commitment made by her predecessor. I look forward to not only receiving that report but being able to compare the results of that report with previous reports.

In addition, health data has been a long-running problem for this government. An answer to a question on notice revealed that it will cost \$12.6 million to fix the problems with ACT Health data. This money should not have needed to be spent. It is money that could have been spent on upgrades to equipment, on infrastructure and on staff.

The ACT Auditor-General recently did an audit into ACT Health's data upgrade. He found:

Planning for the implementation of the System-Wide Data Review program is not effective. There is neither transparency nor clarity about how and when the three-year program will be delivered ...

Why is \$12.6 million not fixing the problem? Why has the Auditor-General been so scathing in his review? How can the people of the ACT have confidence in the health data that will be released in the future? It is important for all. How can this Labor-Greens government plan for future health services when data is unreliable? How can people be guaranteed that when they turn up at accident and emergency they will have the doctor that they need to see if there is not sufficient data about the needs of ACT Health patients? What is this health minister's plan to ensure that her directorate delivers on the system-wide health review? Other states are well ahead of us in using health data to develop health services plans. We are only just reaching the position where we can add the figures of hospital A to the figures for hospital B and get a reliable outcome.

We have several performance indicators in the budget that are being phased out. These indicators are based on Australian Institute of Health and Welfare measures and are comparable between jurisdictions. The government is replacing objective data with subjective data. Why can't the people of the ACT see in their budget papers performance indicators that are rigorous and give a good indication of how well the government is doing in relevant areas? Why is the government so keen on hiding information? Why can't the people of the ACT rely on the information that the government releases?

During estimates, the former minister stated that these performance indicators were being phased out because they were reported on by the AIHW. Perhaps the former Minister for Health and Wellbeing did not like the AIHW because they kept releasing reports that showed that the ACT was not performing well. The government should be using this data as a prompt to look at how it can perform better. It should not be swept under the carpet and we should not be looking at distraction. We should be looking for good health data that can be relied upon. At the moment, given what we have experienced since 2012 and the latest Auditor-General's comments, I do not hold out much hope in that space.

Data is one of the things that has always been downplayed by successive ministers: "It is only data. No-one dies because of bad data." Actually, people probably do have bad health outcomes if we do not have proper data. The issue with data is fundamental to health planning. Poor health planning has resulted in poor health outcomes, and these

poor health outcomes have impacted on the health and wellbeing of my constituents, of your constituents. This should be a matter that we are concerned about.

The adult mental health unit at the Canberra Hospital is an example of where there have been poor health data and poor health outcomes. It has been full virtually since it was opened, even when the beds were not fully funded. Answers to estimates questions on notice showed that the adult mental health unit had an occupancy rate of 106 per cent in the last financial year. I understand that there will be full funding for all the beds in this financial year, but the occupancy rate is still expected to be close to 100 per cent. That is not a great place for the operation of health facilities. Patients with mental health issues often must wait in the ED for extended periods before they can be admitted. We are hearing reports from the community that patients are being discharged from adult mental health units into homelessness.

Being a mental health nurse is a very stressful job at the best of times. Having a high occupancy rate adds to the stress of the job because patients in the adult mental health unit require a greater level of monitoring and service than those in most areas of the hospital. There were also a high number of assaults in the adult mental health unit in the past year.

In 2016 the Labor Party announced in its election policy the surgical procedures, interventional radiology and emergency building, known as SPIRE. We have since found out that this policy was developed at the last minute in response to the Canberra Liberals' well-thought-out and well-planned policy announcements. Those plans had been in the works since before 2012, and a considerable amount of work had been done on them. By contrast, SPIRE was developed on the back of a drinks coaster. There was no detailed planning of SPIRE prior to the 2016 election, and since 2016, the date at which it will be delivered has blown out to 2022-23.

The government has changed the site of the project. The occupants of building 5, which will be demolished to make way for the facility, will have to find new homes. The minister has spoken about decanting beginning fairly soon, as though that is the beginning of the SPIRE project. It is not the beginning of the SPIRE project; it is the beginning of disruption on the health campus. The scope and budget for this project seem to change on a regular basis. They change so frequently that now the government will not say what they expect to pay for it. Planning was delayed during the separation of ACT Health and Canberra Health Services, and we will not know the cost until next year.

The project has transferred to major projects because the former Minister for Health and the Health Directorate were not going to be able to deliver the project on time. The *Canberra Times* reported last month that the government was not going to seek expressions of interest until late this year. An initial construction contract will not be completed until the middle of next year, and construction will not start until 2021. In 2016, I need to remind you, Madam Assistant Speaker, the government promised that this whole project would be completed by 2022. It is now claiming that it will be finished by 2023. My estimate is that SPIRE will not be completed this side of the 2024 election.

Recently we have heard about the ACT government's failure to enforce building standards. Over the past few years there have been several examples of building quality failures in ACT public health projects. In 2017 an ACT Health audit discovered flammable cladding on the Centenary hospital and five other buildings. It has cost taxpayers millions to remove this cladding.

The 2018 hospital accreditation process discovered that there were ligature points at the adult mental health unit. The process to remove these ligature points has still not been concluded. The urgency of this task is highlighted by the fact that five people committed suicide at the Canberra Hospital in the three years before 2018.

One of the children's wards at the Centenary hospital was closed for four months last year due to water ingress. As well, we have had problems with water ingress in the birthing suites. That has resulted in every birthing suite having to be taken offline at some point and refurbished. I have recently received answers to questions on notice indicating that the hydrotherapy pool at the University of Canberra Hospital has been offline twice in the past year due to unplanned maintenance issues.

It seems that the government has not learnt the lessons from these projects. I am concerned that this will translate into the building of SPIRE not being futureproof and creating more problems in the future. We need to remember, for instance, that the women's and children's hospital, by the time it was built, was below the capacity demanded. And we have not actually solved the problem.

Recall, Madam Assistant Speaker, that as part of the ACT government's election commitments in 2016 it promised that there would be an extension to the women's and children's hospital and that it would be built in 2019. Two years ago, the Minister for Health announced the building of an adolescent mental health ward as part of that infrastructure extension. I remember asking—I think it was in estimates—about the time frame for that. We were told that it would be built by 2019, but in answer to questions recently in a health committee inquiry, the Minister for Health told us that the completion of phase 3 of the women's and children's hospital will be in 2023.

When all of the adolescent mental health advocates came out two budgets ago, extolling the ACT government for the work that they were doing in the adult mental health space by creating a new adolescent mental health facility, they were misled. They were misled because it was promised in 2019. Mr Rattenbury told the estimates committee that it would be built in 2019. It has not been. They have not even started planning. I think we have some concept designs. The urgent need that we have in adolescent mental health has just been put on the backburner because they cannot get their act together.

I would like to conclude by highlighting some problems in the area of community health. The dental health services program is facing long wait times. Canberrans face an eight-month wait for a full set of dentures and 12 months for partial dentures. The protecting Canberrans from infectious disease program has been re-profiled. The program was supposed to be finished in 2018 and will now not be finished until 2021.

The government approved a residential alcohol and drug rehabilitation facility for Indigenous people over 10 years ago. It has spent \$15 million on the bush healing farm project to date. As yet, we do not have a residential alcohol and drug treatment facility. So far, 35 people have been to the bush healing farm over two years.

Unfortunately, the current and former ministers for health have decided that they know better than the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community about their needs in residential alcohol and drug rehabilitation. I understand that my colleague Mr Milligan will be speaking more about this later—not in relation to the health item but on the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander item. The evidence to date shows that there is great need in the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community for residential drug and alcohol rehabilitation. There has been a crying need for some time. That is why Jon Stanhope, more than 10 years ago, went down this path. But still, after 10 years, the ACT government has not delivered.

The ACT government has been following the wrong priorities for the past 18 years. It is time that the government had the right priorities. The government has failed to manage health; it has failed to deliver on health. In doing so, it has failed the people of the ACT, who are crying out for better management of health in this territory.

MS STEPHEN-SMITH (Kurrajong—Minister for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Affairs, Minister for Children, Youth and Families, Minister for Disability, Minister for Employment and Workplace Safety, Minister for Health and Minister for Urban Renewal) (11.26): It gives me great pleasure to rise today as the relatively new Minister for Health to talk about the many health initiatives in this year's budget. The funding that has been delivered is about futureproofing our health system to ensure that we are well placed to continue to meet the healthcare needs of the entire Canberra region into the coming decade.

Madam Assistant Speaker, the 2019-20 budget commits a record \$8 billion over four years to the health portfolio. This will see \$1.8 billion spent on health in the 2019-20 financial year, more than 30 per cent of the entire ACT budget, with funding to rise to about \$2 billion a year by 2021-22. As part of this we are making significant investments to respond to our growing community's need for free high quality public health care and also to transform our health system.

Our investment is focused on building and improving health infrastructure, expanding existing health services in areas where we are seeing increases in demand, providing more resources towards essential medical and health research, continuing to invest in improving the health and wellbeing of the community and preventing chronic disease, providing more support for people overcoming addiction and ensuring that more mental health care is available for Canberrans, which I will leave Mr Rattenbury to outline as part of this debate.

Contrary to Mrs Dunne's rhetoric, the government of course has a strong record in investing in health infrastructure across our city. We continue to grow health infrastructure. We are investing almost \$1 billion in new and upgraded health infrastructure for Canberra over the next five years. At the Canberra Hospital this will

mean a major transformation of the hospital campus. Through the new surgical procedures, interventional radiology and emergency project, or SPIRE project, we will provide state of the art critical care to meet the acute healthcare needs of our region into the future in a contemporary facility at Canberra Hospital.

The SPIRE project will deliver 114 emergency department treatment spaces, 39 more than are currently available at the Canberra Hospital, as well as 60 ICU beds, almost doubling the number currently available. The new facility will include four new paediatric ICU beds and a family zone to provide support services for families who have children in the ICU. It will also deliver 22 new state of the art operating theatres, nine more than are currently available, including hybrid theatres and interventional radiology theatres that will support the most advanced medical technology and techniques in caring for Canberrans.

I can assure Mrs Dunne that clinicians have been, and will continue to be, closely engaged in the development of SPIRE. Indeed, solid progress has been made in delivering on this project. Proof of concept designs are essentially complete. Clinical engagement is underway in relation to both models of care and design. As Mrs Dunne noted, contractor engagement for the new temporary building 24 has been completed and works are due to commence in the next few weeks.

A project director is in place at Major Projects Canberra and a team of five health planners and clinical liaison officers has transferred from the Health Directorate into the SPIRE project team in Major Projects Canberra, quite contradicting Mrs Dunne's assertions about how many people are involved in this project. Advisory procurement is underway, as Mrs Dunne has noted, and the delivery team is ramping up. So solid progress is being made in relation to the SPIRE project and it will be delivered, as was advised by former Minister Fitzharris in May.

In addition to the SPIRE project, through this year's budget we are investing in more beds at Canberra Hospital to help reduce waiting times and to ensure that Canberrans receive the critical care they need, when they need it. This includes more than \$42 million over four years to resource four additional intensive care unit beds and 12 beds for inpatient services.

We are also significantly expanding the Centenary Hospital for Women and Children to support women, families and children. The planned expansion will increase existing services such as maternity and neonatology and create spaces for new services. It will enhance the Centenary hospital's role as Canberra's tertiary facility for neonatal, gynaecological and maternity services, and as the sole facility for paediatric services, with new and expanded services to include improved paediatric high care services, more neonatology services, new adolescent gynaecology services, improved integration and maternity assessment services with existing birthing services, more postnatal services, new inpatient adolescent mental health services supported by a new day service, and an expanded family support area for parents with ill or premature babies.

Another key part of growing the health infrastructure in the ACT is ensuring that Canberrans have healthcare options close to their homes—in particular, options that

take pressure off our hospitals. I am proud to say that as part of this year's budget the ACT government are delivering on our promise for a new nurse-led walk-in centre for the inner north, completing the network of five nurse-led walk-in centres across the ACT. The new \$9.8 million walk-in centre will be collocated at the Dickson Community Health Centre, in the Dickson group centre, and near the new light rail transport route, making it easy and convenient to access.

It is an investment that will see the existing community health centre upgraded, with four treatment rooms added for the new walk-in centre, within the building's existing footprint, thus complementing the current services provided at the centre, which include maternal and child health services and podiatry. With Canberra's fourth walk-in centre in Weston Creek due to open later this year, the budget also delivers \$10.5 million over four years to fund its operations.

Madam Assistant Speaker, another key part of making sure our healthcare system is set up to provide the best possible care to our community is ensuring that we have the digital infrastructure in place to position the ACT to take advantage of new technologies and advances in health care into the future. That is exactly what the government is doing through this budget, with a \$106 million investment over eight years to introduce a new digital health record across the public health system.

The new digital health record will be centred on the person rather than focused around clinical speciality or treatment location. It will give our doctors, nurses and other health professionals access to the most up to date patient information, enabling them to make more timely and accurate decisions at the point of care. It is a major investment that follows the release of the ACT's new digital health strategy earlier this year and the \$41 million delivered in last year's budget to upgrade ICT systems and to introduce new technology initiatives to make clinical care easier and more efficient.

It is funding that adds to the investments that the government is making in state of the art health infrastructure, such as the SPIRE project, that will truly transform our public health system into the future. In addition to investing in building and improving health infrastructure, the 2019-20 budget invests in more services and specialists to keep people out of hospital, reduce waiting times, treat people on waiting lists and give Canberrans access to more timely care.

We are expanding existing services at Canberra Hospital to keep up with demand. This includes \$4.6 million for more doctors at the Canberra Hospital's emergency department to help reduce waiting times and to respond to increasing demand; \$14.7 million to deliver another interventional radiology suite to provide state of the art care for cancer and stroke patients, and funding new and upgraded MRIs; and \$7.9 million to boost pharmacy services so that people who are treated at the Canberra Hospital and the University of Canberra Hospital can get access to their medications more quickly and easily.

We are making significant investments in specialist services supporting Canberrans with chronic and ongoing conditions and expanding capacity in outpatient services at Canberra Hospital. This includes \$250,000 to undertake a feasibility study into

options to expand ophthalmology services; \$728,000 to increase the capacity of dermatology services; \$1.6 million to increase the capacity of rheumatology services, helping to reduce waiting times as well as providing alternative care pathways to prevent avoidable ED presentations; \$4 million to increase staffing for the fracture clinic; \$1.9 million to increase staffing for aged-care services to help meet growing demand and maintain the highest standard of patient safety and wellbeing in the rehabilitation, aged and community services division; \$771,000 to establish a dedicated multidisciplinary transvaginal mesh service, providing ongoing support and clinical care to women affected; and more than \$2 million to deliver a new and simpler model to access maternity services, further boosting our support for expectant mums and families.

Madam Assistant Speaker, we are also building on the investments we have made in recent budgets to increase the healthcare services available for children and young people. The 2019-20 budget includes \$1.8 million to provide more support for families of paediatric patients travelling interstate to access specialist health care through the interstate patient travel assistant scheme; \$1.3 million to make meningococcal ACWY vaccination a permanent part of the vaccination schedule for the ACT; \$2.9 million to expand childhood and gestational diabetes services; and a dedicated investment of \$1.2 million to support the implementation of the child safe, child friendly and child aware framework across all ACT hospital and health services in response to the recommendations relating to the health sector from the Royal Commission into Institutional Responses to Child Sexual Abuse.

This will continue to be an area of focus for the government, with planning for health services that meet the future needs of children and adolescents, with an initial focus on the first 1,000 days and a project on paediatric services and supports for children and families accessing specialist paediatric care. This work will be coordinated across directorates, recognising that young Canberrans and their families engage with many arms of government services delivery during these crucial years.

As I mentioned earlier, the 2019-20 budget invests in keeping people out of hospital, and it does this with initiatives that support community health and aim to take pressure off our front-line hospital services. In addition to funding for walk-in centres, we are investing \$2.5 million in a new program to develop better integrated pathways and improve health outcomes for people with complex and ongoing chronic health conditions, which will be co-designed with general practitioners.

We are also expanding health services for older Canberrans, with \$1.6 million over four years to support the delivery of the inspired program in all residential aged-care facilities. This program supports residential facility staff to integrate specialist palliative care into their practices and will respond to the growing demand for services that sensitively and respectfully support older Canberrans. It adds to the \$9.6 million of the geriatric rapid acute care evaluation—or GRACE—service funded as part of the 2018-19 budget review earlier in the year.

Additionally, the budget provides \$1.1 million over four years for the implementation of the ACT's strategic priorities for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander health 2019-28. This work will be done in partnership with the Aboriginal and Torres Strait

Islander community, with the priorities aimed at driving health, wellbeing and quality of life outcomes.

As we work to build a more inclusive health system, \$87,000 in funding will also be used to undertake a 12-month scoping study to consider how we can better support health outcomes for lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, intersex and queer—or LGBTIQ—Canberrans, as part of the capital of equality strategy.

Another element of the health budget I would like to talk to today is the funding for health services at Calvary Public Hospital Bruce and Clare Holland House. This year more than \$220 million will be spent delivering these services. Calvary plays an important role in the provision of quality health services across the ACT public health system and has for the past 40 years. Over that time much has changed at Calvary, with significant investments by the government in recent years to upgrade and modernise the hospital and ensure that we have a truly territory-wide health system.

With the north side of Canberra being one of the fastest growing areas of our city, through this year's budget there is a major new investment of \$40.5 million in Calvary Public Hospital over the next four years. This package will provide funding for 81 new doctors, nurses, administrators and other health professionals at Calvary hospital over two years, including 46 new staff in the new expanded emergency department, once complete.

It will expand Calvary's capacity to perform elective surgery, with two new theatres being commissioned and 31 new staff to support the theatres as they come online—one theatre to come online in 2019-20 and the second theatre in 2020-21. The funding will ensure more urology services are delivered at Calvary Public Hospital, with an expanded service to meet the growing demand for urology surgery in the ACT, with four new staff.

Clare Holland House will also be expanded with the assistance of funding from the Australian government and the Snow Foundation. Some \$6 million will be spent on the expansion, to come online in 2021-22, providing Canberrans with high quality care with dignity at the end of their lives. The expansion will deliver more inpatient beds as well as improved clinical support spaces.

In addition to these important investments, I want to take the opportunity to acknowledge all of our community service partners who are funded through the ACT Health Directorate to provide community-based services across our city. More than 70 different organisations are contracted through grants and service funding agreements to deliver these services, from advocacy and policy all the way through to treatment and prevention programs, with the government providing more than \$63 million every year.

Another budget initiative I am pleased to highlight today is the \$3 million boost we are making to clinical research in the ACT. The funding will enable research into priority health areas, including cancer, type 2 diabetes, cardiology, nursing, mental health, women and children, dementia, palliative care, and population health. It will

continue to strengthen the partnerships between our healthcare services and our tertiary research institutions.

An example of the types of projects being funded is the \$600,000 over three years to the Australian Brain Cancer Mission to support projects based in the ACT. Investing in the Australian Brain Cancer Mission contributes to a national pool designed to enable patients to take part in clinical trials. This funding will help to improve patient access to clinical trials and access to new treatments here in Canberra.

Another focus for this year's budget is the funding that has been provided for more support for people overcoming addiction. In response to community feedback about growing areas of need across Canberra's health services, we will step up our investment in drug and alcohol services to help tackle substance abuse disorder and see more people get the support they need, with a number of the key action areas outlined in the drug strategy action plan 2018-21 being funded.

Some of these key initiatives include establishing a new opioid maintenance treatment clinic in Canberra's north, with \$3 million over three years, which will deliver more timely access to treatment for those living on the north side; providing \$200,000 to undertake a feasibility study and needs assessment for a medically supervised injecting facility in the ACT; an additional \$1.2 million over four years to prevent fatal drug overdoses in the ACT, including \$300,000 in 2019-20, with funding to make the lifesaving opioid overdose reversal medication naloxone available to even more people; and continuing to support Canberrans whose drug and alcohol use is a factor in their involvement in the criminal justice system.

Through this year's budget we will also continue to partner with the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community to develop a culturally appropriate residential service supporting drug and alcohol rehabilitation for people in the ACT. The government will co-design the delivery of a dedicated Aboriginal residential rehabilitation facility with Winnunga Nimmityjah, in partnership with a specialist Aboriginal alcohol and drug service provider of Winnunga's choosing. This future service will be designed to complement existing service, with \$300,000 in 2019-20 to scope the establishment of a service by Winnunga.

In addition, in response to the growing harms in the community associated with prescription medicines, I am pleased that the ACT is the first jurisdiction to commit to adoption by 2021 of the national real-time prescription monitoring system developed by the commonwealth. To fulfil this commitment the budget includes \$2.1 million over two years to replace the ACT government's legacy drugs and poisons information system and connect to the national platform.

Adopting a national system will build on the ACT government's success in rolling out the DORA—or DAPIS Online Remote Access—prescription monitoring website for health professionals in March 2019. The national system will also deliver additional benefits for health professionals and the broader community through enhanced features and the ability to share data via a common platform. The ACT government is working closely with the commonwealth to make this important national system a

reality in the ACT, and this budget measure affirms the ACT's commitment to preventing harms due to addiction and the abuse or misuse of pharmaceuticals.

The initiatives I have outlined today are all part of creating a healthy future for Canberrans and building on a strong public health system that provides high quality care. Fundamental to delivering this, though, is ensuring the safety and wellbeing of the people who work across the system in our hospitals and health facilities to provide the care our community relies on.

It is something the government is acutely aware of and committed to improving, with significant work over the past 12 months in the health portfolio through the transition to two new health organisations, the independent review into workplace culture within ACT public health services, and the establishment of the new clinical leadership forum, work that is now backed by a substantial investment in this year's budget to implement the recommendations of the independent review into workplace culture and the nurses and midwives towards a safer culture strategy over the next three years. I will continue to update the Assembly and community on this critically important work as it progresses.

Before concluding, I want to take the opportunity to both acknowledge the work of my predecessor and briefly reflect on my first few weeks as health minister. Former Minister Fitzharris faced some significant challenges and complex issues during her tenure as health minister. She did not shy away from tough decisions and she left the portfolio with a clear way forward. I thank her for the work she did on behalf of all Canberrans.

In some ways it is easy to criticise the health portfolio. There is no perfect health system anywhere in the country or, indeed, the world, and there are always things that can be criticised. But Minister Fitzharris did an incredible job in moving the portfolio forward. I feel I have come into the portfolio with a very clear path for continuing improvement in what is already a high quality health system in which Canberrans have high levels of confidence.

Over the last few weeks since taking on the portfolio I have spent a bit of time out and about in our hospitals and health services, meeting staff and seeing firsthand how our health services work. I have already learned a lot. I acknowledge, Mrs Dunne, that I probably have a lot more to learn, as we all do in a very large and complex system.

I have been to the Canberra Hospital intensive care unit and met staff at the front line of acute care. I have celebrated the University of Canberra Hospital's first birthday and the new approach to rehabilitation, recovery and mental health support that is now offered to not only our community but the entire Canberra region. We too easily forget that we opened a new hospital in Canberra last year, a significant addition to our public health system and one that everyone I speak to who has used the services at the University of Canberra Hospital absolutely raves about. It is a very important contribution to a strong public health system.

I attended the first meeting of the new clinical leadership forum established to better engage clinicians in policy, planning and delivering the cultural change we know we

need. I have visited ACT Pathology and have seen firsthand the critical work being done by committed staff in the prevention, early detection, diagnosis and treatment of many diseases that may impact on our community's lives.

I have helped celebrate the enormous contribution our nurse-led walk-in centres in Belconnen and Tuggeranong have made over the past five years, highlighting just how important the new walk-in centres in Gungahlin, Weston Creek and the inner north will be. I helped to launch Donate Life Week and as part of this had the privilege of hearing the stories of some very inspiring donor recipients and families of donors.

I have congratulated the winners of this year's NAIDOC health awards and celebrated dedicated individuals whose work is helping to close the gap in health outcomes for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people in the ACT. I have met some of the volunteers of the Canberra Auxiliary, acknowledging the tremendous contribution they have made over nearly 47 years. Over this time they have raised more than \$4 million, and these funds have been used to purchase lifesaving equipment, further education for hospital staff and to update well-loved areas of the hospital.

As Minister for Health I look forward to continuing to learn about our public health system and to celebrate the wonderful work our health professionals and non-clinical support staff deliver for our community every day. I look forward to working with the leaders of our public health system in the Health Directorate and Canberra Health Services and Calvary and our partners in the private and community sectors as we continue to build a better healthcare system that can meet the needs of our growing community today and in years to come. Critically, I look forward to continuing to meet with the staff and working with them to ensure that they can come to work and continue to make a difference in a positive environment.

I commend the 2019-20 budget to the Assembly and the very significant investments this government is making to modernise and futureproof our health system.

MS ORR (Yerrabi) (11.49): Providing Canberrans with access to quality public health care is a top priority for this government. While Canberra Hospital is the major hospital in this city and provides various essential health services, Canberra's north side is home to a wide range of hospital and health services that residents engage with every day.

The 2019-20 budget builds on this government's record investment in health care for Canberrans and provides Canberra's north with its fair share of health funding. Calvary Public Hospital is the main hospital for acute public health care for people in Yerrabi. As a government we are futureproofing the hospital to ensure it keeps up with the needs of all of us who live on the north side.

As part of the ACT government's investment in Calvary Public Hospital, the capacity of the emergency department will be increased and more doctors and nurses will be available to provide quality health care. The number of operating theatres at Calvary Public Hospital will also be boosted to enable more people to undergo elective surgery.

This budget will provide funding for the infrastructure, staff and resources that are needed to expand elective surgery capacity, allowing for 250 more elective surgeries to be performed a year. The capacity for urology services is also being increased, with a service expansion and four new staff based at Calvary public.

