



Debates

WEEKLY HANSARD

Legislative Assembly for the ACT

TENTH ASSEMBLY

9 FEBRUARY 2021

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Tuesday, 9 February 2021

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Tuesday, 9 February 2021

MADAM SPEAKER (Ms Burch) (10.00): Members:

Dhawura nguna, dhawura Ngunnawal.
Yanggu ngalawiri, dhunimanyin Ngunnawalwari dhawurawari.
Nginggada Dindi dhawura Ngunnaawalbun yindjumaralidjinyin.

The words I have just spoken are in the language of the traditional custodians and translate to:

This is Ngunnawal country.
Today we are gathering on Ngunnawal country.
We always pay respect to Elders, female and male, and Ngunnawal country.

Members, I ask you to stand in silence and pray or reflect on our responsibilities to the people of the Australian Capital Territory.

Petitions

The following petitions were lodged for presentation:

Planning—Giralang shops—petition 1-21

By Ms Orr, from 321 residents:

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

- the local shops in Giralang have sat unused and in a state of semi-development for 15 years;
- progress has been made with the developer settling the legal action against them and gaining approval for a Development Application;
- over the last 12 months however progress to build the shops has stalled with no supermarket secured and the development taken off the sales market;
- the developer, who is ultimately responsible under the lease for progressing the shops, has provided only one clear update to the community in this time, which provided no clear indication of what happens next.

Your petitioners, therefore, request the Assembly to seek a full update from the developer on any progress and when we can see action on delivering our shops.

Health—drug and alcohol treatment services—petition 3-21

By Mrs Kikkert, from 487 residents:

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

This petition of certain residents of the Australian Capital Territory draws to the attention of the Assembly that:

- according to ACIC reporting, the average consumption of many major drugs, including alcohol and tobacco, has been increasing in the ACT in recent years;
- specialist alcohol, tobacco and other drug services in the territory can no longer meet demand, with waiting lists growing even longer in 2020;
- delays in accessing rehabilitation services may negatively hinder successful treatment; and
- research confirms the link between alcohol and other drugs and violence in the home.

Your petitioners, therefore, request the Assembly to call upon the ACT Government to conduct a thorough inquiry into the alcohol, tobacco and other drug service sector, including prevention/early intervention services and pathways as well as treatment/rehabilitation services, both for persons on Drug and Alcohol Treatment Orders and those voluntarily seeking help, to:

- identify current strengths and weaknesses;
- assess current and future demands; and
- recommend service and funding models that will better meet people's needs.

Health—drug and alcohol treatment services—petition 25-20

By Mrs Kikkert, from 212 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 that:

- according to ACIC reporting, the average consumption of many major drugs, including alcohol and tobacco, has been increasing in the ACT in recent years;
- specialist alcohol, tobacco and other drug services in the territory can no longer meet demand, with waiting lists growing even longer in 2020;
- delays in accessing rehabilitation services may negatively hinder successful treatment; and
- research confirms the link between alcohol and other drugs and violence in the home.

The petitioners, therefore, request the Assembly to call upon ACT Government to conduct a thorough inquiry into the alcohol, tobacco and other drug service sector, including prevention/early intervention services and pathways as well as treatment/rehabilitation services, both for persons on Drug and Alcohol Treatment Orders and those voluntarily seeking help, to:

- identify current strength and weaknesses;
- access current and future demands; and
- recommend service and funding models that will better meet people's needs.

Pursuant to standing order 99A, the petitions, having more than 500 signatories, were referred to the Standing Committee on Health and Community Wellbeing.

The Clerk having announced that the terms of the petitions would be recorded in Hansard and referred to the appropriate ministers for response pursuant to standing order 100, the petitions were received.

Motion to take note of petitions

MADAM SPEAKER: Pursuant to standing order 98A, I propose the question:

That the petitions so lodged be noted.

Health—drug and alcohol treatment services—petition 3-21

Health—drug and alcohol treatment services—petition 25-20

MRS KIKKERT (Ginninderra) (10.03): Madam Speaker, today I present a petition signed by 699 residents of the ACT. The Canberrans who initiated and then supported this petition have asked me to raise a number of issues with this Assembly—something that I am very happy to do.