Overall, the funding allocated to improving Calvary Public Hospital will see 81 new doctors, nurses, administrators and other health professionals at Calvary hospital over the next two years. By investing in Calvary Public Hospital, this government is ensuring that people living in Canberra's north have access to quality public health care at their local hospital. This will make a huge difference to the amount of time people will need to wait for elective surgery.

As part of our record investment in health, the ACT government are committed to the delivery of free public health care to people when and where they need it. Our nurse-led walk-in centres provide free public health care for Canberrans close to home, relieving the pressure on our emergency departments in cases of minor injury and illness and at the same time ensuring that people can seek medical treatment from a free public healthcare professional.

The 2019-20 budget will provide funding for a new walk-in centre to be built in Dickson, which will bring the total number of centres in the network to five. We know that Canberrans value their local walk-in centres. That is why we have committed to making sure every region in Canberra has their very own walk-in centre.

The Belconnen and Tuggeranong walk-in centres have recently celebrated five years of service, with the Gungahlin centre coming up to its first year of service and Weston Creek's new centre almost ready for operation. Within my electorate, people have consistently spoken to me about the fantastic treatment they have received at the Gungahlin centre. I know that people in the inner north and Weston Creek will be just as pleased in the coming years.

In supporting Canberrans to live healthy lives, it is important that this government invest in mental health services across the ACT. Mental health professionals provide care and support for a variety of needs. Through this budget they will be supported to continue doing so.

The 2019-20 budget will allow for the expansion of the mental health consultation liaison service to operate at the Canberra Hospital every day.

Another key initiative in this budget is the commitment to expand public healthcare services for eating disorders through the new eating disorders specialist clinical hub. Previously in this Assembly and in the community we have heard the experiences of young Canberrans who have struggled with eating disorders and seeking adequate treatment. Through the establishment of the new specialist hub, these people will now be able to access the essential health services they need to improve their lives.

This budget also invests in more staff resources for the adult mental health unit at the Canberra Hospital, which will make sure adults with mental health needs are cared for and supported in their own recoveries.

This budget also focuses on supporting better health care for LGBTIQ+ Canberrans. Funding has been allocated to conduct a scoping study to consider the ACT government LGBTIQ strategy and the implications this will have for health services in the ACT. This is an important commitment to ensure that our hospitals and health services in the ACT are accessible for LGBTIQ+ Canberrans and can provide quality care when needed.

The 2019-20 ACT budget is building for the future. I am pleased to support the record investment in health on behalf of my constituents in Gungahlin and Belconnen.

MS CHEYNE (Ginninderra) (11.54): Our health and the health of our families is so important. When you or a loved one are injured or fall sick, it is not just about feeling physically or mentally unwell; it can be isolating, it can be scary, it can be exhausting and of course it can be expensive. That is exactly why this government is committed to funding high quality and free public health care to meet the needs of our growing city.

We are investing in the infrastructure we need to deliver world-class health care at every level across Canberra. From community-based centres treating minor illnesses to the state-of-the-art hospitals delivering specialist care for complex health issues, we are building and we are expanding the facilities that keep us healthy. Importantly, we are investing in our healthcare workers. We know that our doctors, our nurses and our allied healthcare workers are the backbone of our health system. It is their incredible skill, dedication and passion that makes the system successful.

These are not just hollow words. As we have heard from other members on this side today, this year the government is devoting almost one-third of the budget to strengthening our health system so that it can meet the demands of our city now and into the future. In fact, with the investment in SPIRE, Calvary Public Hospital, and new community health centres, this budget equates to the single largest program of health infrastructure delivery since self-government.

This is especially good news for Ginninderra, with Calvary Public Hospital set to enjoy almost \$22 million over the next four years. Of this, \$12 million will fund more surgical theatres, allowing 250 more surgeries each year. That means more elective surgeries and shorter wait times. Waiting for elective surgery can be frustrating and make day-to-day living more difficult. This investment will make a real difference to the quality of life for hundreds of people each year.

While last year's budget funded the expansion of Calvary's emergency department, this year's provides for more staff for when that expansion is complete. That means more doctors and nurses ready to admit, treat and care for Canberrans. But we cannot just rely on our hospitals. Nurse-led walk-in centres complement and, where appropriate, help shoulder some of the load from our emergency departments by providing free care for minor injuries and illnesses.

I personally have always received quick and professional service at the Belconnen walk-in centre. As we heard in the last sitting week, there are many amazing

experiences that people have readily shared about the treatment that they have received there. For the past five years, the Belconnen walk-in centre has been providing that outstanding care. I am so pleased to see that this budget will deliver even more of these excellent centres.

A health system is all about improving our quality of life. For those with life-threatening illness, that might mean palliative care. I am proud of the work the end of life choices inquiry did in this space. The government are acting on our recommendations to improve the provision of palliative care in the ACT.

The budget includes \$1.66 million over three years to fund the inspired program, which sees nurse practitioners providing specialist care in residential aged-care facilities. Aged-care staff are actively supported to work with residents to make individual plans for the end of their lives. This is in addition to last year's commitment to expand Clare Holland House, with eight to 12 new beds, and to provide better administrative and clinical support spaces. These are the measures that will help deliver the best care to Canberrans who are at the end of their life and to support them and their families to navigate this complicated time.

Madam Assistant Speaker, I, you and plenty of other people in this place have spoken before about how important reproductive and sexual health is to our overall health and wellbeing. It is great news that from July this year Canberrans have been able to seek medical abortions from their local GP or telehealth provider. This move has meant more choice and better access to safe and affordable abortions.

The ACT government has been a leader in abortion law reform, but there is room for other improvements in areas of health policy, particularly when it comes to sexually transmitted infections and blood-borne viruses. Worryingly, the rates of these diseases are going up, not down. A number of groups across the ACT are, as we discussed earlier this year, already doing a tremendous job in improving awareness, providing testing and supporting Canberrans to be sexually healthy. But we can do more work in this space. I look forward to seeing the government's progress as it develops a framework for a model to provide even better care, smash the stigma and improve sexual health outcomes.

Better health means a better quality of life. It means more time with our families and friends. It means more time doing what we love. It means more time enjoying our beautiful city. This budget is about funding high quality public health care so that we all can do exactly that.

We are funding expansions of our hospitals, our specialist services and our community walk-in centres so that Canberrans can enjoy outstanding health care at every level close to home. We are investing in our doctors, our nurses and our allied healthcare workers because we all know that these people are the backbone of our health system.

I am proud to be part of the government that is delivering the investments we need to futureproof our health system so that it can keep pace with our growing city and keep us healthy.

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

Sitting suspended from 12.00 to 2.00 pm.

Questions without notice

ACT Health—SPIRE project

MR COE: My question is to the Minister for Health. Minister, how many people were working full time on the SPIRE project in the directorate before it was transferred to the Major Projects team?

MS STEPHEN-SMITH: I thank Mr Coe for the question. I will take that question on notice. I indicated in my earlier comments that five people had transferred from the ACT Health Directorate to Major Projects Canberra to work on the project. I will take the question on notice as to how many of those people were specifically working on the SPIRE project.

I note that Mrs Dunne in her earlier comments talked about one person working full time. I thought that she was talking about Canberra Health Services at the time, and of course the infrastructure project was primarily the responsibility of the Health Directorate prior to the creation of Major Projects Canberra. But I will take the detail of the question on notice.

What I can assure the Assembly is that there is a project director in place at Major Projects Canberra, that those staff have transferred and that the project is well underway and on track.

MR COE: Separate to the actual number of staff, what capability was transferred from the directorate to Major Projects Canberra?

MS STEPHEN-SMITH: I may be able to answer that question if I can find the information. A team of five health planners and clinical liaison officers has transferred into the SPIRE project team under Major Projects Canberra from the Health Directorate. Their expertise, I imagine, is in health planning and clinical liaison, as those are their titles.

MRS DUNNE: Minister, what health planning expertise remains in the Health Directorate?

MS STEPHEN-SMITH: I thank Mrs Dunne for the supplementary question. There is a lot of health planning expertise remaining in the Health Directorate.

Employment—rights

MS LE COUTEUR: My question is to the Chief Minister and relates to employment conditions. Chief Minister, given the recent High Court case where the commonwealth government's right to sack a public servant over anonymous tweets

critical of the government was upheld, have you examined the implications for the ACT and can you guarantee that all ACT public servants and contractors have and will continue to have freedom of political expression?

MR BARR: I have not personally examined the matter. I am perhaps not professionally qualified to give a legal opinion on that matter but I will seek advice as to any implications within the ACT public service of that High Court decision.

MS LE COUTEUR: It has been suggested that this ruling is relevant to private sector employees as well. Will your government act to protect free speech in the ACT? You did not actually answer the first question, about ACT public servants continuing to have freedom of political expression; maybe you could answer that. It is also about the implications for the private sector.

MR BARR: ACT public servants have freedom of political expression subject to the usual public sector management requirements under legislation and, indeed, under codes of practice for those who are employed in the public sector. In relation to the private sector, that would principally be a matter of industrial relations law, which, as I am sure members are aware, is regulated at a federal level in the territory.

MS CHEYNE: Chief Minister, what other measures, such as the secure local jobs code, has the government put in place to improve job security in the ACT?

MR BARR: There is one very good example of the sorts of measures that the ACT government has taken. Undoubtedly, there are—

Opposition members interjecting—

MADAM SPEAKER: Members, please! The Chief Minister has the floor.

MR BARR: There are, of course, a range of differences in relation to public sector employment in the ACT as opposed to the commonwealth as it pertains to workers' rights to organise collectively, to bargain and to undertake a range of activities that will advance the collective interests of employees. It is clear that there is quite a difference in terms of the ACT government's employment practices and approaches to our workforce from what we see at the commonwealth level. This is manifested in many different ways, the secure local jobs code being but one of them.

Health—inter-agency communication

MRS DUNNE: My question is to the Minister for Health. On 6 June 2019, ACT Health was advised that Major Projects would be taking responsibility for the SPIRE project. The head of Canberra Health Services was not aware of this until 18 June, after it was reported in the media. Documents obtained under freedom of information show that there was no communication on the matter between ACT Health and Canberra Health Services during that period. Minister, why was there no communication between ACT Health and Canberra Health Services about the transfer of SPIRE to Major Projects?

MS STEPHEN-SMITH: I thank Mrs Dunne for the question. I have not had a chance to read through every document that has been released under FOI over the past few weeks, as there are many of them, so I take that with a slight grain of salt. Maybe there was no written communication. I cannot say for sure that the opposition's characterisation of the situation is accurate. But I will take the detail of the question on notice and come back to the Assembly if there is further information to add.

MRS DUNNE: Minister, do you have plans to improve the communication between ACT Health and Canberra Health Services?

MS STEPHEN-SMITH: I thank Mrs Dunne for the supplementary. On the basis of not taking the premise of the question as presented, I have been very clear with both the Director-General of the ACT Health Directorate and the CEO of Canberra Health Services that I expect good communication with me and with one another, and that we are all working together as part of a health system to deliver excellent health services to the people of Canberra when and where they are needed. That is what we will continue to do.

MISS C BURCH: Minister, what role do you have in ensuring that senior officials in your portfolio are advised of significant developments?

MS STEPHEN-SMITH: I thank Miss Burch for the question. I see that the minister does have a strong role in ensuring that people are aware of what is going on. I note that I was not the minister at the time, so I am not able to comment on what conversations were or were not had at that time.

Government—services

MS ORR: My question is to the Chief Minister. Chief Minister, how will the government continue to support the Canberra community by guaranteeing public sector jobs as Canberra grows?

MR BARR: I thank Ms Orr for the question. As members are aware, our city is growing very rapidly. We are now home to around 430,000 people and we continue to grow at the rate of around two to three additional average Canberra suburbs worth of people each year. This is occurring because our quality of life and access to high quality public health, education, transport and city services are second to none in this nation and, indeed, according to the OECD, second to none in the world. These services are delivered by a strong public sector workforce of nurses, teachers, bus drivers and city rangers, amongst others, and as Canberra grows we must continue to hire more people to deliver these services to our growing city.

Through the budget we are debating in this sitting fortnight and future budgets the government will continue to invest in high quality public services for the people of Canberra. We will invest more in our public hospitals and public schools, our public transport network, our front-line emergency services and the broader ACT public service.

MS ORR: Chief Minister, can you also guarantee that essential public services will stay in public hands?

MR BARR: Yes.

MS CODY: Chief Minister, what is the biggest risk to the government not being able to deliver high quality services as our city grows?

MR BARR: The biggest risk is the wrong priorities. It is driving down revenue at the expense of public services. It is pursuing an ideological obsession with reducing the size of government. We know that conservative parties around this nation have form in saying one thing before elections about public services and then cutting those very services when they get into office.

Mr Hanson interjecting—

MR BARR: Few of us would forget the promises of no cuts to health, education, the ABC and the SBS that were made by the Abbott government before the election. Then they went in and started cutting all those services. So we know they have form. We are seeing it now at a state and territory level in South Australia—

Mr Hanson interjecting—

MADAM SPEAKER: Mr Hanson, enough!

MR BARR: We are seeing it at a state level in South Australia where a series of promises was made prior to that state's election, that no public services would be cut. Then in they go, privatising public transport services, selling off TAFE campuses, that sort of thing—

Opposition members interjecting—

MR BARR: You know you have hit a raw nerve, Madam Speaker, when they are all interjecting. You certainly know when you hit a raw nerve. We guarantee to continue the provision and growth of public services in this territory. Those opposite have a narrow, conservative, ideological agenda to drive government out of people's lives, to make it smaller and less effective. That is the agenda of those opposite and we stand against that.

Mental health—disability access

MS LAWDER: My question is to the Minister for Mental Health and is in relation to follow-up of a letter that was sent to you on 9 July this year about psychology services for deaf and deafblind mental health patients in the ACT. Minister, do deaf and deafblind mental health patients in the ACT have access to psychology services from providers with subspecialist expertise in caring for that cohort of patients specifically? If not, why not? If yes, how many providers are there?

MR RATTENBURY: I thank Ms Lawder for the question. A letter came while I was on leave, and I have been looking into that since I returned. The letter was from Mrs Dunne in the first instance. I have a draft on my desk to write back to her. I have been looking into this matter. Mrs Dunne's letter specifically related to a particular specialist and that specialist's role. That specialist no longer works for ACT health services.

What I have been able to ascertain is that any deaf or blind person that presents at health services in the ACT, whether that is Canberra Health Services, mental health, justice health or alcohol and drug services divisions specifically, has access to interpreter services available throughout all services within 24 hours of notice. That can include onsite Auslan interpreters in the hospitals. So there is support there.

In terms of the specialist question that Ms Lawder is asking about, I will take that part of the question on notice and come back to her.

MS LAWDER: Minister, how can you guarantee access to interpreters for deaf and deafblind people, given the very small number of interpreters in the ACT, let alone their availability at short notice for an emergency in the ED of the Canberra Hospital?

MR RATTENBURY: Canberra Health Services seeks to ensure that that service is available. It is obviously critically important to enable people who come to the hospital to get the best care available and for our medical staff to be able to understand the reason they have come to the hospital. What I can tell you, as I touched on earlier, is that these services are provided. In emergency situations sign language communication is provided by the Deaf Society, a 24-hour emergency interpreter service in the ACT which is called on by Canberra Health Services.

MRS DUNNE: Minister, how is it that a contracted doctor who had expertise suited to servicing the deaf and deafblind mental health community no longer works in the ACT and it appears that there are no other specialist psychiatric services available to this cohort?

MR RATTENBURY: Mrs Dunne, I will be sending you a letter on this exact matter in the next day or two. In terms of the specialist, in around early 2018 there was a discussion between ACT Health and the doctor in question about her contract. ACT Health sought to insert a number of performance indicators and other changes into the contract. The doctor did not wish to continue with ACT Health on that basis and has returned to private practice. That is the advice I have, but I will provide further details to Mrs Dunne in my written response to her.

Health—adult mental health unit

MRS JONES: My question is to the Minister for Mental Health. Minister, in your answer to estimates question E19-250 you said that the adult mental health unit was at 106.2 per cent occupancy during 2018-19. Minister, is it reasonable and what are the implications for healthcare outcomes for patients when the adult mental health unit is operating at or over capacity?

MR RATTENBURY: Those figures are based on the fact that until this current financial year the adult mental health unit at Canberra Hospital has been funded for 37 beds. There are in fact 40 beds in the unit. Due to high levels of demand, all those beds have been utilised. I think people find it odd that you have capacity over 100 per cent. That is the reason, because the formal figure is 37 beds even though all 40 beds have been used on occasion.

This year's budget recognises that pressure that has been placed on the adult mental health unit and provides significant additional resources in the order of \$7 million to provide more nursing staff and more allied health services staff to ensure that the adult mental health unit operates with a full staffing capacity to reflect the number of people who are seeking medical treatment there.

MRS JONES: Minister, how common is it for patients to wait for 24 hours or more in the ED at Canberra Hospital before a bed becomes available at the mental health unit; where are they held during those 24 hours; and, given the longstanding issues with staffing in the AMHU and the pings that have been issued on that place, how is staffing managed when you are over 100 per cent capacity?

MR RATTENBURY: There were a lot of questions in that question. I am sure I will not get to them all in the course of two minutes. What I can say is that there are occasions on which people do wait longer than 24 hours in the emergency department. This is clearly not a situation that we want to have happen very often; it should not be happening at all. We are seeking to put in place measures to deal with that now. Part of it, as I touched on, is the increased funding in this year's budget. Canberra Health Services are also looking at issues of flow. Longer term we have funded in this budget initiatives like PACER which are designed to minimise the number of people who have to be taken to the emergency department and to seek to provide an appropriate mental health response. Not every person in a mental health crisis needs to go to the emergency department. In fact some people would be better off—

Mr Coe: Where do they wait for 24 hours?

MR RATTENBURY: Mr Coe, you might learn something if you actually listened to the answer. I am sure this is not your area of expertise—

Mr Coe: You complain about the question but you have not actually answered any of them.

MADAM SPEAKER: Mr Coe, the minister is answering the question.

MR RATTENBURY: I was asked whether people spend 24 hours or more in the emergency department. I said yes, some do, and I said what we are trying to do to respond to that. I have been very clear that we do not think that that is a situation that should be allowed to continue, so we are seeking to put measures in place. PACER is one of those.

Mr Coe: Don't you think they deserve an answer?

MR RATTENBURY: If you are going to shout at me, I am not going to stand up.

MADAM SPEAKER: Members, please.

MRS DUNNE: Minister, are you advised, or is the health minister advised, when there is a patient in the emergency room for more than 24 hours? What is the standard response if you are?

MR RATTENBURY: That issue is predominantly dealt with by the CEO of Canberra Health Services. There is a daily recording of those sorts of incidents. The CEO deals with that and I am briefed regularly on how we are going in progressing the pressures on the emergency department but also the pressures on the adult mental health unit.

Homelessness—government policy

MS CODY: My question is to the Minister for Housing and Suburban Development. Minister, can you update the Assembly on the government's commitment to strengthening homelessness services in the ACT?

MS BERRY: I thank Ms Cody for the question. Yes, I can update the Assembly. The ACT government is committed to providing more services and support for people in our community who are at risk of or experiencing homelessness. Through the consultations for the housing strategy, support for these emerging cohorts experiencing homelessness was heard loud and clear, and the need to address the gap in services available to them. This feedback was supported by the cohort study which I released earlier this year, outlining the kinds of supports that these groups need.

To address this, the government committed \$6.5 million for more specialist homelessness services in the ACT. I launched the first of these new services, called "next door", with the YWCA last week. Next door will provide one-on-one support for older women at risk of or experiencing homelessness. Women are far too often in these difficult situations, with low or no superannuation or savings. This service will mean that more women will be provided with the support and services that they need to connect them to safe and secure housing.

MS CODY: Minister, how do these new programs fit into the government's overall support for Canberrans experiencing or at risk of homelessness?

MS BERRY: The ACT government provides over \$24 million a year to organisations supporting people who are homeless or at risk of homelessness. These services are tailored to meet the needs of a range of groups of people who are at greater risk of homelessness. Another new service that has been funded by the ACT government and which will be launched soon is a program run by the Migrant and Refugee Settlement Services. This program will assist families from refugee and asylum seeker backgrounds who face additional challenges to secure housing, many with federal government restrictions around their ability to work, meaning that they are unable to sustain housing in the private market.

These new programs join a range of housing services that are available in the ACT. Beryl, Toora and Doris are key housing programs for women escaping family and domestic violence, and they are critical to the success of our whole-of-community approach to family and domestic violence. EveryMan, St Vincent de Paul and CatholicCare all run specialist services for men as well.

Specialist youth homelessness services such as Barnardos Our Place are important to ensure that young people who experience a crisis find themselves with a home and are well supported to thrive and not to fall into the cycle of homelessness. Organisations like Toora and Winnunga provide support for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people in the community, who are consistently over-represented in homelessness statistics nationally.

The government will continue to provide more support for these front-line services that help Canberrans into safe and affordable housing.

MS LE COUTEUR: Minister, given that neither of the two projects you talked about—the one with MARSS and the one with the YWCA—included actual physical beds, how are those going to be provided?

MS BERRY: I have responded and the directorate has responded to these questions from Ms Le Couteur on a number of occasions during estimates. We will work with the YWCA and with MARSS as well about how these supports can occur for these women. A lot of these women might not actually be in homelessness at the moment but need support so that they do not actually fall into homelessness.

We will work with the YWCA about this program as it rolls out. Unfortunately, older women fall into this situation all too often because of low superannuation and because of the lack of recognition of the time they spend away from work. It means that they will need extra support as they get older.

Hospitals—emergency waiting times

MRS KIKKERT: My question is to the Minister for Health. Minister, why do the ACT's emergency department waiting times continue to be the worst or amongst the worst in the country and continue to deteriorate under this ACT Labor-Greens government?

MS STEPHEN-SMITH: I thank Mrs Kikkert for the question. This has been a topic of conversation in this place many times and I have already said on a number of occasions just in one sitting week that increases in presentation and increases in acuity have resulted in an increased demand on the emergency department and that has resulted in there not being a significant improvement in waiting times despite some increases in investment such as the expansion of the Calvary ED which we are investing in—\$22 million on expansions across Canberra Health Services and Centenary—but also the timely care strategy which is really focused on reducing demand, diverting patients to the most appropriate service, maximising capacity within Canberra Hospital and improving patient flow processes.

A number of initiatives under the timely care strategy have already been implemented, including daily multidisciplinary staff ward huddles, hospital-wide flow management meetings, strategies to reduce barriers to discharge and identifying and discharging appropriate patients before 9 am. All these things are aimed at reducing bed block, ensuring that we can get patients flowing through the hospital and discharged in an appropriate manner because it is not, of course, appropriate for people to be in hospital longer than they need to be, and we also need to be focused on ensuring that we are using our hospital facility as efficiently as we can be.

MRS KIKKERT: Minister, what have emergency department staff asked for to improve waiting times?

MS STEPHEN-SMITH: Emergency department staff, I am sure, have welcomed the increased investment in emergency staffing—that includes an increase in doctors in the emergency department—and the implementation of the winter strategy, the opening of an additional 16 winter beds at the Canberra Hospital and the all-care discharge unit, which both commenced from 11 July. An additional 12 beds have been progressively opened at the University of Canberra Hospital since June 2019 to provide additional capacity into the system.

I am sure that those working at the emergency department at the Canberra Hospital have welcomed those initiatives as well as the timely care strategy initiatives that I have previously outlined.

Mr Coe: Point of order.

MADAM SPEAKER: Point of order, Mr Coe.

Mr Coe: On relevance, the question that Mrs Kikkert asked was about what emergency department staff have asked for. The minister has said that she imagines they are happy with additional doctors and additional resources, but if she does not actually know what the emergency department staff want, perhaps she could just say so.

MADAM SPEAKER: I believe that the minister was responding appropriately to the question. Do you have something to add, minister?

MRS DUNNE: Minister, what was the performance of the Canberra Hospital emergency department regarding patients in the urgent category, category 1, for 2018-19?

MADAM SPEAKER: Can you repeat the question?

MRS DUNNE: I am happy to repeat it, Madam Speaker. Minister, what was the performance of the Canberra Hospital emergency department regarding patients in the urgent category, category 1, for 2018-19?

MS STEPHEN-SMITH: I have some numbers in front of me that relate to more current figures. I will have to take on notice the figures in relation to 2018-19. However, I would note that I did raise this question with the CEO of Canberra Health Services in relation to daily dashboard information that I received the other day. It was specifically in relation to category 1 patients, and I was assured that all category 1 patients are seen on time, in accordance with their triage category.

Hospitals—radiation therapy waiting times

MR HANSON: My question is to the Minister for Health. Minister. Recent data from the Australian Institute of Health and Welfare shows that ACT cancer patients face the longest wait for radiation therapy in the nation. Minister, why do ACT cancer patients face the longest wait for radiation therapy in the nation?

MS STEPHEN-SMITH: We have obviously addressed this issue in relation to media queries. I thank Mr Hanson for bringing the question again to the Assembly. I want to assure the Assembly and the Canberra public that 100 per cent of patients requiring emergency radiation therapy receive their treatment within one day. This is, in fact, the best performance, or the equal best performance, across the country.

One hundred patients a day receive treatment at Canberra Hospital. This is being achieved on three machines, as opposed to the same number being treated on four machines during the same period last year. 1,450 patients received radiation treatment in 2018-19 compared with 1,377 in 2017-18, so the number of treatments is increasing. Canberra Health Services is currently spending \$5.3 million replacing two linear accelerators and the treatment planning system and updating the physical space to ensure that the latest technology and most efficient services are provided.

Part of the reason that those percentage numbers have fallen is as a result of replacing these accelerators. There has been a smaller number available but, as I noted, more patients are still being treated. These patients are triaged to ensure that those who will benefit most from early treatment are treated first. When all four machines are operational by mid-2020, wait times will return to within the national benchmarks.

MR HANSON: Minister, why have waiting times for radiation therapy declined so badly over recent years?

MS STEPHEN-SMITH: Without accepting the premise of that question at all, the performance in radiotherapy wait times has been impacted by an increase in the number of referrals, increasingly complex treatment techniques, treatment delivery time and some workforce shortages. So improvements in treatment capacity have been achieved by extending treatment times to 7 pm, recalling clinicians from indirect roles to providing treatments where appropriate, improving patient scheduling, improving the planning processes, and ensuring limits on maintenance downtime in relation to those machines.

One of the issues around workforce is that radiation therapists are not trained in the ACT, so recruiting staff means having to attract staff from other states. This often

adds to delays in recruiting new staff as they need to relocate. But CHS has recruited nine staff, though they still have five vacancies they are actively trying to fill.

MRS DUNNE: Minister, what action is Canberra Health Services taking to meet the growing demand for stereotactic radiosurgery and stereotactic body radiotherapy?

MS STEPHEN-SMITH: I thank Mrs Dunne for the supplementary, and I will take that question on notice.

Budget—health funding

MR PETTERSSON: My question is to the Minister for Health. Minister, how is the government continuing to support our nurses and doctors as they deliver crucial services to the Canberra community through this year's budget?

MS STEPHEN-SMITH: I thank Mr Pettersson for his question and his ongoing interest in the government's support for nurses and doctors, an interest that is shared by everyone on this side of the chamber. Health care is a core pillar of our values, and at the centre of this is the important work done by doctors and nurses in our health services. As I touched on this morning, this year's budget will commit funding to ensure that people can receive the right health care where and when they need it.

For doctors and nurses in particular, this includes \$4.6 million for more doctors at the Canberra Hospital's emergency department to help reduce waiting times and respond to increasing demand, as per the earlier questions that were asked today; \$40.5 million in Calvary Public Hospital over the next four years, providing funding for 81 new nurses, doctors, administration and other health professionals over two years; and \$106 million over eight years to introduce a new digital health record, ensuring that doctors and nurses have the most up to date information when making decisions in relation to patient care.

Supporting our doctors and nurses also goes to ensuring that they are able to work in a positive environment. That is why the ACT government has committed \$10.5 million in this year's budget to implement the recommendations of the independent review into workplace culture across the ACT public health service over the next three years.

Further to the work being undertaken in relation to the culture review, which I will update the Assembly on in due course as part of the biannual update on progress against the recommendations, is the development of the health sector culture framework, which is work that will be undertaken in partnership with the Australian National University. The framework will consider the key fundamental elements towards creating a positive culture, such as leadership, mentoring and psychological safety, which will be implemented throughout the public health service.

MR PETTERSSON: Minister, what support and training opportunities are available to medical students and junior doctors who are just at the start of their careers?

MS STEPHEN-SMITH: I thank Mr Pettersson for the supplementary. Of course medical students' and junior doctors' support and training opportunities are critical.

Canberra Health Services works with the ANU to provide clinical placements for students within the ACT health system across both Canberra Health Services and Calvary Public Hospital, providing students with real-life experience across a vast array of medical specialities, including the emergency department, surgery and the ambulatory services in outpatient clinics.

Canberra Health Services provides many supports for the junior doctors around health and wellbeing, including the blue buddy system—these junior medical officers act as an informal near-to-peer mentor by providing support, advice and information; professional development for junior doctors, including sessions on avoiding burnout and promoting resilience and wellbeing; encouraging junior doctors to take their accrued days off as they accrue, and systems in place to ensure that junior doctors can take their annual and study leave entitlements; orientation programs and documents to highlight access to the employee assistance programs, which include psychological and career counselling; regular feedback is sought about workload, rosters and support that is received from senior staff; and of course mentoring by senior clinicians.

In respect of nurses and midwives, in the 2018-19 financial year financial support was provided for 202 nurses and midwives undertaking postgraduate studies in clinical practice, education, leadership, management and research, and a further eight scholarships were awarded to nurses and midwives representing the ACT Health Directorate at national and international conferences. The nurse and midwifery office also offers Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander enrolled nursing scholarships. Six registrations for nurses and midwives and students from the ACT have been sponsored for the congress of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander nurses and midwives national conference in September.

MR GUPTA: Minister, what else is the government doing to support our nurses and doctors?

MS STEPHEN-SMITH: I thank Mr Gupta for the supplementary. Another aspect of the government's commitment to ensure that nurses and doctors are supported is ensuring that they form a key part of our decision-making processes.

I recently attended the inaugural clinical leadership forum, a forum made up of clinicians, including doctors and nurses. The forum is responsible for providing independent and expert clinical advice to me and to the Minister for Mental Health, with the aim of contributing to decision-making to ensure continuous improvement of a high-performing health system that keeps people well, provides the best care when required and provides an industry-leading workplace.

The forum will be informed and guided by the recommendations of the Independent Review into the Workplace Culture within ACT Public Health Services, and make recommendations to us where this relates to improving the clinical operations of the ACT's health system.

Significant opportunity exists for strong engagement between the culture review implementation branch and the clinical leadership forum. Work will be undertaken between these two areas to provide the opportunity for early discussion, concept

development and proactive stakeholder engagement in the development of proposals to build a positive workplace culture.

One of the key findings of the culture review was the need to better engage clinicians across the board, whether that is in policy, in processes across the health system or indeed in leading cultural change across the system. We know that ensuring that clinicians are a part of decision-making not only provides better support for them in their work but also provides better outcomes for the community, for their colleagues and for patients.

Hospitals—oncology treatment waiting times

MR PARTON: My question is to the Minister for Health. Minister, recent data from the Australian Institute of Health and Welfare is interesting stuff, but the question that I have is not that one. It is this one.

Members interjecting—

MR PARTON: Minister, on 8 August 2019, it was reported in the media that private cancer services provider Icon Cancer Centre Canberra was open to having discussion with Canberra Health Services about reducing waiting times for patients to access oncology treatment. Minister, what is the status of these negotiations?

MADAM SPEAKER: Minister for Health, are you clear about the question?

MS STEPHEN-SMITH: Thank you, Madam Speaker. I will take the question on notice.

MR PARTON: Minister, what advice have you sought or received regarding those discussions? If none, why?

MS STEPHEN-SMITH: I did have a general conversation with the CEO of Canberra Health Services just the other day about what the opportunities are for non-government providers to support Canberra Health Services in the delivery of timely care across the ACT health system. Those conversations are ongoing.

MRS DUNNE: Minister, how long will it be before cancer sufferers can expect a significant reduction in the wait times for treatment?

MS STEPHEN-SMITH: I thank Mrs Dunne for the question but I do think that it is really important that we do not send the message, as the opposition continues to do, that patients in the ACT are not receiving timely care according to their need. Yes, there are some waiting times in various services that look like they are longer or are not in line with national benchmarks. But patients in the ACT are triaged and supported to ensure that they receive timely care, and they receive care in a health system that is high quality and supports people's needs. It is really important, I think, that members in this place do not continually talk down our public health system.

Mr Hanson: Ask cancer patients about it. See what they say.

MADAM SPEAKER: Mr Hanson, enough.

Aboriginals and Torres Strait Islanders—rehabilitation facility

MR MILLIGAN: My question is to the Minister for Health. Minister, the 2019-20 ACT budget commits \$300,000 for the ACT government and the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community to co-design a residential service that will support drug and alcohol rehabilitation. Minister, Winnunga Nimmityjah worked with ATODA to design a model of care some years ago for implementation at the Ngunnawal Bush Healing Farm. Is it now redundant?

MS STEPHEN-SMITH: I thank Mr Milligan for the question. The answer is no, that work is not redundant. Unfortunately, the model of care that was sought by ACT Health at the time—and Minister Fitzharris apologised and explained this in considerable detail—and the model of care that was sought from Winnunga at the time was not a model of care that was able to be delivered at the Ngunnawal Bush Healing Farm, as a result of the zoning and location of the Ngunnawal Bush Healing Farm.

The \$300,000 that has been allocated in this year's budget will go to Winnunga, for them to work with an Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander alcohol and drug provider of their choosing to design the model for residential rehabilitation for the ACT. That will be part of a continuum of care, of which the Ngunnawal Bush Healing Farm will also form an important part. It is really important to acknowledge that the Ngunnawal Bush Healing Farm is about a model of healing that specifically recognises Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander healing in relation to land, being on country and reconnecting with culture.

MR MILLIGAN: Minister, to what extent will the old model of care be used in the new model of care?

MS STEPHEN-SMITH: I thank Mr Milligan for the supplementary. I probably cannot speak with specific detail, because that is really a matter for Winnunga, but I would be very surprised if the work that Winnunga had done previously was not used to inform this current work.

MRS DUNNE: Minister, will this co-designed residential drug and alcohol rehabilitation service be run at the current Ngunnawal Bush Healing Farm or is there another location in mind?

MS STEPHEN-SMITH: I thank Mrs Dunne for the supplementary. No, it will not be run at the Ngunnawal Bush Healing Farm. I think the reasons why that cannot be the case have been explained in detail previously. No location is specifically identified at this point. That will be part of the work that Winnunga will undertake to identify what the most appropriate location and service type will be.

Budget—emergency services

MR GUPTA: My question is to the Minister for Police and Emergency Services. Minister, how are we helping to put more police on our streets?

MR GENTLEMAN: I thank Mr Gupta for his question and his interest in safety across the ACT. Thanks to the investments this government is making we will see more police on our streets. By working with police, in the coming years we will move towards a more proactive model of policing. This will mean having more police out from behind the desk and on our streets. Because of the prudent economic management of this government, led by the Chief Minister, we have been able to make this investment.

Through careful, thoughtful, nation-leading tax reform, ACT Labor has been able to show that you can grow jobs and grow services in a sustainable manner. The only way to invest almost \$34 million in the hardworking members of ACT Policing is to have a sustainable economy. This is what this government is doing. We are growing services and investing in the things that a growing Canberra needs.

But there is a threat. If you hear the Canberra Liberals talk about more efficiency and removing red tape, this means only one thing: cuts. We have heard these words before. Remember Mr Abbott! He promised no cuts and more efficiency. We know how that went: cuts to healthcare, cuts to education and services. Only this government will invest in our police and other front-line services, helping build our city and keeping it safe as the city grows.

MR GUPTA: Minister, what resources has the government provided to police?

MR GENTLEMAN: This government is providing almost \$34 million over the coming years. This is in addition to the support we are providing to other emergency services. It is one of the largest investments in ACT Policing and will see a change in how police operate. We are helping ACT police move towards a more proactive model of policing: a model that the police have said they want to do.

This government's investment will mean more ACT Policing members on our streets. It will see more engagement with our community, building relationships. It will also see more than 60 new members join, in a range of roles within ACT Policing. This year's investment builds on investments made in the most recent budget and those before it. In the most recent budget we are providing better tools and technology for police officers, building on our investment, made through recent budgets, in new mobile devices, tasers and body-worn cameras.

Opposition members interjecting—

MR GENTLEMAN: Madam Speaker, we are making investments now and preparing for the future. We are putting more ACT police members on the streets and delivering new technology to help them keep our community safe. Our actions contrast with the negativity of those opposite. You just heard them shouting across the chamber, Madam Speaker. Their vision is cuts; that is the only option under the reckless economic policies adopted by them, policies that favour their mates.

Opposition members interjecting—

MADAM SPEAKER: Members, please! Ms Cheyne, you have the floor.

MS CHEYNE: Minister, what support is being provided to other emergency services?

MR GENTLEMAN: An excellent question from Ms Cheyne, from a member in this place who works hard for their local community; a member who knows that Canberrans want to see services grow as our city grows too. This can be done if you have a strong economy, one that works for everyone in our city.

Opposition members interjecting—

MADAM SPEAKER: Members—Mr Coe, Mr Hanson, others—can we just concentrate on question time.

MR GENTLEMAN: Because of this government's stewardship, we have been able to invest in our emergency services. We are investing in ACT Fire and Rescue and helping grow the ACT Ambulance Service as our city grows. We are delivering more firefighters, more emergency service vehicles and more stations. We have announced \$15.7 million in funding for two new paramedic crews and five new ambulances. Thirty new paramedics will progressively join the ACT Ambulance Service to fill the new crews.

These investments build on those that we have already made. Earlier this year, I announced that 12 new state-of-the-art ambulances would hit the road shortly. Under our government we have the best ambulance service and the best fire and rescue service in the country. These things only happen if you work with our services and their members and make these investments. We have been able to do this because of our strong economic management.

Opposition members interjecting—

MADAM SPEAKER: I am just wondering whether we will get the same noise when you ask your question, Mr Wall.

Mr Wall: I should be so lucky.

MADAM SPEAKER: Continue.

Aboriginals and Torres Strait Islanders—Ngunnawal Bush Healing Farm

MR WALL: My question is to the Minister for Health. Minister, on 30 May 2019, your predecessor corrected a question without notice about the number of clients who have attended the Ngunnawal Bush Healing Farm.

Members interjecting—

MADAM SPEAKER: Members, can we please put a button—

Ms Cheyne interjecting—

MADAM SPEAKER: Ms Cheyne! They do not need any encouragement so please stop. From the beginning, Mr Wall.

MR WALL: Minister, on 30 May 2019 your predecessor corrected a question without notice about the number of clients who have attended the Ngunnawal Bush Healing Farm. Having originally reported 85 clients, the real figure was in fact 35. Given that the residential model of care was abandoned, minister, since 30 May how many clients have attended programs at the Ngunnawal Bush Healing Farm?

MS STEPHEN-SMITH: The information I have currently is that since its inception approximately 35 clients have participated in the Ngunnawal Bush Healing Farm programs. I note that the program that was due to commence in July 2019 was deferred due to some significant sorry business in the local community, which impacted staff at the farm. The fifth program was due to commence yesterday, with 12 clients participating. I will get back to the Assembly if that was not the case, but my expectation is that that program commenced yesterday.

MR WALL: Minister, why is the number of clients receiving therapy at the Ngunnawal Bush Healing Farm so low, given the government's substantial investment in the facility?

MS STEPHEN-SMITH: I thank Mr Wall for the supplementary. Of course, the 12 clients in the current program that I understand has commenced are receiving significant support through that program. Certainly, the feedback I have had when I have visited the Ngunnawal Bush Healing Farm, as I did for the launch of the eagle sculpture, from participants and from staff is that people are getting great value from the programs that are delivered at the Ngunnawal Bush Healing Farm.

We have currently underway the Ngunnawal Bush Healing Farm review. Mr Russell Taylor, director of the Burbangana group, facilitated a governance workshop on 15 April, with 35 stakeholders in attendance. Work is currently underway with the United Ngunnawal Elders Council and the Healing Foundation to develop the healing framework taking that forward. The United Ngunnawal Elders Council conducted the first knowledge circle on site at the healing farm on 19 May, which was the first step towards creating the healing framework, and other meetings have been held since then.

The Ngunnawal Bush Healing Farm advisory board held its first meeting on 6 August to re-establish the relationships and membership of the advisory board, which will include representation from the United Ngunnawal Elders Council, the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Elected Body and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community organisations, as well as the ACT government. The board will continue to meet every four to six weeks in the near term. We are committed to the finalisation of the healing framework and the review.

MRS DUNNE: Minister, how can you develop a model of care for a residential drug and alcohol service when you do not know where it will be situated and you do not know what its physical structure will be like?

MS STEPHEN-SMITH: I thank Mrs Dunne for the question. I am not entirely convinced that it is a supplementary question to the Ngunnawal Bush Healing Farm questions. Nevertheless, the work that Winnunga will undertake will explore the model of care, and it is work that is in the spirit of self-determination and underpinned by the principle of self-determination that underpins our work with the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community. Actually this work will be led by Winnunga to determine what that model of care will look like, in partnership with an Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander alcohol and drug service chosen by Winnunga, and depending on what that model of care—

Opposition members interjecting—

MADAM SPEAKER: Members, please!

MS STEPHEN-SMITH: As I have explained in response to a previous question, this work is required because of the previous miscommunications that resulted in a model of care being developed for the Ngunnawal Bush Healing Farm by ACT Health. This is in no way holding Winnunga responsible for this. This is about—

Opposition members interjecting—

MADAM SPEAKER: Will you allow the minister to respond to your question, thank you.

MS STEPHEN-SMITH: It is an impossible situation, Madam Speaker. You acknowledge that mistakes were made and you get shouted down. You try to do something else and you get shouted down.

What I can assure the Assembly is that we are working with Winnunga in a way that is led by them, underpinned by the principle of self-determination, then working with an Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander alcohol and drug service of their choosing to develop a model of care and that will inform where this is to be best located.

MADAM SPEAKER: When we have finished with the interjections across the room—

Opposition members interjecting—

MADAM SPEAKER: Members, I have just about run out of patience. The next one who misbehaves will be named, perhaps.

ACT Health—SPIRE project

MISS C BURCH: My question is to the Minister for Health. Minister, how many staff will be transferred from ACT Health and Canberra Health Services to Major Projects in 2019-20 to work on the SPIRE project?

MS STEPHEN-SMITH: I have already indicated that five staff have been transferred from the ACT Health Directorate with health planning and clinical engagement expertise. I would need to confirm whether that includes the project director. My understanding is that it does not, but I will check that. As to whether any further transfers of staff will be made in this financial year, I will take that question on notice.

MISS C BURCH: Minister, what is your plan to ensure that clinicians, hospital facilities staff and other relevant people in Canberra Health Services and ACT Health are engaged in the development of the SPIRE project after it goes to Major Projects?

MS STEPHEN-SMITH: I thank Miss Burch for the supplementary, but I note that I did in fact state very clearly in my earlier remarks in relation to the budget that the engagement of clinicians is something that has been underway, is underway and will continue. I have been very clear with Major Projects Canberra, although I did not need to be, that clinical engagement through this process is absolutely vital, and not only with the clinicians who work at Canberra Hospital Services but also with the ACT Ambulance Service and the ambos, who will be participating in this process as partners with the emergency department that will be located in the new SPIRE project.

MRS DUNNE: A supplementary question, Madam Speaker.

MADAM SPEAKER: Mrs Dunne, I will automatically give you the health supp, perhaps.

MRS DUNNE: No, we need to keep it in the tent. We have demarcation rules on this, Madam Speaker! Minister, was the transfer of responsibility for SPIRE from ACT Health to Major Projects due to a lack of confidence in the ability of ACT Health to manage the project, a lack of confidence in the ability of the new health minister to supervise the project, or both?

MS STEPHEN-SMITH: Neither.

Municipal services—shopping centre upgrades

MS CHEYNE: My question is to the Minister for Transport and City Services. Minister, what work is the government undertaking to upgrade public spaces around shopping centres in our suburbs?

MR STEEL: I thank Ms Cheyne for her question. Our government is upgrading public spaces around shopping centres across our city to make our suburbs even better places to live.

Works are well underway at Kambah Village, I am very pleased to say, and works have also been completed at Anketell Street in Tuggeranong. As you would be well aware, Madam Speaker, just yesterday I met with multiple business owners along Anketell Street to discuss the upgrades and also the government's future plans for further upgrades along the laneways down to the lake.

The Anketell Street upgrades began in January this year and saw a large set of improvements to the public realm, including a raised pedestrian zone, a low-speed traffic environment, an off-road cycle lane, improvements to paved areas, tree replacement with 27 additional trees, wider pavements for outdoor dining, improved lighting and more furniture along the street.

I am also particularly pleased to have recently announced an extension to the highly popular Woden experiment in the town square at Woden. In the budget we have also committed to building more parking at Cooleman Court and Palmerston shops. The government will also soon begin works on upgrades to Dunlop and Fraser shops to benefit residents in West Belconnen.

MS CHEYNE: Minister, on that, what upgrades will take place at Dunlop and Fraser shops?

MR STEEL: I thank Ms Cheyne for the supplementary. The government has committed to upgrade—

Mr Coe interjecting—

MR STEEL: the public spaces at these two shopping centres in west Belconnen.

Mr Coe interjecting—

MR STEEL: At Dunlop, the community would like to see more shade at the shops—

Mr Coe interjecting—

MR STEEL: and a community noticeboard in particular. This is something—

Mr Coe interjecting—

MADAM SPEAKER: Mr Coe!

MR STEEL: that our government will provide through these upgrade works.

Mr Coe interjecting—

MADAM SPEAKER: Mr Coe, you are warned.

MR STEEL: Following the feasibility study into the upgrades for Fraser shops, a number of improvements have been identified. These include planting more trees to improve canopy and shade; widening footpaths to improve pedestrian accessibility; refreshing and upgrading seats and other amenities; formalising existing pedestrian desire lines to improve the linkages at the shops to Tillyard Drive underpass; upgrading existing stair access from the car park to the front; rejuvenating the garden beds with new shrubs and ground cover; installing new trees and shrubs in the planting bed at the front of the shops courtyard to provide shade and improve amenity

and appearance; and installing new lights and replacing fittings to upgrade lighting to improve safety and visibility.

However, we will continue to work with the community over coming months to confirm which of these upgrades are a priority.

MS ORR: Minister, how will the government work with the west Belconnen community to deliver these upgrades?

MR STEEL: I thank Ms Orr for her supplementary. We will be working with both residents and businesses in west Belconnen to ensure that these upgrades around shopping centres reflect the community's priorities. Only a couple of years ago, Fraser received funding for a feasibility study on future upgrades which will strongly inform the basis of these future works.

During work on the feasibility study, local traders, leaseholders and businesses, as well as local residents and community groups, were consulted on priorities as part of upgrades. These consultations revealed that there are three key priority areas for the upgrades to the public realm. The provision of shade was one of the priorities, which will be achieved through the planting of new trees in particular. Improvements to the car park were also identified: improving pedestrian safety; undertaking line marking works; and improving lighting, in particular, around the car parking at the shops. The third priority for the community was improvements and enhancements to the landscaping, such as providing new and updated planters and upgrading communal infrastructure such as benches and other street furniture.

The government will use the feedback that we have already undertaken through the consultation process and will continue to consult with the community and businesses in Dunlop and Fraser to ensure that the upgrades can provide improved spaces for people around their local shops and make sure that the suburbs are an even better place to live.

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

Supplementary answers to questions without notice Aboriginals and Torres Strait Islanders—Ngunnawal Bush Healing Farm ACT Health—SPIRE project

MS STEPHEN-SMITH: I can confirm that the Ngunnawal Bush Healing Farm program did start yesterday, with 12 participants.

In relation to questions that I was asked on SPIRE staffing in the ACT Health Directorate, I can advise that the planning phase of SPIRE included staff from ACT Health, Canberra Health Services, Treasury—that is, infrastructure, finance and capital works—and many specialist consultants, including business case specialists, architects, facility planners, urban planners and cost planners.

ACT Health's infrastructure team and executives, including facility and service planners, all worked on the SPIRE project. The team consisted of up to 12 people at

any given time. However, these staff were also working on other projects at some times, including the Centenary hospital project.

A project control group and steering committee existed for the planning phase of the project and included people from across government. It was always intended to establish a specific project team focused on the delivery of SPIRE once the business case was successful. This team had not yet been established when Major Projects Canberra was announced, meaning there were few people to transfer to a new agency who were focused solely on the delivery of SPIRE. As I noted earlier, five people transitioned to Major Projects Canberra to continue working on SPIRE.

Papers

Madam Speaker presented the following papers:

Electoral Act, pursuant to section 54—Electoral Boundaries Redistribution 2019—Redistribution report—Augmented ACT Electoral Commission, dated 31 July 2019.

Mr Gentleman presented the following papers:

Remuneration Tribunal Act, pursuant to subsection 12(2)—Determination 6 of 2019—Full-Time Statutory Office Holder: Chief Executive Officer, ACT Integrity Commission, together with accompanying statement, dated August 2019.

Financial Management Act, pursuant to section 26—Consolidated Financial Report—2018-19 Interim Result—Financial quarter ending 30 June 2019.

Annual Reports (Government Agencies) Act, pursuant to section 13—Annual report 2018—Canberra Institute of Technology—Corrigendum.

Loose Fill Asbestos Insulation Eradication Scheme—Implementation—Report—1 January to 30 June 2019.

Coroner's Act, pursuant to subsection 102(8)—ACT Coroner's Court—Annual Report 2018/19, dated 30 July 2019.

Independent Competition and Regulatory Commission Act, pursuant to section 24—Independent Competition and Regulatory Commission—Container Deposit Scheme Price Monitoring—Final Report—Report 10 of 2019, dated 23 July 2019.

Subordinate legislation (including explanatory statements unless otherwise stated)

Legislation Act, pursuant to section 64—

City Renewal Authority and Suburban Land Agency Act and Financial Management Act—

City Renewal Authority and Suburban Land Agency (Suburban Land Agency Deputy Chair) Appointment 2019—Disallowable Instrument DI2019-188 (LR, 18 July 2019).

City Renewal Authority and Suburban Land Agency (Suburban Land Agency Member) Appointment 2019 (No 2)—Disallowable Instrument DI2019-189 (LR, 18 July 2019).

Construction Occupations (Licensing) Regulation 2004—Construction Occupations (Licensing) (Qualifications—Builder and Building Surveyor Licences) Declaration 2019 (No 2)—Disallowable Instrument DI2019-181 (LR, 8 July 2019).

Juries Act—Juries (Payment) Determination 2019—Disallowable Instrument DI2019 185 (LR, 15 July 2019).

Public Place Names Act—Public Place Names (Coombs) Determination 2019—Disallowable Instrument DI2019-187 (LR, 18 July 2019).

Road Transport (General) Act—

Road Transport (General) (Pay Parking Area Fees) Determination 2019—Disallowable Instrument DI2019-182 (LR, 11 July 2019).

Road Transport (General) Application of Road Transport Legislation Declaration 2019 (No 7)—Disallowable Instrument DI2019-186 (LR, 16 July 2019).

Veterinary Practice Act—Veterinary Practice (Fees) Determination 2019 (No 2)—Disallowable Instrument DI2019-183 (LR, 18 July 2019).