First, they are aware that the average consumption of several major drugs in the territory is above the national average, including both capital cities and regional areas. These include alcohol, cannabis, cocaine and nicotine—with cannabis and cocaine both well above this average, and alcohol and nicotine use in the ACT clearly trending upwards.

Above-average and increasing rates of consumption of alcohol, tobacco and other drugs are of concern to residents for several reasons. The impacts of these substances on both physical and mental health are well established and frequently discussed.

Beyond these, many residents also know—often from difficult personal experiences—what research has clearly demonstrated: that there is a link between alcohol, drugs and domestic violence. Recent research at Deakin University found that 27.6 per cent of incidents of intimate partner violence in the ACT were alcohol related. Nationwide, those who reported that their partners had engaged in heavy binge drinking in the past 12 months were 5.8 times more likely to have experienced such violence. The same research project found that incidents of intimate partner violence involving drugs were more likely to involve physical violence and also more likely to result in both physical and psychological injury.

Impacts on families are not limited to domestic violence. When a family member has a dependency on alcohol, tobacco or drugs, this can create fears, worries, tension and even conflicts. In such situations, loving family members can be quite hopeful that the needed help is both available and accessible.

It is for this reason that this petition specifically calls upon the ACT government to conduct a thorough inquiry into the alcohol, tobacco and other drugs service sector.

We already have some idea of the difficulties facing this sector. In August last year, providers of rehabilitation services publicly spoke about long waiting lists. Some services indicated that, pre-COVID, those seeking assistance could be waiting for several months, and one provider noted that it had “about 30 people waiting on the books”.

At the same time, Alcohol Tobacco & Other Drug Association ACT noted that specialist alcohol and drug treatment in the territory is in “high demand” by the community, with resourcing over past years failing to keep pace. They have asserted that their modelling “indicates that treatment places need to double to meet demand”. Instead, some providers have had to cut their programs in half in response to restrictions resulting from the pandemic.

As the petition itself states, delays in accessing rehabilitation services can negatively hinder successful treatment. This is true for adults, but it is even more true for youths. As specialists know, the optimal time to help a young person is the very moment she or he walks through the door. Placing a young person on a very long waiting list often results in a situation that is much more complicated to fix, and it is often too late. Too many of those who signed this petition have personally experienced this tragedy. One family, for example, has a son who struggles with addiction. He has been referred by the court to specialist drug treatment, but he and the family have now been waiting for many months to access this help; meanwhile, the young man’s situation is deteriorating with each passing week.

We must do better, Madam Speaker. We need to identify the current strengths and weaknesses of both prevention and treatment services, we need to accurately assess current and future demands, and we need to seek service and funding models that will better meet people’s needs. On behalf of the Canberra residents, I commend this petition to the Assembly.

MR DAVIS (Brindabella) (10.08): I would like to personally thank and congratulate all 699 petitioners who have signed Mrs Kikkert’s sponsored petition, and I would like to congratulate and put on the record my appreciation of Mrs Kikkert for her well-known reputation in the community for being someone who is very active in this public policy space. I am very excited to work with Mrs Kikkert and Mr Pettersson on the Standing Committee on Health and Community Wellbeing on this very important issue.

As members will recall, in my inaugural speech last year I noted that before coming to this Assembly I lived with and cared for a family member who struggled with drug dependency. It is an area of public policy I am most excited to get to work on. I am most excited to strip off those partisan shackles and get together in the committee to work on this.

I again thank all 699 people who signed the petition for their considered involvement in this area of public policy. I look forward to their submissions, and I again thank Mrs Kikkert for sponsoring the petition.

Question resolved in the affirmative.

COVID-19 pandemic response—update Ministerial statement

MS STEPHEN-SMITH (Kurrajong—Minister for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Affairs, Minister for Families and Community Services and Minister for Health) (10.09): I rise today to provide to the Legislative Assembly the first update of 2021 on the COVID-19 situation in the ACT, and the plans, preparations and actions the government continues to take to protect the health and wellbeing of Canberrans.

Much has happened since my last update on 2 December 2020, both in Australia and around the world. The situation has, unfortunately, taken a turn for the worse in many countries which are experiencing a rising wave of infections and the emergence of more transmissible strains of the virus. However, I am both pleased and relieved to report that the ACT continues to remain in a strong position.