Waste Management and Resource Recovery Act—Waste Management and Resource Recovery (Fees) Determination 2019 (No 2)—Disallowable Instrument DI2019-184 (LR, 18 July 2019).

Water Resources Act—

Water Resources (Water Available from Areas) Determination 2019 (No 2)—Disallowable Instrument DI2019-191 (LR, 29 July 2019).

Water Resources Environmental Flow Guidelines 2019 (No 2)—Disallowable Instrument DI2019-190 (LR, 29 July 2019).

Appropriation Bill 2019-2020

[Cognate bill:

Appropriation (Office of the Legislative Assembly) Bill 2019-2020

Cognate papers:

Estimates 2019-2020—Select Committee report

Estimates 2019-2020—Select Committee—government response]

Detail stage

Schedule 1—Appropriations—Proposed expenditure.

ACT Local Hospital Network—Part 1.1

ACT Health Directorate—Part 1.2

Canberra Health Services—Part 1.3

Debate resumed.

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) (3.05): I am pleased to speak today about the initiatives announced in the 2019-20 ACT budget, and in particular those that fall within my portfolio responsibilities as the Minister for Mental Health and the minister with responsibility for justice health.

As Minister Stephen-Smith has outlined, this year's budget is very much focused on making the investments needed to futureproof our health system. This means ensuring that our hospitals, local health services and facilities are resourced appropriately to expand as our population continues to grow.

In the mental health space, this includes more support for mental health services so that people experiencing mental illness can access a better range of treatment options. This approach acknowledges that a one-size-fits-all approach cannot work to meet the mental health needs of people across our diverse community.

In the justice health space, it is about strengthening diversion processes, offering people alternative pathways away from the courts where possible and improving health services for people in custody.

I am pleased to say that this year's budget will continue to increase investment in mental health and justice health, with \$686 million over the next four years. This commitment is in line with our focus on the delivery of an integrated cross-sector system that provides a better range of appropriate treatment and care options that are accessible to people with mental health concerns or illness, in a timely manner.

Investing in our local community organisations for the delivery of mental health services across the ACT is also important to provide the community with the full range of treatment options in their personal journey. The ACT government has a strong history of partnering with community sector organisations to deliver community-based mental health services and supports.

One example, which I was very pleased about this year, was the launch of the Recovery College. The early feedback I have had on that is that it is a popular service, and the community are very encouraged by it. I look forward to getting further updates on that. It is being led by the Mental Health Community Coalition, in partnership with ACT Health. I think it is a great example of how government can effectively partner with community organisations to deliver not only good services but also innovative services.

This year will see over \$10.7 million provided to community organisations for the mental health services they deliver across the ACT. Further, building on investments the government has made in recent years, funding for new mental health initiatives has increased by five per cent, with a \$24.2 million funding package.

As members have heard me say before, around one-third of Canberrans will experience poor mental health at some stage in their lives; and as our city grows, we will see further increases in demand for mental health services. With this growth we know that our acute services simply cannot, nor should they be expected to, provide care for everyone with a mental health issue, as the acute care setting may not be the

most appropriate clinical option for people's mental health needs. That is why it is important that while we continue to invest in both our acute and community-based mental health services, we also invest in early intervention and prevention, which is what the 2019-20 budget seeks to do.

Before I move on to talk about specifics in relation to some of the new initiatives announced in the budget, I would like first to mention the work that has gone into developing a new strategic indicator for the ACT Health Directorate in the mental health area. I am pleased to say that we now have a strategic indicator for improving the mental wellbeing of Canberrans—strategic indicator 4—which will measure the percentage of ACT adults who self-report their mental health status as good, very good or excellent.

The indicator aims to reflect people's feelings and views about their mental health and recognises that mental health is impacted by a range of factors, including access to appropriate preventive, early intervention, primary care, community and acute services. This demonstrates the government's inclusion of mental health as part of the broader focus of the Health Directorate on improving the health and wellbeing of the community. This new indicator will be measured biennially as part of the ACT general health survey.

I will now move on to highlight some of the new initiatives announced in the 2019-20 budget. Firstly, acknowledging the growth in demand for the specialist care provided by the adult mental health unit at Canberra Hospital, \$12.1 million has been allocated over the next four years to ensure that our acute mental health services are properly resourced and available to provide care for people experiencing severe mental health episodes and those managing chronic conditions.

This investment will include \$7 million to boost allied health and nursing staff numbers, ensuring that inpatients are provided with more comprehensive psychosocial care to support their recovery and management of their mental health, while also supporting stronger workforce development.

It will also include \$5.1 million to establish an electroconvulsive therapy—ECT—service. This new service will provide better access to necessary therapy for patients experiencing mental health issues like depression and psychosis, leading to reduced length of stay for inpatients and fewer relapses for people requiring maintenance therapy in the community.

To expand the support to people with mental illness across the Canberra Hospital campus more broadly, the 2019-20 budget will also provide \$4.6 million to expand the mental health consultation liaison service to operate seven days a week. This service has a particular focus on providing support for people admitted into medical and surgical wards, and those presenting to the emergency department. This expansion of funding to the service will help to ensure that mental health issues can be safely managed in general wards where appropriate, helping to reduce pressure on inpatient acute mental health beds.

Delivering wraparound services is an important part of the ACT government's commitment to mental health, from early intervention to acute care and providing care for people at the right place and at the right time.

As part of this, over \$2.2 million is allocated to establishing an eating disorders specialist clinical hub and a community-based intervention support service to expand the range of eating disorder services available in the ACT and make these available to more Canberrans. This initiative follows the release of the ACT government's eating disorders position statement in October last year. The position statement was developed through a series of stakeholder workshops that examined the current status of eating disorder services in the ACT, the gaps in those services and how best to move forward with evidence-based treatment programs.

Eating disorders are serious illnesses that are often poorly understood, and their impacts underestimated. These diseases cause high levels of psychological distress, and carry a risk of long-term mental and physical illness, an increased risk of premature death due to medical complications, and an increased risk of suicide. This is an initiative that is going to make a huge difference to the people in our community who are affected by eating disorders.

I am pleased to get this work underway. I particularly want to acknowledge, once again, the community partners who helped the ACT government develop the position statement and identify where services were needed and which services would be most effective in addressing the needs of people in the community with eating disorder concerns.

The current budget also provides \$457,000 for more support to build the resilience of mental health carers in the ACT. This initiative acknowledges the important proactive role that carers play as part of someone's journey towards recovery and recognises the stressors and challenges that mental health carers face and the impact that this can have on their own health and wellbeing. It is an initiative that will strengthen the resilience of people who care for people with mental health needs and support their involvement in care and recovery planning. With this funding, Canberra Health Services are recruiting two carer engagement clinicians to pilot a range of support and psychosocial education activities that will build capacity for the families and carers of people with mental health conditions.

Another budget initiative I am pleased to highlight is the \$323,000 to undertake planning and design work for a police, ambulance and clinician early response service, known as PACER. This initiative will bring together police, ambulance paramedics and mental health clinicians to focus on designing an integrated service model that will enable our first responders to provide better support for people experiencing acute mental health incidents. This will include consideration of support for safe assessment and treatment of people experiencing acute mental health episodes and help minimise both avoidable hospital presentations and contact with the justice system for people with mental health conditions.

As I mentioned earlier, the investments we are making in the justice health space are about strengthening diversion processes away from the courts where possible and improving health services for people in custody. There are two new initiatives being funded in this year's budget that I want to highlight today.

The first initiative is the \$3 million being provided for more staff to respond to the growing number of Canberrans with complex needs appearing before the ACT courts, and support strengthening diversion processes away from the courts where possible. This initiative directly supports and aligns with the government's agenda to "build communities, not prisons" by helping to divert people from prison and by supporting their mental health needs in the community. It will also provide more capacity to deliver mental health assessments and supports at the courts, which are often places where Canberrans can experience particularly high levels of stress and also administrative pressure.

The second initiative is a \$1.1 million boost to resources for the justice health service to enhance drug and alcohol services at the Alexander Maconochie Centre. This funding is being provided in response to existing demand and feedback from the community sector regarding unmet need. It will see recruitment of additional specialised nursing staff to support an expansion of the existing opiate replacement treatment service and the delivery of a range of additional drug and alcohol services. Detainees will be able to access services seven days a week, and the service expansion will mean that they are better supported to engage with their substance use issues while also forming essential linkages with counselling and services that may help them once they are released back into the community. When we reflect on the budget, we often talk about the amount of money that is being invested in particular projects, but there are, of course, other pieces of work being done. The delivery of a new performance indicator in the budget is an example of that.

I would also like to highlight an area that I am particularly committed to: the culture review of our health services. This is a fundamental part of the success of our health and mental health services. It will be part of the government's investment to ensure safe, high quality health care for the ACT community. In addition to taking care of our community, we are working hard to ensure that our staff are looked after.

The government has received a very detailed independent report. I will be working with the new Minister for Health, Minister Stephen-Smith, to continue the culture review oversight group, which has engaged key stakeholders to follow through on that work, to make sure that we are implementing that report effectively and that we are meeting both the spirit of that report and the actual recommendations.

In having the range of stakeholders we do, from unions to medical groups, representatives from Calvary hospital and ACT government agencies, and a range of specialist organisations—the AMA, for example—we can do that work to the highest possible standard. I thank those representatives for their willingness to continue and engage in that process.

The culture review highlighted issues in the health system that make for uncomfortable reading. We are now in a position to really tackle those, and that will be an important part of the work in the coming year. Whilst there is funding in the budget for that, in highlighting the key initiatives, often we do not talk about the work that goes on underneath to actually make it happen.

Aligned with that is safety in our healthcare system. The nurse safety strategy to reduce and manage occupational violence is another important piece of work that we will follow through this year. This was a commitment in the Labor-Greens parliamentary agreement, and I am dedicated to ensuring the safety of our nurses. The strategy outlines a vision where staff, patients and visitors to ACT public health services are protected from harm and feel safe at all times. This work is led by ACT Health and also encompasses Canberra Health Services, the University of Canberra Hospital and Calvary Public Hospital at Bruce.

Before I close today, I want to express my gratitude to all the healthcare professionals across our ACT mental health and justice health services who remain extremely committed to providing the best care and services they can for people in our community. I also want to reiterate the government's ongoing commitment to improving mental health services for the Canberra community.

We know that mental health issues are becoming increasingly common as we work to continue to break down stigma and encourage people to come forward to ask for help. As I have said in this place before, as Minister for Mental Health and minister for justice health, I recognise that we continue to face challenges in this field and that we need to continue to invest in initiatives that enable our services to respond appropriately to growing demand.

My commitment is to continue to work with mental health staff, consumers and carers so that we continue to provide a timely, high quality and evidence-based service for those who need it for the duration that they need it. This \$24 million package of investments demonstrates that commitment. I welcome the input we have had from the groups—be it our own staff within government or non-government partners, consumers and carers—who have helped shape this year's budget package. We listen to their input constantly and try to reflect that in the priorities we have in the budget each year. Not everyone in each of those groups always agrees, and there are more things to get done, but I trust that they will see their fingerprints on this year's budget as we seek to incorporate the feedback we get from the community.

The new initiatives announced in the budget add to the existing funding that the ACT government has committed in recent years to mental health and justice health. These initiatives continue to build on all of the work underway across the system—whether it be through the newly established office for mental health and wellbeing, our mental health policy team within the health directorate, or the clinical staff at Canberra Health Services—to ensure that, as our city grows, we are continuing to strengthen Canberra's mental and justice health services and we can make the journeys for people transitioning between hospital care and the community as smooth as possible.

I commend the investments in mental health and justice health made in the 2019-20 ACT budget to the Assembly and look forward to supporting Canberra's mental health and justice health system to continue to develop in future.

MS LAWDER (Brindabella) (3.21): I would like to make a few points relating to the health budget in this year's appropriation. I want to reiterate that here in the ACT, emergency department waiting times are going up. Eighteen years ago, we had the best ED wait times. We have the failure of accreditation reviews. For years, we have heard about workplace culture and bullying issues in our hospital system. People can spend years waiting for specialist appointments. There are long waiting times for other types of surgery, such as bariatric surgery. We have failed to replace equipment as it ages, to the point where, in one case at least, there was a fire in the switchboard, which had already been identified as a risk. We have had the long-running saga of data issues. Our adolescent mental health system is inadequate and we have long waits in our adult mental health unit.

We have recently seen the saga with the hydrotherapy pool and this minister wanting to close the hydrotherapy pool at the Canberra Hospital and leave people on the south side without a suitable alternative. We have had the worst performance in elective surgery. We have high costs in delivering our health services, at 120 per cent of the national efficient price and 130 per cent of what it costs to deliver services in our peer hospitals. We have spent \$15 million on the Ngunnawal bush healing farm, which is still not a residential drug and alcohol rehab facility, and now, apparently, we are going to spend money on developing a completely different one. Ear, nose and throat patients wait over a year to be seen. Cancer patients in Canberra have the longest waits in the country to start treatment, according to AIHW data.

Many of us here will have had contact with our health and hospital service, either personally or through family members, friends, neighbours or work colleagues. In the past six months, I have spent more time at the Canberra Hospital than I would normally like to, with family members with various issues, in the emergency department, in the intensive care unit, and on wards.

No-one—certainly not I, but I do not think anyone I have spoken to—questions the care, compassion, professionalism and dedication of our staff at our hospitals: nurses, doctors, specialists, wardsmen, cleaners, people in the food area, no-one is questioning their dedication and their skill. The way they deal with patients is generally amazing. That is literally a word my daughter said to me recently: that the care she got when her husband was in the hospital was amazing.

The health minister earlier talked about our strong record of investment, but the point I want to make in this very brief talk about our health budget is that it is not just about spending more money; it is how we are spending that money. It is about decision-making, planning, leadership and replacing things before they reach the end of their useful life, before there is a fire, before they break down. That is where we are failing, and that is what we need to pay a lot more attention to, not talking about the criticism of our staff.

I do not hear people criticising staff. I hear about our ageing facilities and the lack of planning for the future. That is where I would like to see the focus go: not just talking about how much money we are spending, but talking about how we can spend it well so that we can better support the hardworking, caring, compassionate, highly skilled staff in our hospital and health system.

Proposed expenditure agreed to.

Education Directorate—Part 1.4

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) (3.27): I am here to talk today on the ACT government's commitment to high quality and accessible education and learning opportunities to ensure that every child and young person gets a great start to life. With 88 public schools and almost 50,000 students the ACT's public education system is growing rapidly.

The growth has been fuelled by population demand but also by more families choosing public education for their children than they ever have before. This is an exciting time for education in the ACT because with growth comes the chance to reach more children and young people with the life-changing potential of a great education.

The 2019-20 budget will deliver a record investment into new and expanded schools for our growing suburbs and recruit more teacher professionals to continue to advance our world-class education system. The government is investing more than \$47 million into the planning, design and construction of new primary school for Throsby. From 2022, 132 preschool and 450 primary school children will call this their new school and they will be the start of a brand new school community with room to grow in the years that follow.

The ACT government is investing in a new high school for Gungahlin that will be ready for 800 students in 2023. In 2019-20 further work will be undertaken towards the planning, design and construction of this school. Gold Creek senior campus will also be expanded by an additional 200 spaces by the beginning of 2022 with an investment of \$6.4 million over the next three years.

For college students the government is investing \$1.3 million for modifications to Gungahlin College to increase the number of staff areas as well as more specialist teaching facilities such as wet science lab areas. The flexible timetable that operates at Gungahlin College has allowed an increase in student numbers. This investment will provide more space for the increase in staff needed to support the larger student population.

For younger children the government is investing \$29.5 million to expand Franklin Early Childhood School. This investment fulfils the government's election

commitment to permanently expand the school from a P-2 school to a P-6 school and will increase the overall capacity of the school to around 600 students. For one of the fastest growing regions in Australia this investment in government schools is really important.

It is also important that we continue to plan for growth throughout the territory, and that is why the government is investing \$6.5 million into feasibility studies and planning for future growth. This will allow the government to strategically plan for student growth across Canberra not only in new suburbs but also in areas like the inner north, Belconnen and the south of Canberra.

On 31 July 2018, I announced that the government was working towards introducing the phased implementation of 15 hours per week, 600 hours per year, of free, quality early childhood education for three-year-old children in the ACT. The government recognises the importance of early childhood education in ensuring that all children are set up to learn for life.

The government is also investing \$10.9 million over four years to deliver the first phase of the early childhood strategy that will take this work forward. Importantly, the strategy will focus on increasing access, equity and affordability of early childhood education, enhancing the workforce and qualifications, ensuring seamless transitions into school, and maximising the benefit to children from this important investment in their early years.

The ACT continues to provide one of the best education systems in the country. The budget invests in teachers and supports more students with complex needs, ensuring that ACT public schools keep getting better. The ACT community values the increasingly strong culture of inclusion in ACT public schools. It is an area of focus because all children, regardless of their backgrounds or circumstances, are entitled to a great education and the life chances that flow from it. To achieve this, the government is providing \$41.56 million in ongoing additional needs-based funding to support students to be included and part of school life.

Student wellbeing and mental health will also be supported through \$3 million in ongoing funding to employ an additional five full time psychologists by 2020 as part of the government's ongoing election commitment. Meeting students' needs also means providing pathways for students identified as gifted and talented. This budget will deliver an accelerated pathway for gifted and talented students to the University of Canberra, providing those students with options to get a head start on their university studies.

Finally I highlight a significant investment included in the 2019-20 budget—the transition of externally contracted school cleaning services to a cleaning workforce within the Education Directorate. This investment is significant because it goes to the heart of the ACT community. Cleaners are often vulnerable members of the community and, historically, these arrangements have presented concerns about contractors adhering to their legislative responsibilities and demonstrating their commitment to adequately support their workers.

The history of noncompliance and apparent market failure in contract school cleaning highlights that the service would be better delivered through insourcing to meet the territory's ethical and industrial relations objectives and to meet the ACT community's expectations of fair treatment for all people, including those who are more vulnerable than most. These workers are critical to the effective operation of public schools and they contribute to creating environments that are welcoming, safe and inclusive. Their right to secure and supported employment is recognised by this government, and I am proud of the work that we have done to make this a reality.

Through these and other initiatives outlined in the budget this government is investing \$3.2 billion over four years in recurrent funding and \$324.1 million in capital funding to public education in the ACT. The government's commitment to education is clear and will continue to result in positive outcomes for Canberra's children and young people.

MR WALL (Brindabella) (3.33): The ACT continues to invest significant amounts of money in education. Investment in education is never wasted but increasing numbers of parents of students in government schools particularly are starting to wonder whether their children are getting the best opportunities and whether our schools are the best environment in which to learn. The ACT once had the enviable record of leading Australia in academic performance. Now it seems to be becoming better known for our violent behaviours, our conversations and our apparent objection to everything from standardised testing through to school chaplains.

Last sitting, the minister for education delivered her future of education strategy implementation plan. I think the word "future" appears to be the most telling part of this publication because after conversations, another favourite word of the minister, with apparently thousands of people, research papers, focus groups, surveys and consultancies, we have a document that tells us that we will review the Education Act, and that we will change the Education Act, and that there will be preschool for three-year-olds, but absolutely no detail, no measurable time frame or outline of how these will be delivered.

The education estimates were not an enlightening exercise. I have to say that between the buzzwords, the acronyms and the use of case studies, we learnt very little. That is disappointing, but under this minister not very surprising. We have great schools in the ACT and we have great teachers. Notwithstanding that, and at the risk yet again of claims from the other side that the Canberra Liberals run down schools, we cannot ignore the many failings in our current education system.

Some, possibly all, are not unique to Canberra but I am not convinced that we are addressing these shortcomings effectively or efficiently. Much has been said about the unacceptable behaviours in a number of our schools. If we read the estimates briefing notes prepared for the minister that have been released under FOI, we could be fooled into believing that much is being done. But I would suggest that it is nothing more than a range of coloured bandaids seeking to address much larger problems.

It is not at every school that parents have expressed fear for their children's safety, but it is enough for thousands of people to have signed a petition to have the issue of violence in our schools looked at. We need to remind ourselves that this only came about because the minister refused to accept that there was a problem in one school, much less many. The minister stalled, prevaricated and provided waffly scripted non-committal responses to the opposition's questions over a number of weeks.

It was only when the minister tried yet again to bluff her way out of a motion that I led in this place that she realised the game was up. She delivered her "nothing to see here" speech to a gallery of parents who were directly affected by what was happening at the coalface in our schools, who had contacted her and the directorate with no response. They were not impressed.

But has much or anything actually changed? I would like to believe so, but I am yet to see the evidence. In estimates we were told yet again that schools were rolling out a much referenced program called positive behaviour for learning and that it would address the bullying and other unacceptable behaviours. We were told that the Shaddock report had itself recommended widespread adoption of school-wide positive behaviour support as a highly effective alternative to traditional approaches to discipline and behavioural management.

The Shaddock report was published in 2015. Parents of students were lodging complaints about unsafe schools, based on what the opposition has been able to find through records, as early as 2017. But it is a behaviour and a practice that has been long entrenched in a number of schools.

One has to ask why only 51 schools, or about 60 per cent of all government schools, have this framework program operating. If this program is as successful as the minister suggests, surely all schools and all staff should be acquainted with its benefits and its rollout should have had it implemented across the entire system as a priority.

Other bandaids that are on offer include smiling mind programs, mindfulness training and some schools have used circle of friends. But when I asked on notice what schools had trialled mindfulness training, like so much of what is apparently happening in our schools, that information is not collected centrally at a directorate level.

The ACT Council of P&C Associations conducted 10 workshops to address violence in schools. But answers to questions that I put on notice have revealed that only 53 directorate staff attended any of the workshops and that four of the workshops were for identified participants only. A total of only 117 people attended the 10 workshops. I wonder how well and how widely they were promoted. Was this just another, "Look, we are doing something" exercise? The outcome of the workshops is to be provided to the minister.

Additionally, the Legislative Assembly's education committee is yet to complete its inquiry into school violence and report to the Assembly and the minister's own

education advisory council is yet to have any reports made public. So we have all this apparent activity but is it just wheel spinning? We have a nation-leading workplace health and safety policy but we still have record numbers of injuries in the workplace. Is that more papering over the cracks?

When questions were asked about how well equipped learning support assistants, or LSAs, were to cope in the classroom, we were assured that they will be offered a cert IV in disability. For LSAs working in learning support units for autism, there is no specific training offered and it is not a requirement. Does that not suggest a problem and a possible explanation for the number of incidents we see in classrooms from students with complex needs?

But it is not the minister's fault. We are told that that sort of detail is not held centrally and that schools deal on an individual basis with such issues. While there is so much going on that the directorate cannot collate data centrally on so many education measures, they decide it is imperative that the cleaning contractors become public servants and centralised in the Education Directorate.

The discussion about internalising the cleaning staff currently in schools was frankly not convincing. We are told that this move will cost an additional—that is, over and above what the previous contracts were—\$5.2 million over four years. There is also money set aside—an additional \$1.6 million—to gear schools up with the right equipment. It is a significant amount of extra investment by taxpayers for the same outcome.

The reason for bringing them inside the directorate was claimed at one point to be to ensure high cleaning standards, while at another time, the move was to provide good employment opportunities for, “a particularly vulnerable cohort of people”. Given that a number of currently employed cleaners are on visas that would potentially have precluded them from accepting work with the government, that removes the vulnerable cohort worker argument.

To suggest that these workers were not doing the job properly now, but will magically improve when they are public service employees, is insulting. To suggest that someone who has cleaned a school for 10 years would only feel pride in their work and achieve dignity if they became public servants is ridiculous, but that is what the minister is suggesting.

On questions about maintenance, we learnt little other than that the \$6 million budget for maintenance provided directly to schools was already fully committed in May. So tough luck to any school that had an emergency, vandal attack or similar between May and the start of the new financial year. Had it not been for a local Catholic school, Turner primary and Lyneham primary may well have been needing emergency maintenance repair funding after repeated vandalism at both schools.

The Catholic school had CCTV installed. That in turn helped ascertain who the perpetrators were. Turner Primary School had been requesting permission to install CCTVs in the playgrounds and perimeter for after-hours surveillance but I am told that that had been denied by the directorate.

The conversation around the education of three-year-olds was another wheel spin. The policy was first mentioned over a year ago. At the time, my colleague Ms Lee welcomed the news and sought a briefing to learn more. It became apparent in the first five minutes of the briefing that this policy was no more than a thought bubble. Even during estimates this year, there was little more information available.

We are told that there will be a “targeted, phased approach”—they are the minister’s words—providing up to 400 dedicated places for what are described as, again to quote, “priority children”. We are told that the first phase of the universal access initiative for three-year-olds will start in 2020. What we do not know is where, how or who will be selected. We do not know how it might be funded. No doubt the original policy announcement was predicated on the fact that ACT Labor were supremely confident there would be a federal Labor government, and they did make many promises.

We do not know whether existing schools will accommodate three-year-olds. We do not know if childcare centres will be accredited. We do not know where the additional teaching force will be sourced from or even if there are sufficient numbers of trained preschool teachers available for employment. If children are selected on the basis of disadvantage, how will those three-year-olds access preschool if it is not delivered in their suburb? What work will be required to communicate to parents that this is an important opportunity? On the question of school psychologists, there will never be agreement from this side of the chamber that the government is addressing the issue appropriately or in sufficient numbers.

As I said at the beginning, this was not an enlightening estimates and we learnt little around what the government’s budget commitments are seeking to address or what outcomes the taxpayer should be expecting. Perhaps it is more of a concern that neither does the minister. The opposition holds a very dire outlook on what is happening in education.

MS ORR (Yerrabi) (3.44): Gungahlin is continuing to grow. That is why this Barr government is building and expanding schools for our community. In this year’s budget we are delivering two new schools for Gungahlin: a preschool to year six school for Throsby and a high school for Kenny. With Throsby’s community starting to grow and families and first homebuyers calling the new suburb home, I know that residents in Throsby are excited about the infrastructure that this government is planning for the suburb. A new home of football and recreation ovals will be ready for use when classes start at Throsby’s primary school from term one in 2022.

The new school will have capacity for 450 primary students and 132 preschool students, with further space to allow for future student growth. As a result of this investment in Throsby through the 2019-20 budget and in the coming years, students in Gungahlin’s north-east will be able to attend a great local public school.

Across Horse Park Drive in Kenny, planning work will get underway for a new high school to cater for up to 1,000 students living in the surrounding suburbs and the future residents of Kenny in 2023. By beginning planning work now on the new high school, the ACT government is building for the future of east Gungahlin.

We are not just building new schools. We are expanding already existing schools to ensure that school communities are able to stay strong as our suburbs grow. Through this budget, Franklin Early Childhood School will continue to expand to cater for students from preschool all the way to year six by 2021. I know that families in Franklin are pleased that we are making this important investment that will mean students can stay at the same school for their entire primary school education.

The 2019-20 budget also invests in our local high schools and colleges. Gold Creek senior campus will be expanded to keep up with growth in that area of Gungahlin. We will expand the teaching and support facilities at Gungahlin College with new teaching spaces, administration areas and a science laboratory. Work on these improvements at Gungahlin College is underway and is expected to be completed in time for the start of next year.

These major infrastructure investments in Gungahlin schools are part of our government's commitment to public education and ensuring that Canberra children and young people have access to quality public schools close to home. Of course, all these investments build on the commitment this government made last year to begin growing our local schools for the future. We have seen the benefit of our planned 400 additional places across Gungahlin schools and the opening of Margaret Hendry School in Taylor.

We will continue to invest in the necessary infrastructure for school population growth, but the investment does not stop at buildings and classrooms. In addition to our school infrastructure investments, we are investing in teachers and support staff that are needed for Canberra school students. The ACT government will hire the equivalent of 92 teachers and learning support assistants for 2019-20 and beyond. These teachers and staff play a key role in preparing young Canberrans for their future. It is our responsibility as a government to ensure that they are given the best possible support to do their jobs.

ACT public school teachers will be the best paid in the country as a result of Minister Berry and the Australian Education Union working together on a new enterprise agreement. I am proud that it is this ACT government that is leading the country in the value we place on our public school teachers. Our government's future of education strategy will also continue to strengthen educational outcomes across the ACT. The strategy sets the direction for high quality teaching and learning within our ACT public schools, to be achieved through collaborative learning and the development of cohesive relationships between schools, communities and the government.

The 2019-20 budget delivers on our education election commitments and ensures that every young person in Canberra has a place at a great local public school. Canberrans can trust that ACT Labor will always invest in Canberra's students, their teachers and support staff. That is exactly what this year's budget does. I am pleased to support our 2019-20 budget investments in education. I know that the Yerrabi community does too.

MR PETTERSSON (Yerrabi) (3.48): As a Labor government, we believe in the importance of a properly funded education system. Canberrans know that only our government prioritises our education system, supporting our teachers and making sure that students are given as many opportunities as possible. We believe in the transformative power of the education system and the importance of supporting students to grow and to learn. In this year's budget the government has invested \$1.4 billion in our education system. From early childhood education to tertiary study, we are increasing access to quality education across the territory.

Equitable access is fundamental to creating a just and fair city, so the government is working to increase access to early childhood education. The first three years of a child's life are fundamental in the child's social, physical, emotional, and cognitive development. It is therefore vital that children are not being left behind in this crucial development stage. That is why our government is investing in expanding education to this age group, implementing stage 1 of our commitment to universal free childhood education.

The first targeted phase will include up to 400 dedicated places for families experiencing disadvantage or facing financial hardship. Eligible families for 2020 will be contacted directly to be offered an opportunity to enrol their child into the program. This is the first step towards our policy of 15 hours per week, 600 hours per year of free, universal, quality early childhood education for three-year-old children. This initiative funded through this budget is the first step in rolling out this very significant reform to the early childhood education funding model. It is part of the \$2.2 million in funding dedicated to improving equal access to early childhood education.

Canberra's economy is growing, and more and more people want to call Canberra home. This is a great thing for our city, but with Canberra's population growing quickly we must address the pressure that this puts on our education system. The ACT government is investing in new education infrastructure, particularly in growth areas like Gungahlin. Two new schools are being built in Gungahlin: a primary school in Throsby and a high school in Kenny. The new primary school in Throsby will be built with the capacity for 450 students and up to 132 preschool students, with the space to accommodate future student growth. It will be ready for students for 2022. In Kenny the new high school will cater for 800 students from years 7 to 10 and be ready by 2023. This will increase education options for families and ensure that children do not have to travel too far to attend school and that our schools do not become overcrowded.

Gungahlin is one of the fastest growing regions in Australia and this creates growing demand for places at our local public schools. Population forecasts show the suburbs of Moncrieff, Taylor, Jacka, Kenny and Throsby welcoming 2,300 new children by 2028. This investment will ensure that Gungahlin can continue to grow in a sustainable way while our local schools continue to improve.

As well as building new schools, we are operating existing ones. The government is increasing the capacity of schools across Canberra, particularly in our growth corridor. There will be 200 more places at Gold Creek's senior campus, as well as a further 350 places at schools across Gungahlin, Belconnen and the inner north.

As well as the increasing capacity, the government is upgrading ageing infrastructure to ensure that students are learning in the best facilities. We will be upgrading old and inefficient heating systems, a necessity given Canberra's winters. These upgrades are happening at schools including Red Hill, Fadden, Forrest, Wanniasa and Lyneham primary schools, at Stromlo High School and at Hawker College. To ensure that our schools are energy efficient and comfortable for students, schools will receive upgrades including double-glazed windows, insulation and draft-proof roofing. Overall the government expects that this initiative will see a reduction in carbon dioxide emissions of at least 621 tonnes.

The government believes in quality education and understands that a one-size-fits-all approach to student learning is not productive. That is why the government is investing in a wide range of education programs that will fit the diverse needs of very different students.

The budget has provided for accelerated pathways for gifted students in partnership with the University of Canberra. This is in addition to the established partnership with the Australian National University. UC will offer pathways for students in design, behavioural science, psychology, commerce and exercise science, while ANU will continue with courses in biology, chemistry, physics and maths. This will give more opportunities for students who excel in certain subjects to expand their knowledge and prepare for their future tertiary education.

As well as this initiative, the ACT government is building skills for Canberra workers and young people leaving school through the future skills for future jobs grant program. Our Labor government supports and champions vocational training at our CIT. This program will help young people who are transitioning from school to apprenticeships and encourage new pathways to train and upskill young people. This will ensure that our government is moving towards the target of an additional 4,165 commencements of traineeships and apprenticeships in the territory over the next four years. These traineeships will be across a wide range of occupations that are in demand and will help grow our economy. This includes areas such as hospitality, health and community services, building and construction, digital technologies, tourism, renewable energy and cyber industries.

Additionally our government is improving the learning space at CIT Fyshwick to develop hands-on work environments. These programs will diversify our workforce and ensure that Canberra students are well equipped for whatever roles they want to pursue in the future.

Our government is committed to funding a wide range of programs for Canberra students so that all students are supported to reach their full potential. This support results in great results for our students. Canberra school leavers are achieving fantastic results, above the national average. Recent results have shown that 93 per cent of young people who graduate in 2017 were employed or undertaking further study in 2018, or both. This is higher than the national average of 87 per cent.

Support for students during their time at school, especially for later year students to help them to choose future employment or study pathways, has contributed to this result. These results show that investing in students is working. Our students can go on to study or employment in a wide range of fields that will help strengthen our economy and provide for a greater community.

Quality education can only occur when we empower our fantastic teachers. Our government believes that teachers play a formative role in childhood education and that they must be supported. Our teachers encourage students to develop a love of learning. This is what creates a great education system. Our teachers are the best paid in the country, in recognition of their fantastic work.

This budget has allocated \$5.4 million, over four years for professional development, mentoring and coaching for these teaching professionals. This plan will include employing skilled teachers with expertise in helping students with learning difficulties, encouraging collaboration and sharing best practice between schools, staff training to better understand student requirements through data literacy development, funding for national and international education researchers to work alongside teachers, and training to support educators' wellbeing and job satisfaction, in particular their mental health. Additionally there will be \$4.5 million in funding for an affiliated schools partnership with the University of Canberra to further enhance teachers' skills. These programs will ensure that our teachers are supported to continue their skills and support our teachers' wellbeing.

This government is prioritising education in our city across a wide range of programs. We are investing in our education system. This means focusing on the individual needs of students to ensure that no student falls through the cracks. We are focusing on the full spectrum of the education system, from preschool to tertiary education.

The first stage of our equitable funding for early childhood schooling will make sure that children from disadvantaged backgrounds are not falling behind in these key development stages. We know that children do not start on a level playing field, so the government is targeting early childhood learning to address these gaps before they affect long-term learning outcomes.

Our government is committed to funding education infrastructure, especially in our growth corridors, so that we can keep up with our growing city. The government is investing in programs to encourage young people to enter vocational or tertiary programs and build their skills. We are investing in our teachers to support the people who are doing such a great job of educating Canberra and Canberrans. These programs together will ensure that our education system continues to go from strength to strength.

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) (3.57): As this is the second largest area of expenditure in the ACT budget and a very significant part of the ACT budget, there is obviously a great deal of material to be covered under this part of the Appropriation Bill.

As a former education minister, I have a great appreciation for the breadth and the complexity of issues in the education sector in the ACT. I do not intend to speak at length; I simply want to convey three things. One is the Greens' support for this element of the budget. We think that there is a good quantum of expenditure, it is targeted in the right areas and it provides the support our education system needs.

The key issue I want to touch on is one of capacity. Mr Pettersson mentioned this briefly in his remarks. It is clear that significant population growth in the ACT puts pressure on our schools to provide enough spaces in some key areas. Of course this is not uniform across the city: there are some schools which continue to be below capacity. There are a couple of key areas in particular: Gungahlin, which Mr Pettersson touched on, and also schools in the inner north of Canberra. As we are seeing a change in demographic across our city, our education system needs to keep up with that and be looking at where capacity is needed. Particular areas in my electorate in the inner north are areas where there is significant pressure on capacity, which the government will need to turn its mind to in the very near term.

The last area I want to touch on is the issue of the mental health and wellbeing of our students. Clearly young people are dealing with significant pressure when it comes to their mental wellbeing, with the influence of social media, issues of growing up too fast and the like. This is an important area of investment and development of new initiatives, new ideas and new strategies in the coming years, certainly through my work as the Minister for Mental Health. The office for mental health in particular are doing a piece of work on this that I think will be very important for us in determining future directions. It is an area that future budgets will need to canvass to make sure that we are keeping up and providing young people with the coping skills, the resilience and the support networks to ensure that their mental health and wellbeing is strong and that they are able to progress through their younger years with the support and care that they need or, where they start to struggle, an appropriate response.

Mindful of how important education is for people to have the best chance in life, the Greens are pleased to support this element of the Appropriation Bill.

MR GUPTA (Yerrabi) (4.01): I rise today to speak to the ACT government's education commitments outlined in the 2019-20 budget. This budget is building for Canberra's future through education. We are building new schools, expanding existing schools, upgrading classrooms and strengthening our investment in education from early learning through to post-school qualifications. Our community is growing, and our ACT Labor government understands that we need to invest in the infrastructure and services to meet our community's needs in the future.

In my maiden speech I outlined education as a priority of mine. Education is the greatest tool we have to give Australian citizens a fair go and optimise outcomes for our country. In order to build our future we need to be investing in human capital, and the best way to do that is through skills training and education. It is a key component to increase equity in our country and grow our economy.

In this budget we are delivering new and expanded school facilities for every age group, from primary school through to college, particularly in the Gungahlin region. This will deliver the next major phase of investment in schools for Canberra's key areas of growth.

The ACT government launched the future of education strategy in the 2018-19 budget which outlined the plan for education in the ACT for the next decade. The intention was to achieve better equity in learning outcomes and that all children should have the opportunity to thrive in school, regardless of external circumstances. It also outlined that we would continue to improve the quality of education in Canberra, with a focus on wellbeing, and this budget is delivering on these commitments.

We are lucky in Canberra to have many fantastic schools and educational institutions in our community, and I have sent my two children, Mallika and Ashvin, to local schools in Yerrabi. My home suburb, Gungahlin, is one of the fastest growing regions in the country. Whilst this provides exciting opportunities it also comes with significant challenges. It is essential that we ensure that our city is ready to service new Canberrans in the next decade.

I am incredibly proud that our ACT Labor government is building two schools in Gungahlin. This budget has committed to building a new primary school in Throsby, which will be ready to take students at the start of 2022. An additional new high school is also planned to serve east Gungahlin and is intended to open in 2023. These areas are experiencing rapid growth, and we have listened to the community about capacity needs at our schools and have responded. The two new schools will deliver 1,382 more places for students, to better service Canberrans in the Gungahlin region.

This budget also outlined plans to expand local schools, particularly in the Gungahlin region with 200 more places at Gold Creek School's senior campus. The budget will also provide a further 350 places at schools across the inner north, including Gungahlin.

In conjunction with this, we are delivering an additional 400 places at Franklin Early Childhood School, and the 2019-20 budget provides \$29.5 million to fund this expansion. Through this budget we are working to ensure that every student has access to a great school close to home and that they are supported academically.

It has been well established that the first three years of a child's life set the foundation for social, physical, emotional and cognitive development. Evidence shows that a person's life success including health and overall wellbeing are strongly linked to childhood. If we get the early years right we are setting children up to thrive in their later years.

This is why I am incredibly pleased that our ACT Labor government is progressing the delivery of the ACT early childhood strategy. This is a significant reform that we are rolling out to all Canberra families and children in need, especially families experiencing disadvantage and vulnerability. This budget has outlined \$2.2 million as part of the first step towards 15 hours per week, 600 hours per year, free, universal, quality early childhood education for three-year-old children. This strategy is

incredibly important to set the ACT up for long-term success in the education sector and builds upon our free 15 hours of preschool a week or up to 600 hours per year. This budget demonstrates the ACT Labor government's commitment to giving every child an equal start to their education.

In conclusion, we know that education is the best way to break down barriers and provide better outcomes for individuals and our community. Our ACT Labor government is delivering on our commitment to education because we believe that every person deserves an education that allows them to get the most out of life. Through the 2019 ACT budget, the government is building for the future by delivering the investment we need today to ensure that every student can continue to find a place at a great local school close to home, and all people are supported to achieve their full potential.

Proposed expenditure agreed to.

Transport Canberra and City Services—Part 1.5

MR STEEL (Murrumbidgee—Minister for Community Services and Facilities, Minister for Multicultural Affairs and Minister for Transport and City Services) (4.07): I rise to speak in support of the budget in relation to Transport Canberra and City Services and talk about the important measures that are being delivered through this budget to ensure that we are investing in our suburbs and protecting what is unique about Canberra and its suburbs. I have been minister for city services for around 51 weeks and minister for transport for six, and the work that is being progressed through the budget is incredibly important for Canberra, whether it is planning for the next stage of our city light rail network or whether its ensuring that playgrounds in Oxley, Florey and Stirling receive improvements to their amenity or that work that is being undertaken in the transport and city services portfolio more broadly.

I really welcome the opportunity to outline many of the excellent initiatives brought forward in this budget. The government is committed to significantly investing in better public transport to protect the liveability of our growing city. Our public transport, active travel and road networks play an important part in moving the community around quickly, safely and with the lowest possible impact on our environment.

This budget provides ongoing support for services and contract management for the highly successful stage 1 of light rail from Gungahlin to the city, and the new, integrated transport network is making it easier for Canberrans to use public transport by delivering on what we know people in our city have asked for. We will continue to build on our new public transport network with a new, more modern bus fleet, planning for a new, integrated ticketing system and the extension of light rail from the city to Woden.

We have committed to the purchase of 84 modern and fuel-efficient buses to improve accessibility and passenger comfort, increased reliability and lower maintenance costs on the new public transport network. The new buses will ensure that the ACT retains

the flexibility to transition to emerging low-emissions and zero-emissions vehicles if these become viable in the near future.

We have also committed to the construction of an additional light rail stop on Flemington Road in Mitchell, with construction commencing this financial year. This newly constructed stop will support local businesses and residents in Gungahlin and north Canberra, providing improved public transport in Mitchell.

In addition to the construction of the light rail stop, pedestrians and cyclists will find it easier to access the Mitchell business precinct, with the missing link in the Flemington Road path network to be fixed. A 1.3-kilometre cycling and walking path will be constructed on Flemington Road between Well Station Drive and Morisset Road and Sandford Street, and a park-and-ride facility will be funded on Well Station Drive to continue to support the record number of people who are using light rail.

The budget also commits to commencing work on a new bus interchange for Woden that will accommodate light rail in the future. The new interchange will feature more comfortable shelters, modern passenger information displays, ticketing machines, accessible footpaths and cycle facilities, security systems and a safer transition between the future light rail stop and those who are catching buses at the interchange. It will make Woden a better place for people and contribute to the regeneration of the town centre, as a new interchange has in other parts of Canberra like Belconnen and Dickson.

The government will continue to invest in our suburbs through the better infrastructure fund. In particular, we will continue to deliver footpath and cycleway upgrades to help make our suburbs more age friendly and promote active travel. In 2019-20, works will be delivered in Aranda, Campbell, Holt, Isabella Plains, Narrabundah and Stirling as part of the age friendly suburbs program. We will continue to upgrade bus stop infrastructure across the ACT to improve accessibility and encourage more Canberrans to combine active travel with public transport. We will continue to deliver the highly successful school crossing supervisors program, supporting 25 schools, and we will continue to deliver a range of safety measures at our schools across the ACT to improve road safety and encourage walking and cycling to school.

The government is upgrading and refurbishing the Woden Library, including upgrading spaces for use by the community and the potential for after-hours use as well.

The 2019-20 budget will see a step-up in city services because we want to make sure that Canberrans in every suburb have access to trees, parks, better playgrounds and great public spaces that we can continue to be proud of. The government has recently released the Better Suburbs—Making Progress report 2019. The report reflects on how the budget aligns with the priorities that Canberrans who participated in the better suburbs citizens forum put forward for city services. I table that report in the Assembly today. I present the following paper:

Better Suburbs—Making Progress—2019-20.

Our government will continue to build better infrastructure, and the better suburbs statement will continue to guide us in progressively transitioning investment in city services to the Canberra community's highest priority areas.

We have committed \$3 million in the budget to continue to implement the play space improvement program in 2019-20. These investments in new and upgraded playgrounds that our government is undertaking will provide improved and new play activities, more diverse ranges of experiences for children and particularly fun, creative and engaging play experiences and those in natural settings.

Amenity upgrades and refresh works will be undertaken at a number of existing play spaces, including seating, shade infrastructure and new pieces of equipment. The new nature play spaces will be delivered to enhance existing play facilities at Yerrabi Pond in Gungahlin and Kambah adventure playground. Natural play spaces provide an outlet for creative and imaginative play, using elements from the landscape—natural elements like logs and rocks—to encourage children to climb, jump and explore. Every region in Canberra will benefit from a new playground.

Additional bins will be installed right across Canberra in highly trafficked areas like group centres to meet the demand of users in our open public spaces and nearby residences. These include highly frequented areas for people walking their dogs and recreational areas like Haig Park, the Watson walking track, Gungahlin Ponds and our popular dog parks. We have also committed to providing 100 additional recycling bins throughout the ACT. These bins will be placed at local and town shopping centres, and I look forward to working with communities to make sure that the best locations are provided for these.

We will continue to improve services at our local shops more broadly. We have committed to deliver up to 25 new permanent parking spaces at the busy Palmerston shops and a further 150 parking spaces at Cooleman Court in Weston Creek to cater for demand there. The parking will help to improve access to the shopping centre as well as other services at the Weston Creek group centre such as the new nurse-led walk-in centre which is going to be open by the end of the year. These upgrades at Cooleman Court will continue the works recently completed on Parkinson Street and provide additional parking capacity for the general public and also potentially for park-and-ride users, pending the outcome of a review of parking at the centre.

We will also undertake amenity upgrades at Dunlop and Fraser shops, with improvements to landscaping and footpaths. Dunlop shops in particular will benefit from a new community noticeboard and a shade sail at the playground.

We are also commencing through the budget something that was brought home to the government particularly through the better suburbs process, and that is the importance of planting more trees. The budget will provide funding for the largest tree planting by the government since the year 2000, with 17,000 new trees being planted across the city to ensure the benefits of Canberra's renowned urban forest continue for future generations. Planting locations will particularly target gaps in the existing tree canopy cover in areas that are most vulnerable to the impacts of climate change as well as

making sure that we are replacing trees in areas where there is existing canopy cover and trees are coming to the end of their life. We will also prepare an urban forest strategy which will map out how we meet longer term targets for our tree canopy and provide a long-term plan for the management of our fantastic tree canopy here in Canberra.

Growing our investment in water infrastructure was the number one priority identified by the better suburbs citizens forum and the government is reflecting this priority in a significant investment in water infrastructure. The budget funds upgrades to the stormwater network in Fyshwick, Waramanga, Page and Weetangera along with a boost to the frequency of street sweeping to improve outcomes and better services for suburbs and also the quality of water run-off into our waterways.

We are improving capacity in our stormwater network to make it safer for Canberrans as well. Stormwater infrastructure in key areas across Belconnen, Weston Creek and the inner north have drainage systems that were not built to current design standards. Our upgrades will address those issues and protect Canberra's natural water courses from pollution through additional street-sweeping resources.

Detailed design for water management infrastructure in Mawson will commence to improve the amenity and support the future needs of the area while also keeping the community safe over the long term by investing in flood mitigation measures. We are looking forward to that work being done on the Mawson retaining basin with construction to commence in 2020-21.

We are making it easier and safer to move around our suburbs by delivering on our election commitment to provide safer intersections through upgrades to key sites across Canberra. Intersection upgrades are planned at Southern Cross Drive and Starke Street in Holt, Belconnen Way and Springvale Drive in Hawker, Kent Street and Novar Street in Deakin and Yarralumla, and Launceston Street and Irving Street in Phillip. These initiatives will continue to improve safe road access in these areas particularly for pedestrians and a better flow of traffic through the areas.

We are also investing in upgrades around the car park in Mount Taylor as part of stage 2 of the works, providing safe turning lanes in and out of the car park and looking at improving and widening the road in that location.

Safety will be improved on ACT roads with infrastructure improvements to be delivered across our roads for heavy vehicles in particular. The upgrades will include line marking, widening of kerbs and of key intersections to cater for the size, carrying capacity and design of today's heavy vehicles. This will allow goods and materials to be transported where they are needed in the ACT. The initiative will also continue to strengthen a set of bridges on the existing B-double network.

The community will benefit from upgrades to the Monaro Highway, an important transport and freight corridor particularly for those on the south side. These upgrades are jointly funded between the commonwealth and ACT governments with up to \$200 million in funding committed beyond the forward estimates.

The road pavement along Northbourne Avenue northbound from Macarthur Avenue to Antill Street will be upgraded. Rehabilitation of the pavement on this section of the road will improve skid resistance, remove defects and reduce the need for regular maintenance as well as benefitting motorists and the many cyclists who use this section of road.

We are working to improve access between Belconnen and Gungahlin by duplicating the arterial road between Ginninderra Drive and the Barton Highway with the commonwealth government contributing \$20 million towards those works through the national partnership agreement on land transport infrastructure projects. The upgrade will ease traffic congestion in Gungahlin and will include 6.4 kilometres of new on-road cycle lanes and a new signalised intersection at Dumas Street.

There will be further planning and delivery of improvements to our roads across Canberra, including duplicating parts of William Hovell and Athllon drives. Designs will be prepared for the duplication of William Hovell Drive from Drake Brockman Drive to John Gorton Drive with more than 20,000 vehicles per day travelling on that section of road, a figure that will only grow as the area continues to develop. We are investing now to ensure that we can help reduce congestion in the future for west Belconnen residents.

Morisset Road includes the Sullivans Creek low-level crossing, which regularly floods during rain events. Design work will be undertaken to extend Morisset Road by 1.2km kilometres to the existing Antill Street-Federal Highway intersection. This road extension will support the development in Kenny, and the design will also increase the road's level to ensure that it is not flooded during rain events. Further work will be investigated to improve this link in our freight network.

Planning and design works will be undertaken for the duplication of Athllon Drive in two sections, first from Drakeford Drive through to Sulwood Drive and then commencing design work on the further section between Shay Street and Melrose Drive in Phillip. That will improve access to Woden and Civic particularly for those coming from the south.

Continuing our commitment to reducing waste in the territory the budget provides significant investment in upgrades to the Hume materials recovery facility, commencing planning for Canberra's future waste infrastructure needs and undertaking early planning for a food organics waste service. The upgrades will ensure that the facility is able to operate effectively and efficiently, particularly in light of the challenges we face around China's national sword policy.

The ACT is one of the best performing jurisdictions when it comes to recycling and our government is investing in infrastructure upgrades to reach our waste reduction targets and to ensure that we have a robust response to waste management in the territory. Funding will be used to construct a purpose-built hardstand area within the adjacent block at Hume that will provide adequate space to store and separate baled recycled materials ready for market and provide an area for the transfer of co-mingled recycling and container deposit scheme material.

Members would be aware that around 143,000 tonnes of organic waste goes to landfill each year, around half of all landfill waste. A food waste avoidance campaign pilot targeted at householders and businesses will be designed, delivered and evaluated in 2019-20 to help reduce the amount of food waste going into landfill. The campaign will raise awareness amongst the community and business about the volumes of food unnecessarily wasted as well as the social, financial and environmental impacts of food waste and the steps to help reduce it.