I am proud to say that the ACT community continues to be amazingly cooperative and supportive, which has been so vital to our response to COVID-19. I appreciate that this has been another difficult time for ACT residents seeking to relax over the holiday period; instead, many have had to cancel or modify planned celebrations, travel and get-togethers.

The situation we are seeing overseas is alarming, and a clear reminder, if one was needed, of the need to maintain our public health measures and work together as a community to maintain our vigilance in stopping the spread. The number of new COVID-19 cases reported globally continues to rise rapidly. As of 8 February 2021, there have been more than 105 million confirmed cases, including more than 2.3 million deaths reported to the World Health Organisation.

The surge in cases has resulted in many countries introducing nationwide lockdowns or returning to a state of lockdown to try and slow the rate of infection. In countries such as the United States and the United Kingdom, health systems are under enormous strain due to high rates of hospitalisation and deaths related to COVID-19. It has been a grim beginning to the new year for many communities around the world and an immense challenge for all governments.

In Australia we have seen recent clusters in Sydney and Melbourne, as well as cases linked to hotel quarantine in Brisbane, Melbourne, Perth and Sydney, prompt rapid action and response to help protect our community. This has put our community and our public health teams to the test, but we can all be proud of how they have responded.

We have also seen the emergence of the new and more transmissible strains of COVID in Australia, prompting a three-day lockdown in Brisbane, a five-day lockdown in Perth, and increased restrictions in Melbourne following the identification of staff involved with hotel quarantine becoming infected with more virulent strains of the disease.

As emerging international evidence showed that these variants of COVID-19 were likely to be more transmissible, National Cabinet met on 8 January 2021 to discuss Australia's plan to manage these variants. The commonwealth Chief Medical Officer confirmed that the UK variant has a higher transmissibility and is rapidly becoming the dominant virus in the UK. Australia is now among more than 30 countries across the world that have experienced confirmed occurrences of this variant.

Our response continues to be closely guided by the Australian Health Protection Principal Committee, AHPPC, which has recommended that additional precautions are necessary to reduce the risk of these variants entering the Australian community. Recent events here and abroad demonstrate that we will continue to see outbreaks occur over the coming months; however, we are well placed to respond and will continue working as hard as ever in our response to COVID-19 through this phase of the pandemic.

Just last week, on 3 February, Victoria recorded a new case of COVID-19 in a hotel quarantine worker. The worker last worked at the Grand Hyatt hotel on 29 January 2021 and was tested at the end of their shift, returning a negative result. Following that test, the worker developed symptoms and was tested again on 2 February 2021 and returned a positive result.

Once this case was publicly notified, the ACT moved quickly and put in place a public health direction listing exposure sites identified by the Victorian government as COVID-19-affected areas. A new public health direction came into effect on 4 February and requires any person who was present at the listed exposure sites to self-isolate, get tested and remain in isolation for 14 days. At this stage there is no evidence to suggest that the hotel quarantine worker breached any COVID-19 safety protocols, and ACT Health is continuing to monitor the progress of investigations into this case.

Following events yesterday, with another new case notified in Victoria, the public health direction has been updated to include the new tier 1 public exposure sites identified by the Victorian government. We have also seen over the past few days another case in New South Wales in a person who had been in the community while infectious. I can advise that the Chief Health Officer is closely monitoring the situation and in close communication with her New South Wales colleagues.

As more information becomes available, the ACT government will advise the community. Our current advice is to follow the New South Wales health advice. That is as follows. If Canberrans have been in a location identified by New South Wales as requiring testing and quarantine, they should get tested and quarantine. If people have been in a location where the New South Wales advice is to get tested and isolate to await their test result, then we ask them to please do that. And if the New South Wales health advice is to monitor for symptoms, we ask people to please be vigilant in doing so.

As members will be aware, this is not the first case in New South Wales over the past couple of months to raise some concern. As I mentioned earlier, a new cluster of cases

emerged in December in the northern beaches area of Sydney. Genomic testing showed that the strain was an international variant of the virus currently circulating in the United States. I understand that NSW Health is still investigating how and when this international strain entered the country and how it spread to the community.