Canberra households will be one step closer to a food organics service with a detailed feasibility study to be undertaken into the delivery of a FOGO processing site and facility. These initiatives will also encourage waste reduction and increased recovery in addition to another measure in the budget, the introduction of a new waste levy on the disposal of waste in our landfill. This is a sensible tool being used by governments across Australia to ensure that we are maximising the amount of material being diverted from landfill.

If the full cost of the levy were passed on, an average cafe producing eight to nine tonnes of waste per year would pay a total of only about \$104 per year, or \$2 a week. This encourages commercial operators to change their behaviour and find new ways of recycling or diverting their waste from landfill so that the levy will not apply to them. Applying a waste levy will bring the ACT into alignment with other jurisdictions currently implementing levies as part of their broader effort to responsibly manage waste but do so in a coordinated way.

This budget will strengthen our investment in city services and see a boost in suburban maintenance and upkeep of community infrastructure to ensure that our city remains clean, green and tidy. The increased funding will ensure that we can deliver ongoing services to new developments across the urban area, including cleaning, mowing, weed control and litter removal. We will continue to support the delivery of municipal services, plans and designs for a new depot particularly to support our city presentation team in the growing Molonglo Valley and the upgrade of depot facilities for city presentation staff at Nicholls. The new city services depot will help service the Woden-Weston area and the growing Molonglo region. Designs will also be prepared for a larger purpose-built city presentation depot.

Our budget will support better compliance across the territory with a focus on engagement and enforcement as part of a six-month trial specifically targeting priority regulatory matters across the Litter Act, dog management, public unleased land, and other matters that are under the purview of city services. The focus of the new engagement and compliance program will be dogs and animal welfare management. This initiative will help reduce problematic animal behaviour and ensure that Canberrans can feel safe when using our parks or taking a stroll through our suburbs on our footpaths and in our streets, reserves and other public spaces.

I want to end on a particularly positive note, a note that all of us on the government side as Labor members can be proud of, that is, our government's commitment to providing secure and stable work for Canberrans. One particular initiative which shows our commitment to delivering secure local jobs across the public and private

sectors alike is designed for providing job security for city services workers by making sure that we transition staff on temporary contracts into permanent positions.

We know that there is some seasonal work in the city services portfolio, particularly the city presentation team, and some areas of peak activity require some temporary or contract work from time to time. But we also know many Canberrans want to take on full-time, permanent, well-paid jobs, and one of my priorities as minister is to ensure that the people working in TCCS can focus on the task at hand rather than on whether their contract will be renewed. The measure we have been able to deliver in this budget will enable us to ensure that we transition 80 per cent of city services staff into full-time permanent positions.

These are some of the great measures in the 2019-20 budget that will enable us to build a better city and provide better community-focused services. I commend the Appropriation Bill to the Assembly.

MS LE COUTEUR (Murrumbidgee) (4.29): The Greens welcome quite a few wins for our policy ideas in this part of the budget. The Greens have a very strong commitment to a more sustainable city, and that very much involves the portfolios of TCCS: Transport Canberra—how we get around; and City Services—how we look after the physical environment we live in.

We are very pleased with some of the recent improvements in public transport. The biggest issue there, of course, is lack of capacity. Network 19 has clearly been a success, and I think it demonstrates very much that if you give people a better bus service, they actually will use it. If you look at the district of Weston, bus use there has gone up nine per cent. The simple fact is that there are now four buses which go from Cooleman Court to Woden—basically, one every quarter of an hour.

I am not saying that the bus system is perfect. Clearly, there have been some significant issues in terms of local buses being cancelled. The issue there is a straightforward one of lack of capacity. I banged on about this before; everyone knows that I would love to see more capacity in our public transport, and in particular our bus network.

On that note, I am pleased to see that 84 new buses have been funded. But it is entirely unclear to me exactly how many of these will be additional buses rather than replacement buses. During estimates it was said that all of the old orange buses would be got rid of. I have mixed feelings about that. We are still using them. They are hot or cold, depending on the weather, but I would like to see us expand the number of buses rather than replacing them with newer buses. It is really important to invest in new capacity and expand our network.

I would like to see us stop investing in fossil-fuel-powered buses. Other jurisdictions have managed to move to electric buses. I would like to see the ACT doing that—and if not electric buses, hydrogen buses. I am not claiming to be a technological expert, but clearly we need to phase out fossil fuels. We have made a decision as an Assembly; we voted for the fact that there is a climate emergency. If there is a climate

emergency, we should not be buying buses that burn fossil fuels. I was very pleased to hear that Minister Steel investigated low emission buses during his trip to the US.

Talking about buses, the estimates committee made a couple of specific recommendations about them which have received very annoying non-answers. Recommendation 140 was that the ACT government ensure that public transport is provided to all new estates and significant recreational facilities such as Stromlo park. The government's response was:

TCCS will continue to work across Government to plan and coordinate the provision of bus services to new estates.

I am sure they will. Nobody really doubts that. The point that the estimates committee was trying to make was that business as usual is not good enough. When you move to a new place, you need to work out how you are going to get to and from there. If there is no bus service, you will do something else.

In particular, Stromlo park looks like it could be a really wonderful recreational facility, but I do not want to see parents in south Canberra being pestered by their kids to drive them to Stromlo park because that is the only way they can get there. I do not want to see the adults who will use it decide: "Yep, the only way I can get to this is to drive." Currently, that looks like it will be the position.

We also recommended that the ACT government review the bus network, with the specific intention of improving journey times. The government agreed, but its answer is a non-answer:

TCCS is constantly reviewing data from the new network in order to continue to improve services.

I do know that this is true to some extent. I am a regular bus user and I would have to say that when network 19 started it was vastly the case that there were not enough R4s. We now basically have enough R4s. It is probably only once or twice a week that I see a bus go past me with the sign saying "full", and not picking up passengers. It would be nice to make the commitment to do a full review.

Moving to light rail, we welcome the commitment of \$49 million for initial work on light rail stage 2. It is important that whatever is planned for this serves the residents of south Canberra as well as residents of the whole of Canberra. In particular, and speaking as a user of the R4, I assume it will be an improvement on the current R4.

The money also includes design work for a new Woden bus interchange, which has been talked about for many years. Clearly, with many thousands of residents expected in the Woden town centre over the next five to 10 years due to the number of apartments being built, we need better public transport to and from Woden. With respect to the people of northern Canberra, I am less aware of the funding for the Mitchell rail stop. It seems like a good idea.

Funding for the flexible bus service will be extended for a further year. I would be very upset about the one-year extension, except that we did talk about this in estimates. The impression we were given of the reason for the one-year funding extension is that work is underway in terms of looking at potential improvements.

In particular, TCCS said that it was currently investigating a new booking system. You have to book the flexible bus service at least two days in advance, and your booking may be cancelled if someone else's need is greater. Clearly, it does not have the capacity for the people who want to use it. I was very pleased that the government indicated that, while it had not funded it further into the future, the reason was that it intended to do bigger and better things in the future, and I look forward to that. Maybe, given the timing, we are looking at an election commitment. However it is delivered, I would like to see it.

I will not be nearly as positive about the next thing I want to talk about—roads. I do not think we should be spending tens of millions of dollars on road expansions or even on car park expansions. We all know that, from a climate change point of view, this is a backward step. From the point of view of mobility for about a third of people in Canberra who are not car drivers, this is probably also a backward step. Roads only temporarily make life easier for car drivers. They are like storage areas in your home: the more you have, the more you fill them up. Experts have a word for this, because it happens everywhere. We are not alone in this. They call it “induced demand”—build the road and, in many cases, people will use it. That is not the case everywhere, but generally it is so.

The problem with building things like that is that we are building a car-dominated future. The people who live in the outer suburbs of Canberra should be particularly unhappy about that, because it will entrench the fact that they have to spend an awful lot of money on transportation. The people who live in the inner suburbs with a higher population have a reasonable chance of getting some decent public transport. But if we spend more and more money on roads, it is the people in the outer areas who should be concerned that they are not getting a very good deal. They are becoming more and more vulnerable to petrol prices, although I agree that electric cars are moving in the direction of freeing people from being vulnerable to petrol prices.

Until we move to zero emission cars, roads entrench greenhouse gas emissions. They also entrench the idea of an awful lot of our city being filled with roads and road infrastructure, such as car parks. This is literally a waste of space. Importantly, we need to look at what else we could do with these funds, instead of building roads. If we want to use exactly the same contractors, so that we do not make life difficult in the short run, in transition we could spend this money on better cycleways, on better footpaths and on making exclusive bus lanes on our roads. The same skills would be used on these projects, but they would be contributing to a more sustainable future.

(Second speaking period taken.)

Going to active transport, the Greens are very pleased to see that there is funding for active travel improvements, in particular around schools. If we can get our young people walking or riding to school, it will set them up for good, for doing that in the

future. We are also very pleased to see the funding for age-friendly suburbs. All of our suburbs should be age-friendly, and we are not bringing that out quickly enough. The parliamentary agreement had \$30 million for active travel infrastructure. I do not know if I should say I am pleased or not pleased, but it is now fully funded; I am pleased with that. I would like to see more and more being spent on this. I would like to see this level of investment continue past this year. Of course, \$30 million over four years is less than one major road project.

Moving on to city services, I am very pleased to see that this budget goes some of the way to implementing the better suburbs project. Members may remember a motion I moved in this place a couple of years ago about participatory budgeting and having a participatory budgeting process focusing on city services. I understand that that has significantly influenced the CS part of the TCCS budget.

There is clearly a high demand for expenditure on public open space upgrades, but unfortunately this demand has to be balanced against a very limited amount of funding. Participatory budgeting would seem to be one of the more positive ways of trying to balance these two.

Better suburbs was very good community consultation, but it did not do as much as we would have liked to have seen in terms of actual budgetary decisions. The better suburbs people had, I believe, a notional \$1.9 million to play with as far as playgrounds were concerned, rather than looking at the whole TCCS budget.

One thing that the better suburbs process made very clear was that trees are highly valued by the community. The better suburbs process ranked trees as priority No 2, and I sponsored a petition about it earlier this year. Street and park trees in our established suburbs are declining by around 3,000 trees a year. This is only likely to increase, as the drought shows no signs of abating any time soon.

As well as the drought, there is ongoing climate change, old age and redevelopment. We are getting trees knocked down every day because of development in this city. The last report, seven years ago, showed that 40,000 trees were needed to fill the gaps and to replace dying trees. The petition that I sponsored would have asked the government to plant an extra 7,000 trees a year. The budget only referred to 17,000 over four years. That is a good start, and I am very pleased about it, but what I would say very strongly is that it needs to be a start, not an end. The 17,000 figure is ramping up over the four years; in the last year there will be 9,000 trees planted. I would love to see us continue at 9,000 trees from then into the future, because that is the sort of amount we need to plant to keep Canberra a bush capital, to address the urban heat island effect.

The next thing we need to do is set up a tree canopy target. I understand from various comments that that is being looked at by government. The better suburbs people suggested a 30 per cent tree canopy target, and we should look at that as the minimum that we should be aiming for.

Waste is a big issue, made even bigger by the federal government's comments that they do not want to see any waste being exported. I think that is great, but we have to

do more than just say we do not want it to happen. We are going to have to make some investments in changing how waste is dealt with in the ACT and Australia.

I am pleased to see \$18 million for waste initiatives, and I am pleased that there is some early planning for FOGO, food organics and green organics. That was the subject of my PMB motion in June. I repeat that I had no idea, of course, what was in the budget when I moved that. Food organics are one of the easy-peasy things for the ACT government to do to reduce emissions and to turn waste into a great green resource to make more sustainable food. I welcome funding for the parliamentary agreement item for a hundred more recycling bins in public spaces, as Minister Steel talked about.

Talking about bins, the government urgently needs to sort out the issues with green bins. It seems entirely unclear what is going on. I want to go to the recommendation from the estimates committee. To give people who were not at estimates a bit of background, if you are a public housing tenant and you want to get a green bin, your address is not up on the list of addresses that can get green bins. We asked the government about this in the estimates process. They made the bizarre excuse that this was done so that it was not possible to identify ACT Housing properties. Of course, it in fact does the opposite, because you can identify them, as I have identified them, by looking them up and seeing the ones that are missing.

It is beyond belief that TCCS cannot find a list of addresses of all the residences in the ACT. It simply beggars belief. Recommendation 205 of the estimates committee was:

The Committee recommends that the ACT Government improve the application process to allow ACT Housing tenants to easily request green waste bins for the address at which they reside.

The government said:

Agreed.

Housing ACT tenants can access green bins through ACT No Waste the same as other Canberrans.

That is actually not the case. They would not be able to find their address on the list, which does make it impossible. This afternoon I checked with a couple of complexes. I live in an area which has quite a few public housing complexes in it, so I do not need to use this website to work it out, but it is depressing to find that the ACT government is not treating ACT Housing tenants with the same respect as it treats other people in Canberra, and also to find that, it would appear to me, the housing act is not being adhered to, because, by looking it up, you can work out the addresses of ACT Housing tenants.

They did say:

ACT NoWaste is also currently identifying measures to improve the process for ACT housing tenants to register. A Customer relationship management (CRM) system is currently being investigated to improve the overall customer experience for all household waste services provided by the Territory.

That has to be a good thing.

I am pleased to see a few urban services wins in my electorate. There is the refurbishment of the Woden library, half a million there. There are new playgrounds, or upgrades in some cases, in Waramanga and Torrens. In Kambah District Park—I remember playing there with my daughter—there will be a new natural play space. There is \$19.9 million over four years for more city maintenance and upkeep, which is particularly important for the new areas in Molonglo, where my constituents are complaining that they are missing out; they have not yet got onto the new schedules.

One thing that is particularly controversial in my electorate is the proposed car parking in Cooleman Court. Many people will support it, but many people do not support the idea of turning what is open space into a car park. The question that has to be raised is: how are we going to solve the actual problem there, which is taking the pressure off Cooleman Court by providing, somehow, actual community facilities, including a viable shopping centre in Molonglo? That is the real solution to the parking issues at Cooleman Court. I look forward to a solution being worked out for that one.

In general, I am pleased with many items in this part of the budget. Some of them, at least, will make a more sustainable city.

MS LAWDER (Brindabella) (4.49): There is no clearer indicator of the government's intentions, priorities and character than what it chooses to fund in its budget, and this budget is no exception. It is a budget that has been characterised by the independent budget adviser as overtly political and shrill, and it shows to me at least that the government's priorities remain north of the lake. I will give an example of why I say that. Budget statements H, which deals with Transport Canberra and City Services, mentions Tuggeranong five times and Gungahlin 21 times. That is one brief indication that shows the government continues to raise more and more money and tax Canberrans more and more at the expense of their everyday services.

I will give another example. Budget paper 3, at page 4, forecasts revenue to increase by over a billion dollars in the next four years. This is an annual year-on-year increase of four per cent, 4.9 per cent, 5.9 per cent and seven per cent for the 2019-20, 2020-21, 2021-22 and 2022-23 years respectively. By comparison, the road resealing budget for 2019-20 has been cut by eight per cent. Money going up; services going down.

Roads are one of the most essential services that Canberrans rely on this government to provide, but it appears we are cutting money from our road maintenance budget by \$17 million, from \$199 million to \$182 million, an eight per cent cut. The funding levels do not return to their 2018-19 level until 2022-23. It also seems the government is cutting the road construction budget by \$175 million, a three per cent cut.

Despite these cuts the government is forecasting that the same percentage of roads will be resealed as the years before, the same percentage of roads in the territory will be in good condition and the same percentage of people will be satisfied with the roads. I am unsure how that is going to happen. We heard during estimates from the

minister that there is no direct correlation between the number in the back of the budget papers and the target percentage of roads resealed. He said that the numbers reflect that they have done a blitz and things are going back to normal.

The target percentage of roads resealed and the estimated outcome of roads resealed last financial year does not reflect a blitz. Rather, those targets and estimated outcomes are consistent with this year's financial year targets without the blitz funding. I am not sure why the minister and the government think they can slash the budget but the percentage of the roads resealed will remain stable and satisfaction will remain the same. One conclusion you could draw is that the method of resealing may be cheaper. If it is, that could well be a good thing but it might also be a bad thing. Does cheaper mean poorer quality? I guess time will tell.

An area I receive a lot of complaints about is footpaths, shared paths and community paths. I know the minister receives a lot of those complaints forwarded from me, and I thank the minister and his staff and departmental staff for their responses. They are always respectful and polite and are often helpful. I pass on my appreciation for that because these issues affect people as soon as they walk out their front door and see a pothole or a streetlight that is not working. People care about these issues and they contact me all the time. I am sure the minister receives these from not just me but many other members as well.

We need to do more on footpath maintenance. As the shadow minister for urban services and also the shadow minister for seniors I cannot keep count of the number of people who write to me about footpaths. We put money in the budget over the past few years into active travel projects, the age-friendly suburbs project and footpath infrastructure, but the fact remains that so many of our footpaths are in disrepair, sometimes dangerously so.

We need to think about outcomes and not just how much money we are spending. Are we getting the results Canberrans need, want and expect? The estimates committee recognised this when it found:

Despite assurances from the Minister that there has been an increase in funding for active travel infrastructure, the Committee remains concerned about the growing number of footpaths in disrepair and in need of maintenance.

I share that concern absolutely. The committee recommended that the ACT government invest more resources into footpath and shared path repair and maintenance, and I agree.

According to questions taken on notice, the community path maintenance budget comes from the same pool of funding as the road maintenance budget, which, as I have already referred to, has just been slashed by \$17 million. So how are we going to get more footpath, community path and shared path maintenance out of a budget that is being slashed? Actions speak louder than words, and members can make what they can of those numbers.

Playgrounds are another area about which I get a lot of queries, comments and sometimes complaints. People are generally not so much complaining but requesting improvements. They are not always asking for brand-new play spaces but better maintenance and upkeep of the ones we have. The upgrade and improvement of play spaces is listed as a government priority in budget statements H. A couple of million dollars is allocated for play space upgrades, expected to be completed by June 2020. This is a good thing that will, as I understand it, meet the changing demands of the community and provide additional opportunities for nature play, for example. It is a great objective. But there are areas where people have asked and asked and asked for improvements and have been knocked back.

Richardson is getting a whole-of-suburb play space refresh, which is fantastic. I am sure people in Richardson are really pleased, and I am really pleased about that too. But I can tell you that in over six years in this place I have never received one request for an upgrade in Richardson. Where has this come from? I have received requests from other suburbs—Wanniassa, Oxley, Chisholm, Calwell, Fadden, Greenway; it goes on and on—but not one from Richardson. I am bemused as to how this has come about. That is not to say that Richardson should not get the upgrade—it is a great thing—but what is the process? Why are some chosen over others?

For example, there was a petition some time ago about a playground in Greenway near Lake Tuggeranong, near the learn-to-ride park. I think 175 to 200 people signed that petition. People love that learn-to-ride park; it has been a fantastic success. I commend the government, and I did at the time, for putting in that learn-to-ride park. It is really popular. Often you cannot get a car park because there are so many families who have gone there with their kids and their bikes. It is fantastic to see kids out in the fresh air and the sunshine—it is cold at this time of the year, but that is fine.

Almost next door to the learn-to-ride park is a small playground which is enormously popular. We have asked over and over and over again about a shade sail. (*Second speaking period taken.*) I understand that the person who runs the little coffee van near there, Mimi's Pit Stop, wrote about a burn a child suffered going down the slide because of the heat. In March someone from Minister Steel's office wrote:

TCCS are going to be installing a shade sail at the playground on Mortimer Lewis Drive.

It is more than five months since that email and there has been neither a shade sail nor a commitment to a shade sail. I asked two separate questions about a shade sail for that playground during estimates and the answers to those two questions were, "No shade sail is being considered at this point for that playground." Why did they write to this member of the community on 21 March this year saying, "Yes, we're going to install a shade sail at the playground on Mortimer Lewis Drive"? Was this just fobbing off this constituent to shut them up for a while? It clearly has not happened, and according to the minister's answers it is not going to happen. That is an appalling way to treat that constituent.

We have to question the government's priorities when they prioritise some areas that have not had a lot of requests over other areas that have had a lot of requests for improvement. You can see how popular those parks are and how many people are using them. I echo the estimates committee recommendation 207 that the ACT government ensures that ageing park facilities are replaced in a timely manner. I agree, and this is really important when constituents and members of the public request upgrades. I would be more confident about it if the minister was more open and transparent and did not send an email to one person saying one thing and then answer questions during estimates saying something completely different.

Another area we have spoken about in this place quite a lot over the past couple of years is dogs. It is estimated that the number of dogs in Canberra may have tripled in the past two decades. Sadly, with that comes a potential increase in attacks by dogs on humans, other dogs and other domestic pets. That has continued to rise, at about 30 per cent, year on year.

The number of dangerous dog licences has gone up over the last five years—that is, more dogs known to be dangerous are identified and sent back into the community. The number of dogs euthanised has trended downward over the past five years, despite more dogs in Canberra. Fines have declined in real terms by 40 per cent over a decade while dog numbers have increased. Revenue from fines for dog offences has trended down over the past five years and income from court action on dog offences has been zero since 2014. These figures come from answers to questions on notice.

Despite all the evidence to the contrary, the government continues to assure us that we have the strongest dog laws in the country. What good are they if we are not enforcing them appropriately? What good are they if we are not doing something about them? It was with a feeling of optimism and certainly interest that we heard recently that since June a six-member team would specifically target off-lead dogs. I am looking forward to hearing more about the effectiveness in reducing the number of dog attacks and enforcing laws to address irresponsible dog owners. This is about people who are doing the wrong thing.

The vast majority of dog owners are doing the right thing and they are responsible. As with many areas in our community and public policy, the small number of people doing the wrong thing cause problems for everyone else. We want to ensure that we are not penalising and punishing everyone with a broadbrush approach. We need to target and focus on the people doing the wrong thing, not the majority who are doing the right thing.

We know the six new positions are not spending their entire time focusing on dangerous dogs or dog attacks; they are doing other really important work, for example, looking at illegal dumping and littering. I get a lot of complaints about that area as well, so I welcome the announcement of the six new staff members and I hope to hear more about the difference they are making in these areas in TCCS.

I will touch briefly on waste management. Some \$973,000 is to be spent over two years on diverting organic waste from landfill. The funding will be used to investigate

and identify options for the diversion of organic waste—specifically food and garden waste from landfill—and will deliver an initial food waste avoidance campaign pilot. This is a good idea. We support the concept of waste minimisation. We have a history of doing so, and we have heard about that at some length in this place over the past couple of months. We are looking forward to hearing more about it and reviewing the feasibility study and business case.

I will touch on transport and buses very briefly because my colleague Miss Burch will talk about it at length. I want to say how surprised I was to hear Ms Le Couteur talk about the success of network 19, because I can assure you that my experience in Tuggeranong is the opposite. I have been inundated with complaints about buses in Tuggeranong suburbs. One person has told me that the changes have benefitted them; the others have all been completely disadvantaged. They feel isolated, especially elderly people who now may have to catch taxis. Whilst they appreciate the flexibus, that is not always suitable.

As one person pointed out to me, the flexibus usually picks up in the morning and does the return trips in the afternoon. It is challenging to get the flexibus for afternoon appointments and until this point you have to book the flexibus a bit ahead of time. I understand the government is looking at ways to improve that and make more dynamic bookings of the flexibus available. I look forward to that happening, as would my constituents. But I reiterate something I have said: why does a tram from Gungahlin to the city mean having to cut buses in Tuggeranong? People genuinely do not understand why that is the case.

To conclude, people I speak to and who write to me and contact me every day do not understand why their rates are going up when they feel their basic local services are going down. They feel there is more litter around the place, there are more dog attacks, and the bus network has made them isolated. They do not understand why they are paying more but are getting less.

MISS C BURCH (Kurrajong) (5.08): The 2019-20 budget has been a disappointing one. It has been a disappointing budget for Canberrans, who expected an integrated, reliable public transport network. It has been disappointing for schoolchildren and parents and it has been disappointing for the elderly and less mobile. As Ms Lawder has spoken about extensively, it has been disappointing particularly for the people on the south side of Canberra who rely on public transport to get around.

Without any significant new spending initiatives to improve transport services, Canberrans have instead been left with more frustration, more delays and buses that never show up, a true demonstration of how incompetent and out of touch the government is with this city. But, to add insult to injury, we have not seen any apology made or effort undertaken by the new minister to fix any of these issues. Instead, what we have seen is an overtly political budget from a government looking to shift blame and cover up their failures.

It was revealed in estimates hearings that Transport Canberra has received thousands of complaints about the new bus network. I tabled petitions earlier this year with signatures from over 7,000 Canberrans who are frustrated by the changes, who are

seeking revisions to the network and for services to be reinstated as soon as possible. These are real Canberrans with real concerns.

On top of our petitions tabled earlier this year, there have been over 13,000 pieces of consultation calling for revisions or alterations to the network. This government has delivered very little in response to that. This also highlights, as mentioned in the estimates report, the need for the government to improve reporting mechanisms within Transport Canberra to better capture the complaints and feedback of Canberrans about our public transport network so that these complaints may be not only addressed but responded to. Our schoolchildren have had their dedicated school bus services cut. We have a bus network that only shows up some of the time on weekends and elderly people are left stranded at bus stops or with their local bus stops taken away.

In terms of new spending that we have seen in this budget, we welcome the funding for new technology and upgrades to our ticketing system. As cities around the world adopt smarter approaches to ticketing, it is important that Canberra keeps up. The flexibus system is also getting additional funding, which is important. But, as Ms Lawder has also spoken about, and as we heard extensively in estimates hearings, the service still leaves a lot to be desired for older Canberrans.

Under the new network, suburban routes have been taken away from a lot of people across the city. Walking distances to bus stops have increased significantly. This means that a lot of elderly and disabled Canberrans have lost access to the network. The flexibus is an alternative for these people but the booking process remains clunky and difficult for many to access.