At a similar time, a van driver transporting international air crew was infected with a different variant of the US strain of the virus. It appears that there was no link to what became known as the northern beaches cluster; however, these two instances revealed a very urgent threat requiring action and response. Community transmission occurred at locations in and around Avalon, in the northern beaches area, resulting in at least 28 linked cases by 18 December 2020 and more that later emerged.

At this time, the ACT government responded by issuing advice to ACT residents not to travel to the northern beaches area of Sydney. Given the increase in cases and the ongoing evidence of community transmission, the ACT put in place a public health direction declaring the northern beaches local government area a COVID-19 affected area. This required anyone who had been in the northern beaches area on or after 11 December 2020 to self-quarantine for 14 days from the date they were last there.

This direction initially included the requirement for those entering the ACT who had been in the COVID-affected area associated with the northern beaches cluster to make a declaration and enter 14 days of quarantine. This measure complemented the requirement by New South Wales for people in the northern beaches region to remain at home. As the situation evolved in the days following, changes were made to our public health directions reflecting the broadening list of New South Wales COVID-19-affected areas in the Greater Sydney, Nepean-Blue Mountains and Wollongong regions.

Madam Speaker, the ACT's response to the Sydney situation saw the strongest travel restrictions between the ACT and New South Wales that have been implemented to date, effectively introducing travel restrictions with COVID-19-affected areas of New South Wales. ACT Policing actively enforced these measures by taking a multi-pronged approach, including at-home quarantine checks, vehicle checks at the ACT-New South Wales border, and pop-up RBT-style stations at locations across the ACT. From Monday, 11 January 2021, ACT Policing's COVID-19 Taskforce was bolstered with support from the ACT Emergency Services Agency, ACTESA, volunteers to speak with people undertaking home and hotel quarantine.

I am pleased to report that the rate of compliance across the ACT has been extremely high throughout the pandemic, and the Canberra community has been very receptive to COVID-19 restrictions. The decision to implement strict travel restrictions with New South Wales was not taken lightly, and I acknowledge that this interrupted holiday and travel plans for many Canberrans at a time of year when many of us look forward to visiting loved ones. The Chief Health Officer deemed this a necessary measure to protect our community until case numbers were brought under control in the affected areas. All other jurisdictions put in place border restrictions with New South Wales to reduce the risk of cases spreading beyond New South Wales. Indeed, both Victoria and Queensland experienced confirmed cases linked to this cluster,

demonstrating just how easily infections can pass across borders and potentially seed new outbreaks.

NSW Health worked extremely hard on successfully controlling these clusters, which allowed the ACT to remove the travel restrictions from all areas of New South Wales by 29 January.

As members would also be aware, while the New South Wales situation unfolded, on 2 January a hotel quarantine worker in Brisbane tested positive to COVID-19. Genomic sequencing confirmed that the case was the United Kingdom variant known as B.1.1.7. In response, the Queensland government introduced restrictions, including a three-day city-wide lockdown in Brisbane from 7 to 10 January. A large number of close contacts of the infected worker were contacted, tested and isolated. Several locations were identified, including train stations and supermarkets visited by the confirmed case, resulting in a large number of casual contacts.

With Queensland's decision to introduce a lockdown and the potential for transmission beyond state borders, the ACT implemented the Public Health (COVID-19 Interstate Hotspots) Emergency Direction 2021 (No 4) on 8 January, after National Cabinet agreed to declare the local government areas of Brisbane, Logan, Moreton, Redlands and Ipswich COVID-19 affected areas.

The ACT's public health direction provided support to Queensland, allowing time to slow the spread and assess the situation associated with the transmission of the UK COVID-19 variant strain. This direction temporarily required approximately 4,800 ACT residents returning from Queensland COVID-19-affected areas to enter quarantine until we could be assured that the risk of further community transmission was low. I thank all those ACT residents who responded and complied with that direction on return from their travel.

As members would also be aware, the Perth metropolitan area, and the Peel and South West regions of Western Australia entered a five-day lockdown on 31 January after a new case of COVID-19 was recorded in a hotel quarantine worker. The ACT again responded quickly by implementing new restrictions for people travelling to the ACT from these affected areas. A public health direction came into effect at 2 pm on 1 February, declaring the Perth metropolitan area and the Peel and South West regions of Western Australia as COVID-19-affected areas. The direction required anyone who had been in these areas since 25 January to immediately quarantine and get tested for COVID-19. In addition, people were required to remain in quarantine until 5 February, even if they returned a negative result. Restrictions relating to Western Australia were eased with effect from 6 pm on 5 February.