Investment in upgrading our bus fleet is also important, another area receiving funding in this budget. However, with the old orange buses being recommissioned to meet the requirements of the network, as Ms Le Couteur has also mentioned, it is not clear what of this is going to be increased capacity. We also know that much of the fleet is still not disability compliant, so this investment really could have come sooner.

Another initiative that could have come sooner is the Mitchell light rail stop, which of course local businesses and the Canberra Liberals have been calling for for a long time. The problems with the new bus network could not be more obviously seen than in the south, where residents have been totally left behind by the government. We have heard from so many constituents from the south side who rely on the network as their only way to get around the city, who have lost services and who now feel isolated.

The minister's comments last sitting week regarding the cancellation of weekend services is about on par with the disdainful view that this government has of Canberrans. We are months into the new network. We continue to see hundreds of services cancelled each weekend and the minister unwilling to give commuters more than 90 minutes notice of these cancellations. Even then, it is only through the NXTBUS app.

This brings me to the most concerning changes that we have seen with network 19, those changes being the cuts to dedicated school bus services. We have seen children stranded at interchanges, left behind at bus stops and in tears. We have seen Transport Canberra officials forced to drop children home because of the upheaval that the school service cancellations have caused to their routines.

Amongst hundreds of stories from parents, grandparents and teachers, one of the most impactful stories I heard came from a parent whose two daughters used to catch a dedicated school service to and from their school together each day. The younger of the two siblings has a disability but was comfortable catching the school bus with her sister as she was somebody that she trusted in a controlled environment.

After their dedicated school service was cut, my constituent told me that her younger daughter no longer felt safe and that she would now have to drive her children to school because she did not want them catching public buses and standing around interchanges. Of course, this is only one of dozens of parents who have told us that they are now driving their kids to school. Another constituent wrote in to explain just how convenient and safe the dedicated school services were for her sons, as she was able to watch them get on the bus in the morning from home. After the changes, she cannot do so anymore and has also been forced to drive them to school.

I am terribly disappointed but not surprised that, six months on, this government has tried to just sweep these problems under the rug, but it has not helped. These are problems that still affect the most vulnerable Canberrans across the territory. Much like his predecessor, the new minister is nowhere to be seen, more concerned with the LA transport system than the one that he is supposed to oversee here.

Despite the removal of bus stops and the increased number of people expected to transfer through interchanges, we have seen very little investment in our interchanges and in infrastructure around the bus network, with the Woden interchange upgrades suffering numerous delays.

As Ms Lawder has also spoken about extensively, improvements to our footpath network are also key if we are to expect people to walk further to and from bus stops, as are improvements to bicycle racks and cycling infrastructure and to park-and-ride facilities. All of these we are yet to see from this minister.

We see further money allocated in this budget for the planning and development of light rail stage 2, but we are still yet to see a business case or any kind of cost-benefit analysis from the government. Instead, the minister and the Chief Minister continue to ask Canberrans to blindly trust that this is the right route and that it will in fact be worth the money. Overall, Canberrans who rely on public transport to get around our city and those who choose to commute by public transport continue to be let down by this government. They are still waiting to see what it is in fact that their rates money is delivering.

MR GUPTA (Yerrabi) (5.15): I rise today to speak to the ACT government's Transport Canberra and City Services commitment outlined in the 2019-20 budget.

Our ACT Labor government is making our city services even better by investing in the community infrastructure that gives our town centres and suburbs their unique character and makes Canberra such a great place to live.

Our ACT Labor government is committed to providing the high quality public services we need now and into the future. We are working to transform our public transport system because it is vital to protect Canberra's livability as we grow. Our public transport, active travel and road networks all play a part in moving Canberrans around quickly, safely and with the lowest possible impact on our environment. Light rail has significantly changed the way we move around in our city. ACT Labor is building on the success of light rail in Gungahlin by focusing on delivering stage 2 light rail to keep Canberrans moving.

This budget has also outlined significant projects for my local community in Yerrabi. In the budget we have committed to design and construct a park-and-ride facility on Well Station Drive in Gungahlin to promote the use of the new public transport network. This investment will provide a 200-vehicle car park set-up at the junction of Flemington Road.

Park-and-ride facilities allow Canberrans to park for free near our major bus stations and continue their journey by bus or other forms of transportation. Park-and-ride facilities reduce congestion on our roads, reduce stress for drivers and provide a more environmentally friendly alternative to get around our city. We know that one of the most soul-crushing things is being stuck in traffic for hours. The speed and ease of commuting makes a real difference to people's quality of life. We are investing where the growth is happening in order to prevent congestion before it builds up.

Our ACT Labor government has committed to improving access between Belconnen and Gungahlin by commencing a process to duplicate the major arterial road between Ginninderra Drive and the Barton Highway. There are around 30,000 vehicle movements each day on this road, and this is going to increase with the projected development in the surrounding areas.

This investment will create a dual carriageway between Belconnen and Gungahlin. Key features of the duplication includes two lanes in each direction between Ginninderra Drive and the Barton Highway, 6.4 kilometres of new on-road cycle lanes, a new signalised intersection at Dumas Street and William Slim Drive, as well as an additional bus stop and upgrading of existing ones.

Our ACT Labor government has been working to reduce congestion on Gungahlin's roads and keep Canberrans moving. This is demonstrated through previous budget commitments that have now been completed, such as the completion of the duplication of Horse Park Drive.

Madam Speaker, we know that our city is growing. We have heard from residents that finding parking now is more difficult. In this budget we are responding by providing more parking across our town centres. At Palmerston shops we will continue upgrades to the parking areas and provide up to 25 new spaces. This is making it easier for

residents to access their local shops during peak pick-up and drop-off times at the nearby schools.

Our ACT government has outlined a commitment to build a new natural play space near Yerrabi Pond. Such new play spaces provide creative and imaginative experiences for children by using elements from the landscape, like logs and rocks, to encourage children to climb, jump and explore. Play is an incredibly important part of a child's development, so it is fantastic to see this outlined in our budget.

The government is continuing to work to make our suburbs better places to live. The government will continue to implement the priorities mapped out in the better suburbs statement by providing more public rubbish and recycling bins and pick-ups, and by planting at least 17,000 more trees to renew Canberra's urban forest. The better suburbs statement is guiding the government in progressively transitioning our investment in city services to the Canberra community's highest priority areas.

Madam Speaker, to conclude, our ACT Labor government understands how important our transport system and the amenity of our services are to maintaining Canberra's livability. This budget reflects our commitment to make our city even better. I commend this budget to the Assembly.

MR PETTERSSON (Yerrabi) (5.20): Our Labor government is investing in transforming our city's transportation system. Our government believes in an interconnected, usable transport system that incorporates light rail, buses, bikes and cars to suit the needs of Canberrans. This year we completed light rail stage 1 and, in doing so, fulfilled part of the original vision for this city.

Canberra is growing fast, and we must continue with bold transport policies so that we do not fall into the gridlock trap that has befallen other Australian cities. We must also ensure that we continue to deliver the services that our suburbs need by growing our city services workforce.

In this budget the government is continuing to prioritise our transport network and to deliver equitable services, regardless of where you live. Infrastructure investment now will allow us to stay ahead of our growing population, and prevent us from suffering the congestion, commute times and urban decay that are now being felt in other major Australian cities.

According to the household, income and labour dynamics survey, commute times nationally have increased over the past decade. That is why the government is investing heavily in upgrading our transport system, so that Canberra does not become like Australia's other more congested cities as we grow. Canberra is growing quickly, and that is why we must continue to invest in public transport infrastructure, road upgrades and better community services. As our city expands outwards and the population grows, we must have the infrastructure in place to cope with this growth. That is why this government has invested and will continue to invest in our infrastructure.

This government took to the 2016 election a promise to build light rail in this term of government, and we have delivered. This has been a huge win for the Gungahlin community. It is worth pointing out that this budget will deliver the final part of light rail stage 1, the Mitchell stop. We have seen just how popular light rail is. It was well worth the wait, dare I say. Already we have seen an increase of 32 per cent in the number of Canberrans using public transport when compared to this time last year. This is a clear endorsement by the people of Canberra that light rail is an effective and popular mode of transport.

Our government is committed to bringing light rail stage 2 to Canberrans south of the lake. I know that this is particularly popular with my constituents, because a lot of them do not want to just stop in Civic; a lot of them want to keep going further south. We want to get on with the job of building light rail stage 2 as soon as possible, so that even more Canberrans can experience the benefits of light rail. Almost 210,000 people will be living within one kilometre of the light rail network by 2041. This is an important investment, and we need to get on with the design and construction to deliver better public transport for the 2020s and beyond.

This budget will deliver the design and planning works for stage 2 to Woden. This will also include upgrading the Woden bus interchange in preparation for integration with light rail. The government will continue to work with the commonwealth government and the NCA to finalise the route and other details. This is all part of our plan to make Canberra a more livable and accessible city for our growing population.

Our government is making it easier for Canberrans to catch the light rail. This budget provides for the design and construction of a park-and-ride facility on Well Station Drive. This means that Gungahlin residents who live too far away to walk or bike to a light rail stop have the option to drive part of the way. This will mean that those same residents do not have to drive all the way to the city, which will decrease congestion.

As we continue to upgrade the transport infrastructure that allows Canberrans to get around, it is just as vital that the public infrastructure in our local suburbs keeps pace with the increasing population in the territory. That is why in this budget we have promised 25 new parking spaces to the people of Palmerston at their local shops. This will increase the safety of the area, as well as supporting local businesses and residents by maintaining public infrastructure and facilities to keep up with the substantial population growth.

The government is delivering 84 new, modern buses and upgrading our bus network to better integrate with the broader Canberra community. These buses are more fuel efficient, accessible and comfortable for passengers, and they will be integrated into the updated bus network. These new buses will be added to the fleet on a rolling basis, so that we have the option to transition to emerging types of low emissions vehicles as the technology changes and improves. This will ensure that Canberrans will have a more comfortable commute if they travel using the bus network.

In addition we have rolled out a new bus network that is designed to integrate effectively with light rail services, as well as provide more rapid bus routes to service

more areas. With significant community consultation, we now have 10 rapid routes, including light rail, which connect people from across the ACT to town centres, essential services and employment.

This is especially great in Gungahlin. There is now easier access to the rapid 8 bus route, as well as better coverage for Moncrieff, Casey and Gungahlin as a whole, which will enable residents to easily access Gungahlin town centre, light rail and the rest of Canberra. This is yet another example of how this Labor government is both upgrading and innovating to allow Canberra to keep pace with other world-class cities, and continue to deliver for our growing suburban population.

Cars are still a huge part of our transport system, so our government is continuing to invest in upgrading roads across our city. A number of major roads, including the Monaro Highway and Athllon Drive, will be upgraded. The duplication of Gundaroo Drive is currently underway, and I look forward to its completion, as do most people in Gungahlin. Gundaroo Drive connects Gungahlin to Belconnen, east to west across Gungahlin, and it is an integral part of the transport and road network for Gungahlin residents. This vital upgrade, which will include on-road cycle lanes to improve bicycle accessibility, has received further funding in the current budget and is yet another example of how this government is delivering infrastructure for the growing community of Canberra.

As Canberra continues to grow, residents are seeing constantly increasing traffic on our roads. In order to keep pace with this, the government took to the last election a commitment to deliver an additional \$6 million for road resealing. We will exceed that commitment and are adopting a preventive resealing method, ensuring that at least five per cent of the territory's road network is resealed every year.

Road improvements, including pavement rehabilitation on Northbourne Avenue, are also a major priority of this government. In addition we have been investing in adding signals at several intersections through the ACT to improve safety. If you drive home via Belconnen in some form or other, you will notice two new signalised intersections at Southern Cross Drive and Belconnen Way. All of these upgrades will increase safety, regulate traffic flow and improve the livability and accessibility of Canberra to all of its residents.

Across a number of different forms of transport, this government is delivering innovation, accessibility and upgrades throughout Canberra. Light rail is a huge step forward in delivering the integrated and livable city that Walter Burley Griffin envisaged when he planned this city. We are supporting this innovation with upgrades to roads, buses and the bus network to ensure that everyone living in Canberra has access to efficient and reliable public transport.

Most importantly, this government is committed to delivering light rail stage 2 to Woden, and we are committed to ensuring that Canberra remains a livable, interconnected and diverse city.

MS ORR (Yerrabi) (5.28): I am proud to be part of a government that is committed to delivering high-quality services through investing in public transport, infrastructure

and environmental initiatives. The 2019-20 budget continues this investment and will deliver significant resources for transport and city services.

One of the most notable projects evolving under the TCCS portfolio is the progression of integrating Canberra's public transport network with the construction of light rail. With stage 1 of light rail now complete and surpassing expected patronage numbers, I am pleased to see overwhelming enthusiasm for stage 2 of light rail from the city to Woden.

Conversations with my constituents in Yerrabi have reconfirmed time and again that light rail has made it easier for people to use our public transport network. Although Woden well and truly falls outside my electorate, I know that light rail stage 2 will help people living in Gungahlin make the commute along the light rail corridor, and vice versa. This will be of particular benefit to Gungahlin residents working in the public service agencies in Barton and Woden, as well as people accessing health services at Canberra Hospital.

This budget also includes funding for the design and construction of a park-and-ride facility on Well Station Drive. We have seen just how popular the park-and-ride facility in the town centre has been, and this new park and ride will make it easier for people living in Franklin, Harrison, Throsby and Forde to connect to the light rail. This government is making public transport more accessible for Canberrans, and I am pleased that this includes people living in my electorate.

We are also investing in upgrading and duplicating roads to keep Gungahlin and Belconnen moving. Travelling between Belconnen and Gungahlin will be easier as a result of our continued budget commitment to duplicate the major arterial road between Ginninderra Drive and the Barton Highway. Once completed, this duplication work will link through to Gundaroo Drive and make it easier to travel between the two parts of the Yerrabi electorate. The 2019-20 budget investment in roads includes car parks, with a commitment to upgrade parking at Palmerston shops, which I know is very much welcomed by the Palmerston community.

Within the city services portfolio, this year's budget invests in our suburbs and natural environment. As our population and city continue to expand, it is important for us to maintain our existing natural environment and look for ways to expand the amount of green space across the ACT.

In this year's budget the government has committed to planting over 17,000 more trees over the next four years, making our suburbs greener, mitigating the impact of climate change on our city and improving the biodiversity of our natural environment. Within my electorate there are several areas where new trees will be welcomed by residents, and I have already started speaking with people about some of the locations within their suburbs that would benefit from an increase in the tree canopy. I will continue to advocate for Yerrabi to be prioritised in the planting of the new trees, and I look forward to working with Minister Steel to deliver the best outcomes for my local community and Canberra's entire tree canopy.

Our government is taking action to ensure that we are all doing all that we can to reduce our impact on the environment. Through waste reduction measures, our target of diverting 90 per cent of waste from landfill is on track to be achieved. The ACT government's rollout of the container deposit scheme and green bins has been a huge success and we are seeing the benefits of these initiatives in reducing our waste output.

I am also looking forward to the rollout of the reusable coffee cup zone trial in Gungahlin, as a result of the motion I moved earlier this year. I have been speaking with businesses and residents in Gungahlin who are keen and ready for the reusable coffee cup zone trial to commence early next year. Sydney's Inner West Council has beaten us to it, so it is time for Canberra to catch up. I know the Gungahlin community are ready to embrace our very own reusable coffee cup zone. The potential for this scheme to extend beyond the Gungahlin area is again indicative of how Canberrans are keen to see more environmentally focused initiatives rolled out across the ACT.

The 2019-20 budget also provides important funding to improve and maintain the amenity of our suburbs. We will see more bins in parks and public spaces, continued weeding and mowing, upgrades to footpaths, including along the Flemington Road shared path, maintenance of streetlights, and a range of other essential programs.

This government is committed to investing in transport and city services for Canberra, and I look forward to seeing the benefits that will come with the passing of the 2019-20 budget.

MS CHEYNE (Ginninderra) (5.33): As we know, Canberra is a great place to live. We have a thriving economy, excellent schools and health care, world-class universities, innovative and inspiring cultural institutions, green space and nature reserves on our doorsteps. But our local neighbourhoods are just as important. Character-filled local shops, accessible tree-lined streets, parks and playgrounds are the things that help foster a sense of community. It is this sense of community that is often remarked on to me as perhaps our city's greatest asset.

Canberra's population is expected to exceed 460,000 people by 2023. In just four years, another 32,000 people will realise Canberra is the best city in Australia and decide to call this place their home. As Canberra grows, it is important that our suburbs have the appropriate infrastructure and services in place so that our communities continue to thrive. It is important that our regions and suburbs are well connected so that Canberrans can get from A to B safely, efficiently and, where possible, sustainably. That is why this year's budget continues to invest in better municipal services, better local infrastructure, better public transport and better roads.

City services and local infrastructure might seem small or often go unnoticed but they have a big impact on our day-to-day lives, and I can say that in Ginninderra they definitely do not go unnoticed. Imagine for just a moment a suburb without services like street sweeping or infrastructure like bins. Footpaths would become cracked or unusable. Leaves would clog our stormwater drains. Rubbish would litter our streets. Parks and playgrounds would become untidy or dangerous.

It is city services and local infrastructure that not only keep our city functioning but also provide us with clean and safe communities to live in and enjoy. That is why we are investing \$9.2 million over the next four years to install more rubbish and recycling bins and plant more trees across Canberra. The introduction of 50 new rubbish bins and 100 recycling bins across our suburbs will make it easier to do the right thing, keep our communities cleaner and help reach our goal of diverting 90 per cent of waste away from landfill by 2025, as outlined in the ACT waste management strategy. The addition of 17,000 more trees will grow Canberra's urban forest, creating a cooler climate in summer and enhancing the character of our streets. We are the bush capital after all.

Like my colleague Ms Orr, I have already started talking to the community about where these bits of infrastructure should be inserted into our neighbourhood and I already had a little list which I could draw on in speaking with Minister Steel. I cannot wait to see that rolled out and people benefiting from it. We have already started to see the rollout of more bins in our nature reserves and our dog parks, like Palmerville Heritage Park. I am very pleased to see the success of having bins and dog waste bag dispensers there.

This year's budget also commits \$906,000 over the next four years to provide more street sweeping and upgrade several stormwater networks, including the stormwater network in Page and Weetangera. More regular street sweeping not only keeps our streets tidy but also, importantly, improves the quality of water run-off into our stormwater drains. These measures address the problems with our water infrastructure raised as part of the better suburbs citizens' forum.

Keeping our suburbs tidy is not just about cleaning up after ourselves. Canberra's new dog management model, which I touched on before, helps complement the budget measures that we were talking about, as well as having a range of further things that we can do to encourage people to responsibly look after their pets. I think that is genuinely a great complement to what has already been announced in the budget. I commend the minister for that.

Community facilities and green space are not only essential to our suburbs but also bring people together and foster a sense of community. It is important that residents of all ages can enjoy their local parks, playgrounds and community centres. I am pleased to see a number of upgrades to facilities throughout Ginninderra funded in this year's budget.

Mount Rogers Community Centre is a prime example of a building that brings people from all walks of life together. It houses a school, a youth group, child care, dance lessons and two churches. The ACT budget commits \$800,000 to upgrading the centre's air conditioning system and fire safety requirements. They are small but important changes to ensure that this building continues to serve the community for many years to come.

Belconnen Community Centre will also receive a welcome funding boost, with \$380,000 for a range of improvements that will make this important community hub

safer and more accessible. These measures include finishing the refurbishment of the centre's toilets, repairing its elevators and upgrading flooring and handrails.

Residents living in Dunlop and Fraser, as we have heard on quite a few occasions today, will also enjoy new and improved infrastructure. The Dunlop shops—and, despite what the Leader of the Opposition said, I think it is pretty normal to call shops “shops” even if there is just one shop—will benefit from the installation of a community noticeboard, bollards to improve pedestrian safety, and a shade sail at the existing playground. Upgrades to the Fraser shops—there is more than one shop—are still being finalised but will draw on some of the ideas raised as part of a 2016-17 feasibility study. I know how much the people who frequent those shops are looking forward to it, because they tell me every time I go there.

As Canberra continues to grow, it is important that we make it easier for people to get from A to B. That includes travelling via public transport. We are now one of 400 cities worldwide that enjoy the benefits of light rail, something that is not outdated technology but is having an even greater uptake right across the globe. Stage 1 was finished ahead of schedule and under budget—in fact, \$32 million under budget. Since the launch of the new bus network and the operation of light rail, more and more people have been travelling via bus or light rail. We have heard those statistics repeated by Minister Steel here and in the media. On the back of this success, the government now turns its attention to delivering stage 2 to Woden.

It is no surprise to anyone in this chamber that it is the eventual third stage of light rail that I am most looking forward to. While it is a little way off, stage 3 will better connect Belconnen to the city and the rest of the ACT by providing the east-west link to complement the north-south spine.

A new integrated public transport system needs a state-of-the-art ticketing system. That is why we are also investing \$450,000 in this year's budget to deliver just that. I am really excited about the emerging technologies in this area.

As Belconnen continues to grow, we need to ensure our roads are better equipped for more cars, more buses, more cyclists and more pedestrians. A common concern among my constituents is the safety of busy intersections. We have listened throughout this term of government. Following on from last year's commitment to Tillyard Drive and Ginninderra Drive, which anyone who has been there knows is well underway, this year's budget commits \$14 million over four years to upgrade a number of intersections across Canberra including, importantly, Belconnen Way and Springvale Drive, and the intersection of Southern Cross Drive and Starke Street.

More than 300 vehicles, on average, travel through these intersections during peak periods alone and both intersections have frequent accidents. Between 2011 and 2017 there were 42 crashes at each intersection resulting in property damage and a total of 14 crashes leading to serious injuries. We have to do something. The installation of traffic lights will make these intersections safer and easier to navigate. As someone who passes through there frequently, I am personally very much looking forward to them. If you have an older car, having to turn right on a busy multi-lane intersection

when you do not take off very quickly from a stop point means that traffic lights are very welcome indeed.

As Belconnen's population increases, so too does the number of cars on our roads. This year's budget commits \$4.1 million over the next two years to begin duplicating and extending several roads across Canberra, including parts of William Hovell Drive, to help reduce congestion. The early stages of this 4.5 kilometre duplication have already been met, with the works at the John Gorton Drive intersection being completed. Tenders for the next tranche of work will, I understand, open later this year. *(Second speaking period taken.)* Construction is due to begin in late 2020 and should be finished by 2023.

This year's budget also commits \$44.5 million, including \$20 million from the federal government—they did come to the table on this one—to duplicate the arterial road between Ginninderra Drive and the Barton Highway. The project introduces 3.2 kilometres of new carriageway and 6.4 kilometres of on-road cycle lanes and hard shoulders. The reconfiguration of existing intersections, including Ginninderra Drive and Owen Dixon Drive; the signalisation of the Dumas Street intersection; and new bus bays, streetlights and landscaping are among the planned changes. Right near there as well, from a previous budget, we will start to see the work on Kuringa Drive and Owen Dixon Drive, which I know people are very much looking forward to, as am I.

Sometimes the best way to get around is on foot or by bike. Aranda and Holt are among six suburbs sharing in \$2.25 million of footpath and cycleway upgrades. This funding delivers upgrades to bus stop infrastructure throughout the ACT, also allowing more people to combine active travel with public transport. Let us not forget the much anticipated Belco bikeway, again announced in last year's budget, which will better connect parts of Belconnen and put the old Joynton Smith busway to good use. I am looking forward to seeing this fantastic project coming to fruition, after participating last year in the community consultation on where it will go. I think it is absolutely going to change the look and feel of and how we get around Belconnen town centre.

This budget delivers a series of measures that will have a tangible impact on our day-to-day lives: more local infrastructure and services to keep our suburbs clean, safe and accessible; more improvements to our shared community facilities; and more and better ways to get from A to B, whether on foot, in the car or via public transport. These measures will ensure that neighbourhoods throughout Belconnen and the rest of Canberra continue to thrive.

Proposed expenditure agreed to.

Chief Minister, Treasury and Economic Development Directorate—Part 1.6

MR COE (Yerrabi—Leader of the Opposition) (5.46): It is a pleasure to rise to speak to what is a very important part, an essential part, of this supposedly one government system here in the ACT. We all know that this is still very much a siloed public service. We know that because of the structure of the government and the way that

there seems to be no rationality in how directorates and ministries are allocated. We know that Chief Minister, Treasury and Economic Development has numerous responsible ministers. Anybody who has had a glance at the Hawke review of the ACT government from all those years ago, on which the directorates are meant to be based, would know that what we see today bears almost no resemblance whatsoever to the recommendations that Dr Hawke made all those years ago.

As a result, after 18 years of Labor, Canberrans are being monumentally ripped off. Despite record revenue, the ACT will soon be in debt to the tune of \$3 billion: interest-bearing liabilities of \$3 billion. For the amount that this government is spending and borrowing each year, it would be reasonable for Canberrans to expect a premium service from the ACT government. For the number of fees, rates, taxes and charges that Canberrans pay, we should get world-class services in every single portfolio.

But, as we know, Canberrans are being ripped off. Canberrans are being ripped off through all means possible by this ACT Labor government. Despite the monumental increases in revenue that the ACT government are getting from the commonwealth and from ACT taxpayers, they are still incapable of balancing a budget. Canberrans are paying more but getting less. It is a rip-off.

The tax that was supposedly abolished all those years ago, stamp duty, continues to rake in hundreds of millions of dollars for the ACT government. Some \$265 million will come in in 2019-20, because house prices—or, rather, the underlying land prices—are increasing faster than the government is decreasing stamp duty. They are having a bob each way. This financial year, 2019-20, will see \$265 million raised through stamp duty. In contrast, when it was abolished in 2011-12 the figure was \$239 million. That is an increase of some \$25 million, not to mention the \$1½ billion collected along the way.

And there is rates revenue, the biggest rip-off of all. We will go from \$209 million in 2011-12 to \$698 million in 2021-22. Commercial rates in particular are going up by six per cent, yet again, to \$211 million. The government are not just increasing the rating factor with regard to commercial rates; they have got the hit squad doing the rounds of Canberra and changing the valuations of properties. I know of some properties that have had their valuation tripled—tripled—by the ACT revenue office, by the ACT Labor government, with no lease variation. There has been no lease variation, yet the valuation has tripled. Do members know what excuse the valuation office gave the owner of this block? “Consider yourself lucky, because we should have done it years ago.” That is the level of respect, or lack thereof, that this government has for small businesses in Canberra.

Unit title rates are also on the move. This year they are up 11 per cent, to \$82 million. Whilst the government claims to bring about relief for those in apartment complexes and unit complexes across the ACT, the revenue is still going up 11 per cent.

Land tax has gone up seven per cent, to \$150 million this year. Let us not forget that land tax is pretty much a renter tax. It gets passed on one way or the other. For a typical house that might pay \$2,500 in rates and then a further \$3,000 or so in land tax,

you are talking about a combined rates and land tax bill of \$100 a week. That is \$100 of the rent of every rented household that is going to the ACT government in the form of a rent tax, that being rates and land tax.

With all that revenue—with the rates, the land tax, the stamp duty and the commercial rates—you would think that they would at least be able to balance the books. You would think that with commonwealth revenue increasing to \$2.4 billion the Labor government would finally be in a position to balance the books and get on top of their debt. Instead, we are going to see an interest bill of \$60 million this year alone. An interest bill of \$60 million! The amount that gets paid to the light rail consortium each year we are also paying for our debt. And that is at a time when we have some of the lowest interest rates on record.

It makes you wonder just how exposed we would be, should interest rates increase or should our credit be squeezed. The Chief Minister may well say, “We have 10-year bonds.” Yes, there is a 10-year bond at 2.25 per cent.

Mr Barr: It is going lower.

MR COE: You would hope that they are going lower. You would hope so. But at some point it has to be repaid. In budget paper 3, I do not see anywhere showing interest-bearing liabilities going down. If we have a time with two per cent interest rates, surely there is the ability to pay down some of this debt as well. That is not happening. The interest-bearing liabilities increase in each of the outyears of this budget. The territory’s fiscal deficit in 2019-20 will exceed \$1 billion for the first time. A fiscal deficit! Total money in and total money out will exceed \$1 billion. It goes to \$1,055 million in this financial year.

We know that the government that this Chief Minister leads is a different government from the ones that previous chief ministers, such as Jon Stanhope, led. (*Second speaking period taken.*) If Mr Stanhope was still here, there would at least be some financial discipline. It was under Jon Stanhope that we had the last surplus.

Mr Barr: No; we had a surplus last year.

MR COE: It was not a structural surplus and it was not a fiscal surplus. The last fiscal surplus was under Jon Stanhope. The territory’s deficit in 2017-18 was \$158 million. The estimated deficit for 2018-19 is \$447 million. The budget deficit for 2019-20 is \$1,055 million. The last fiscal surplus was in 2007-08.

The lower deficits in 2016-17 and 2017-18 were built on a \$722 million increase in revenue that will not last. The 2019-20 budget shows deficits returning to the levels that were pretty much those of the Chief Minister’s first four budgets. For the first time, in 2019-20 the deficit will exceed \$1 billion. The return to surplus in 2022-23 is built on an unlikely control of expenses and a very optimistic increase in revenue. It also banks on an increase in land sales of \$359 million in 2019-20.

In three years time, this government is expecting to get \$359 million more in land sales. If we are running out of land while this government is doing all it can to

expedite it, or we are going to keep on going at the same rate but it is just going to hike the amount that it charges, then one way or another you have a situation where the government is desperately selling the assets of the territory to prop up its financial mismanagement.

In 2007-08 there was an interest expense of \$60 million. That had tripled to \$188 million in 2017-18 and nearly quadrupled to \$235 million in 2019-20. To put that into context, paying the interest bill in 2019-20 consumes over 11 per cent of the territory's total taxation. Eleven per cent of the territory's total taxation will be the total interest bill. For every \$9 that the ACT government gets in taxes, one dollar will be going to fund the interest bill.

With regard to revenue, the commonwealth will deliver a 67 per cent increase in funding to the territory over 10 years. This is above population and inflation growth combined. A 67 per cent increase!

The heart of the tax reform was to abolish stamp duty. That was the major efficiency that the government promised. Revenue from conveyancing will increase by 18 per cent, and the overall effect is a 119 per cent increase in revenue from rates and stamp duty combined. The increase in rates does not include all the fixed levies that Canberrans get with their rates bill. It also does not include levies such as utility bills.

As I have already mentioned, land tax adds a further burden, particularly with regard to commercial rates. In times gone by, prior to the reform, there was a land tax component to commercial rates as well as general rates. The government combined the two and said that was a major efficiency because you only get one bill now. What it did not take into account was that you only paid land tax when your commercial premises were tenanted. Now you pay the combined rates and land tax regardless of whether your commercial property is tenanted.

As anyone would know, there is no shortage of commercial units in Canberra that are untenanted at the moment, yet the owners of those continue to have to pay the rates, which include the embedded land tax that, prior to 2012, they would not have had to pay. Of course, if your commercial rates go up by \$10,000, that not only affects your bottom line for that year but also probably wipes at least \$100,000 off the value of that property, because the yield has gone down by \$10,000. That is on a 10 to one. If we are looking at a 15 to one, you are looking at wiping \$150,000 off the value of that property. You are getting hit with your bottom line and then you are also being hit with your equity. It all adds up. That is why so many people are choosing to send their investments over the border into New South Wales.

When you look at the total increases in tax since the reforms began, in 2011-12, there was \$1.6 billion from the commonwealth. In 2021-22 it will be \$2.6 billion, an increase of 67 per cent. Rates will go from \$209 million to \$698 million, an increase of 234 per cent, more than tripling. Stamp duty will go from \$239 million to \$281 million; it is the abolished tax that goes up 18 per cent in 10 years. Levies on rates will go from \$28 million to \$99 million in that same 10-year period. Land tax will go from \$115 million to \$164 million. Land sales will go from \$261 million to \$589 million. Payroll tax doubles from \$316 to \$668. Total revenue from the

commonwealth, rates, stamp duty, levies on rates, land tax, land sales and payroll tax goes from \$4.4 billion in 2011-12 to \$7.3 billion in 2021-22, well above inflation and population growth combined.

Going to expenses, total expenses will rise from \$5 billion in 2011-12 to \$6.7 billion in 2019-20 and \$7.5 billion in 2021-22. Despite a 34 per cent increase in expenses in the seven years to 2018-19, I do not think anybody would say that they have had a 34 per cent increase in commensurate services.

Madam Speaker, Canberrans are being ripped off. The government is far more interested in its own pet projects and far more interested in its own ambition than in respecting the hopes and aspirations of Canberrans. The government is not on the same team as the people it is meant to represent. It is a government that has lost its way. It is a government that is driving households and businesses over the border into New South Wales. It is not sustainable. And for the taxes, rates, fees and charges that Canberrans are paying, we are not getting the commensurate services.

MR BARR (Kurrajong—Chief Minister, Treasurer, Minister for Social Inclusion and Equality, Minister for Tertiary Education, Minister for Tourism and Special Events and Minister for Trade, Industry and Investment) (6.06): I will speak multiple times in this particular section of the debate, obviously, as it covers at least four of my portfolios. I will begin my remarks tonight by focusing on the Chief Minister's stream within the Chief Minister, Treasury and Economic Development Directorate. I begin with a statement of the obvious: that this central agency provides strategic advice and support not only to me as Chief Minister but to various portfolio ministers and to cabinet on policy, service delivery, whole-of-government issues and intergovernmental relations. The Chief Minister's stream also provides strategic direction for the ACT public service as a whole, supports whole-of-government coordination functions and works to drive change and a culture of continual improvement within the ACT public sector.

In this capacity, its work is integral to achieving a focused, one-government approach to service delivery for all Canberrans. It does so in large part in a consistent framework against the Hawke review that was released in 2011. If you look at the preferred option and directorate structure that was proposed by the Hawke review and what is in place now you will see a striking similarity between those recommendations in 2011 and the structure of ACT government now in 2019. That is the first of many wildly inaccurate statements from the Leader of the Opposition that I will correct over the course of this debate.

I take the opportunity this evening to highlight a couple of initiatives in the Chief Minister's stream that are delivered through the budget and that emphasise the important whole-of-government focus of this area of the budget. A \$15 million investment over four years to move delivery of more community services online, through the ACT digital account, is an initiative that is part of the government's push to find better ways of delivering services to meet people's needs. We know that today's citizens have a very high expectation of how they will interact with government and what they will be able to do online, and we aim to continue to step up our service offerings in response.

We believe, for example, that people should only have to prove who they are to government once and then be able to access all services applicable to them based on their needs and the services that they have used before. At the moment Canberrans can access a range of services through the ACT government digital account. These include the rental bond help scheme, Access Canberra infringements and the my family service, which keeps track of key information like birth and marriage certificates all in one place. The funding delivered through this year's budget will deliver reforms to the working with vulnerable people scheme, including enhanced protection for vulnerable people working through the NDIS worker screening system.

We will also be exploring ways to make it easier for people to prove their eligibility for a range of concessions. The aim of this work is that people accessing concessions, such as pensioners, veterans, seniors and students, will only need to prove their eligibility once and then have all their concessions applied automatically for all connected services. Today I am advised that over 8,000 Canberrans have an ACT digital account. As we progressively move more services to this new digital channel, this will save people time and deliver real value, as well as allowing Access Canberra staff to spend more time helping those Canberrans who prefer to come into a service centre or to use the phone.

Another important whole-of-government initiative that the Chief Minister's stream is leading for the next budget round is the development of the ACT's first wellbeing indicators. As I have pointed out before, by any standard of economic metrics Canberra is doing very well. We consistently have amongst the lowest unemployment rates in the country, our economy has grown faster than that of every other state and territory for several years now, and our population has been growing above national average. That has led to around 8,000 new Canberrans a year coming to the city.

More people, of course, are attracted by our city's amenities, great local services and livability. There are thousands of additional businesses operating in the city, thousands of additional residents. The facts around population growth, economic growth, business growth, low levels of unemployment, strong labour market participation and employment growth in Canberra in recent years again belie all the rhetoric that we have just heard from the Leader of the Opposition. All the statistics that are collected by the ABS and by the ACT government and are regularly reported on demonstrate an economy and a community that are growing very strongly.

Far from this rhetoric of people fleeing the ACT and businesses fleeing the ACT, we have seen extraordinary growth—the exact opposite of the pathetic rhetoric we heard from the Leader of the Opposition in his very dark, dim, conservative 20-minute diatribe about all that is allegedly wrong with one of the fastest growing economies in this nation, with a city that is attracting new residents every day from all over the world and all over Australia.

The city is growing rapidly. It is one of the most socially inclusive cities in this nation, if not the world. People are flocking to live in Canberra because it is a great place to live. The OECD has ranked us the world's most livable city. We intend to build on this considerable period of economic growth, of social inclusion and of population

growth, through a particular emphasis on measuring our wellbeing beyond just economic statistics.

As I have indicated, a strong economy is very important. It is fundamental to delivering a decent quality of life for Canberrans. But a strong economy is not the only thing that matters. Our wellbeing, both as individuals and as a community, is also determined by things like our environment, our connections to place and others, the quality of our services and institutions, how inclusive we are towards others and our preparedness to contend with future challenges and opportunities. These are things that governments around the world are not currently tracking as attentively or as regularly as we do our economic indicators. But we are going to change that.

The Chief Minister's stream is leading the work to develop a set of wellbeing indicators which the government and the broader community can use to collectively monitor our progress as a community, not just our progress as an economy, and to monitor our progress across a broad range of areas that reflect the priorities of Canberrans when it comes to our quality of life. The indicators will help guide government decision-making and our investments, through future ACT budgets. But just as importantly they will help all of us—government, community groups, businesses and individuals—to better understand where our community is doing well and where we may need to make more of an effort to ensure that everyone who lives in our city shares the benefits of a good life.

We have started a period of extensive consultation on this framework with the broadest range of stakeholders. We will continue to engage the broader community in a conversation about this later this calendar year. As I have indicated before, we plan to launch the indicators on Canberra Day in 2020. I look forward to them being a prominent feature of next year's territory budget and territory budgets into the future. The wellbeing indicators work is about understanding and working to improve the quality of life that all Canberrans enjoy.

At the other end of the scale, this year's budget contained a small initiative that also highlights the importance of taking a whole-of-government view. Community groups make a huge contribution to our city every day. The ACT government offers a wide range of grants and programs to support their activities and provides direct funding to a broad range of community groups across all our directorates—over 900 community groups in 2017-18.

But in some cases there are community groups doing worthy and important work that does not neatly fit within the criteria of these grant programs because of the breadth or nature of the services that they provide. We saw that there were a small number of these groups who were at risk of falling between the cracks of policy directorates. This year's budget takes action by providing a combined \$450,000 in direct support to three local groups: Kulture Break, the north side Veterans Support Centre and the Australian National Eisteddfod. Each of these organisations works to increase opportunities for connection and inclusion. They enable community members who might otherwise be at risk of exclusion to participate in and contribute to our city in unique ways. This is work that we are glad to support.

There are many, many more important projects and initiatives contained within the Chief Minister's stream and the broader Chief Minister, Treasury and Economic Development Directorate. I will return to those in different portfolio areas in various speeches, principally on Thursday, I believe. We will continue to work within the broader directorate on the result of this year's budget and of course continue to work on the government's ongoing policy and reform agenda.

Whilst there is not time to list each of those initiatives just within the Chief Minister's stream tonight, I thank all the staff within that stream and indeed the broader Chief Minister, Treasury and Economic Development Directorate for their work and enthusiasm in delivering initiatives that will make a real difference for Canberrans through the coming 12 months and beyond. I commend this part of the budget to the Assembly and indicate, as I have mentioned, that I will return to discuss other elements within this broader directorate on Thursday.

MR RAMSAY (Ginninderra—Attorney-General, Minister for the Arts and Cultural Events, Minister for Building Quality Improvement, Minister for Business and Regulatory Services, Minister for Government Services and Procurement and Minister for Seniors and Veterans) (6.18): I am delighted in this part of the debate to speak in the area of the arts in the ACT. The 2019-20 budget contains a number of initiatives that continue to build on the ACT government's strong commitment to the arts in the capital. It promotes greater access to the arts, capacity building for artists and arts organisations, engagement with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples and building the strength, diversity and accessibility of the Canberra arts scene.

Largest amongst these is the Kingston arts precinct, which will be the largest investment in arts infrastructure in the history of the ACT. The concept of the precinct has been in development for over a decade. The investment will deliver on a number of ACT arts policy principles. The new facilities and collocation of arts organisations at the precinct will bring enormous vitality to the Canberra arts landscape, promoting greater access to the arts through programming and supporting great artists with purpose-built spaces for making and collaborating.

The development will bring together visual arts organisations to create a precinct that delivers artistic excellence while also offering access to the arts at a community level. Kingston is already home to the Canberra Glassworks and Megalo Print Studio, two organisations whose facilities are used by internally renowned artists, as well as locals who just want to come and try.

The 2018-19 budget review includes funding for staff to assist the delivery of the Kingston arts precinct, including into the outyears. The funding is for two positions that will sit within artsACT and will be responsible for managing the relocation of arts organisations to Kingston, including the design development phase and establishing precinct management.

The 2018-19 budget review also provided funds for upgrades to the former transport depot in Kingston, the iconic and much-loved building which houses the old bus depot markets, amongst other things. There is \$5.9 million allocated to replace the

roof and the building's electrical system, as well as to upgrade public toilets, to improve accessibility and to replace the existing roller doors with new code-compliant doors. This investment will significantly enhance the heritage building and improve the visitor experience prior to the development of the broader site around it. The public toilets at the depot will also be made available for patrons of the fitters' workshop and other site visitors by being accessible from the outside.

There is also an allocation of \$1.67 million over three years in the 2019-20 budget for upgrading our local arts facilities. We will undertake design for capital works at Ainslie and Gorman House arts centres and at Strathnairn Arts. Critical works will be delivered at various arts facilities, including roofing repairs at Strathnairn Arts and works to improve site safety and accessibility at both Ainslie Arts Centre and Gorman House Arts Centre.

Other funding commitments for improving arts facilities will allow upgrades to five of our arts centres, with a focus on replacing ageing mechanical systems. These particular works will occur at Ainslie Arts Centre, Gorman House Arts Centre, Strathnairn Arts centre, Tuggeranong Arts Centre and Watson Arts Centre. There will also be improvements to the kiln shed at Watson Arts Centre and the development of a specialist asset replacement scheme for our arts facilities.

By upgrading these facilities, we continue to create spaces for Canberrans to enjoy and participate in the arts. Arts funding in the 2019-20 budget is continuing to support a culturally rich and vibrant community, celebrate arts and culture and encourage creativity, social inclusion, feeling, thinking and exchange. This support is provided through funding for artist projects and capacity building, and for arts organisations to assist their sustainability and vibrancy.

The 2019-20 budget commits \$270,000 per year for three years to increase community participation in the arts in the Woden and Gungahlin regions. Belconnen Arts Centre, and the Tuggeranong Arts Centre were successful in a tender process and they have engaged two community arts officers. Through community engagement, the officers have created opportunities for locals to have their say on what arts activities should be happening in their region. This initiative will be delivered over three years and will provide lots of opportunities for greater access to and participation in the arts for people in those communities.

There was \$100,000 provided in 2018-19 and a further \$100,000 allocated in 2019-20 to deliver capacity-building activities for the arts sector in Canberra. These activities are available to individual artists and to arts organisations, to address needs that were identified through consultation with the sector. These include professional development for artists and support for the continuous improvement of arts organisations, including for governance, strategic capacity and planning, change and risk management and diversity.

The government will also deliver capacity building for non-funded arts organisations through a one-off funding round of \$80,000. Organisations have applied for assistance across strategic planning, business development, incorporation and financial and

administrative management to improve their sustainability and viability. The outcome of the applications will be announced in coming months.

MusicACT has been funded in 2018-19 for \$108,000 and in 2019-20 at \$110,500, to support capacity-building programs for the live contemporary music sector, including in arts management, recording, touring and promoting. Live music is an important part of our night-time economy and in the development of our local bands and musicians.

There is \$350,000 available in the 2019-20 budget for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander arts and culture programs. This includes \$100,000 allocated each year from 2017-18. ArtsACT has been working with the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Arts Network, formed as an outcome of community consultation, to refine and prioritise a suite of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander arts programs. The process of designing these programs adheres to the ACT arts policy principle of engaging with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander arts and cultures. The process has involved close consultation with the community and the arts network.

The government has made a commitment for arts activities funding to be a minimum of \$775,000 per year from 2017-18. In fact, the government have grown our commitment to \$825,000 in 2018-19 and will further increase it up to \$850,000 in 2019-20. This increase will greatly support applications in the up to \$5,000 category, which is experiencing significant demand. The newly modelled arts activity funding category has significantly improved the accessibility of funding for artists by being more flexible. I receive frequent feedback from artists about how happy they are with this new approach to funding.

A strategic priority of the 2019-20 budget is promoting Canberra as a vibrant city for people to visit and to live in, with world-class tourism, artistic and cultural experiences that reflect our unique environment and position as the nation's capital. The government is committed to the vitality of the Canberra region by creating and maintaining opportunities for Canberrans to participate in the arts. This is evidenced by the continued funding of the Design Canberra Festival, at \$100,000 per year, and Art Not Apart, at \$130,000 per year, to 2021. These two signature events offer locals and visitors the opportunities to experience a range of great local artworks.

I am pleased to note the new funding of \$100,000 for the next three years to support the important work of Kulture Break. I was also particularly delighted to announce the new funding to the Australian National Eisteddfod Society that the Chief Minister has referred to.

These initiatives in the arts represent this government's strong and continuing support for the arts, which is vital to our city's vibrancy and livability. I commend the budget to the Assembly.

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

Adjournment

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

That the Assembly do now adjourn.

Ms Meredith Hinchliffe

MR RAMSAY (Ginninderra—Attorney-General, Minister for the Arts and Cultural Events, Minister for Building Quality Improvement, Minister for Business and Regulatory Services, Minister for Government Services and Procurement and Minister for Seniors and Veterans) (6.28): I am delighted to rise this evening to celebrate the contribution of Meredith Hinchliffe to the Canberra arts scene. I want to acknowledge and thank Meredith in particular for her incredibly generous donation of funds to the Canberra Museum and Gallery, CMAG. I am very pleased that Meredith is here in the gallery this evening.

Since 2004 Meredith Hinchliffe has donated funds to CMAG for the acquisition of art, craft and design created in Canberra and the surrounding region. This generosity makes Meredith CMAG's longest standing personal donor. The impact of her generosity is most significant. Through the fund, CMAG has been able to purchase works by 52 artists, valued at over \$150,000. The fund also represents an important contribution to the cultural fabric of Canberra, through the payment it provides to artists.

As a result of Meredith's generosity, CMAG is able to offer our local community access to the work of internationally recognised artists who have exhibited and been collected all over the world, such as Kirstie Rea and Scott Chaseling. The first purchase from the fund in 2004 was a quietly modest work by ceramicist Anita McIntyre, *Tablet 1: Walking with ancient rocks*. Meredith has a wide range of interests in the arts; however, ceramics reflects a particular interest of hers. She has written articles for journals such as *Ceramics: Art and Perception* and *Pottery in Australia*.

The most recent works, purchased in 2018, have strong connections to the environment and landscape; they are timely subjects for artists and for the wider community. They include Gail Nichols' stoneware jar, *Stormwatch*, and the glass didgeridoo made by the Ngambri elder Paul House, with Tom Rowney, at the Canberra Glassworks. These works are on display in CMAG's ramp showcase until Saturday, 24 August.

Madam Speaker, as you know, Meredith is a very generous patron of the arts and an important and influential figure in the arts landscape in Canberra. She never actually suggests what to purchase with the monetary gifts, simply asking that they be used to buy works of art from artists, and in particular craftspeople, who live and work in and around Canberra. The decisions about how to use these donations are made by CMAG's professional staff. This allows the organisation range and flexibility in the choices that are made, reflecting the diverse interests of Meredith herself and also her respect for professional processes.

Meredith has played a strong and active role in the Canberra arts scene since 1977, when she began work at the Crafts Council of the ACT. She is a curator and a writer. She has worked as an arts administrator for a number of organisations in Canberra, including artsACT. She was the executive officer for Museums Australia, now the Australian Museum and Galleries Association. Meredith has held board appointments for local arts organisations and is a valuer for a range of media, from leatherwork to furniture, and for the Australian government's cultural gifts program. Quite fittingly, Meredith was awarded an ACT women's award in 2000 and an Australia Day medal in 2011.

In closing, I would like to place on record my thanks to Meredith, on behalf of the people of Canberra, for her very generous contribution to CMAG and to our arts community, many of whom—not only those present here but people across Canberra—endorse these thoughts.

Assembly—work experience

MS CHEYNE (Ginninderra) (6.32): Last week I had the pleasure of hosting work experience student Tyler Greenhalgh. Tyler was a seamless fit in my office and approached a range of tasks with enthusiasm and a can-do attitude. Before leaving, Tyler wrote about his experience, which I would like to share with the Assembly, noting that the following words have been barely edited by me or my office:

There are so many different roles within the label “politician”. Is your role to read the budget? Talk to people within your community? Answer phone calls? Write emails? Sit in the chamber? Or ask questions in a committee inquiry? I learnt the answer is yes—and more. It begged me to wonder, did I really fully experience Tara's work?

I did so much in so many different aspects of Tara's job in one week so I can only mention my favourites. I was able to meet amazing people within the Canberra community. I went to a citizenship ceremony where I got to see some of Australia's newest citizens. I was also able to meet Mrs Dunne there.

The next interaction I participated in was at the Lions Youth Haven in Kambah. I met some students who weren't as lucky as me but had a safe space provided for them to learn different skills. I literally learnt how to crack a whip like a pro and will probably take over Tara's job soon as a result. I loved interacting with the community and being on the ground learning about different peoples' lives and contributions.

Despite cracking whips and watching people receive their citizenship certificates, my favourite part of this experience was being in the office.

I loved working in such a professional environment with such intelligent people. I was so lucky to be able to work with Tara's amazing team members, Emma and Nick.

I will remind you that this has been barely edited. Tyler continued:

I was extremely nervous when I first arrived, but Emma was really nice and made me feel welcome. Nick and his painful puns and humour also made me feel

welcome. Reflecting back on the job which they do, I can see how they might underestimate their importance and skill.

Nick taught me about correspondence and showed me the range of emails the office receives. I was able to write a birthday letter to someone who had turned 100! I also helped write to the Deputy Chief Minister on behalf of a constituent. I enjoyed learning and trying Nick's job.

I also helped Emma and Tara work on one of Tara's budget speeches.

Madam Speaker, I happened to give that speech a little over an hour ago. Tyler continued:

While at times, and much to my surprise, the speech got a little dry when talking about street sweeping, Emma and I found a way to make it engaging. Emma was able to teach me how to write a speech, how to be concise and how to make it relevant to the people rather than just statistics on a piece of paper.

I appreciated seeing some of the politicians, whether I talked to them or not. I saw Minister Ramsay, Ms Cody, Mr Parton, Ms Orr, Mr Gupta and Ms Burch—

or Madam Speaker, as I should call her in this speech. Tyler said:

I am so grateful that I was provided with such a great opportunity to be able to learn about the ACT Legislative Assembly and meet some truly amazing people.

It was a real pleasure to host Tyler. From his speech, I think he had a very good time. I absolutely wish him all the best; he is a real star.

Question resolved in the affirmative.

The Assembly adjourned at 6.37 pm.