Locally I am pleased to report that the ACT has continued to do well in suppressing COVID-19. There continues to be no evidence of community transmission in the ACT, despite the recent higher rates of testing we have seen, and despite the risk associated with people returning from COVID-affected areas.

Since my last update to the Assembly, on 2 December 2020, the ACT recorded one new case of COVID-19, on 20 December. The positive case was a commonwealth

government official who returned from overseas and entered quarantine. This individual underwent a routine day 12 test, which returned a positive result. The individual was supported by ACT Health and has since been cleared of infection.

I am pleased to report that we currently have no active cases in the ACT. A total of 115 cases have recovered; sadly, there were three deaths early in the pandemic.

On 30 January I announced that our wastewater testing regime had detected coronavirus fragments in the Belconnen catchment. In response to this detection, we asked Canberrans in the Belconnen area to get tested for COVID-19 if they were experiencing any symptoms and urged anyone who lives, works or has recently visited the Belconnen area to get tested, even with the mildest of symptoms. It was pleasing to see the increase in daily testing across the ACT in the days following this wastewater detection, and it is vital that our testing rates continue to stay high in order for ACT Health to identify if there are any unknown cases in our community. Pleasingly, a subsequent wastewater test returned a negative result on 4 February.

As members may be aware, the ACT has joined the NSW Health wastewater COVID surveillance program. Initially, a sample of wastewater was collected weekly from the lower Molonglo water quality control plant, which receives wastewater from more than 99 per cent of the ACT population. From December 2020 this was expanded to six collection sites, which reduced the catchment areas, increasing the likelihood of detecting coronavirus early. Wastewater testing will continue across the ACT to support our COVID-19 response and inform future public health directions.

Madam Speaker, this wastewater detection re-emphasises the importance of being prepared to respond and surge our response to protect the community. To ensure that we are well situated, the government continues to review and update our planning to ensure that our public health experts have the resources they need to protect our community.

The Chief Minister and I recently announced that the government has allocated \$39 million in additional funding through the 2020-21 budget to ensure that our public health team can continue to respond as appropriate. This funding will deliver more supplies of PPE, dedicated resourcing for the Public Information Coordination Centre, and expanded resourcing for the Health Emergency Coordination Centre. It will also ensure that our compliance and education and public transport cleaning services continue to provide a greater layer of protection.

Madam Speaker, I am pleased to report that testing numbers in the ACT continue to be strong, recently surpassing 159,000 negative tests. The clusters in Sydney and the declaration of greater Brisbane as an affected area affected many Canberrans returning from those areas over the holiday period. In late December and early January our testing numbers rose well above previous averages.

Of course, it is still vitally important to present for testing if you are experiencing any COVID-19 symptoms, no matter how mild. The main symptoms of COVID-19 are fever, cough, sore throat, shortness of breath, and loss of smell or taste. Less common symptoms are runny or blocked nose, muscle pain, joint pain, diarrhoea, nausea,

vomiting and loss of appetite. Symptoms can develop between two to 14 days after you are exposed to the virus. Most commonly, symptoms develop five or six days after exposure.

Continued high rates of testing are essential to maintain rigorous surveillance, closely monitor the situation as restrictions are eased and act quickly if a case is detected or new cases emerge in other jurisdictions.

On 8 January 2021 National Cabinet agreed to implement additional measures to strengthen end-to-end protection of Australians from COVID-19, including new variants. Temporary passenger caps in New South Wales, Queensland and Western Australia halved the number of returning Australians into those jurisdictions.

Last week National Cabinet agreed to return the caps to their previous levels from 15 February. In the meantime, the commonwealth announced that it would be supporting additional government-facilitated flights, and the ACT is pleased to be playing a role in getting Australians home through this program. We are taking a very cautious approach to how we manage international travellers, given the heightened risk of new variants of the virus at this time. Now more than ever, we need to ensure that our hotel quarantine and infection control procedures are of the highest standard.

In response to this heightened risk, ACT Health is implementing the safeguarding Canberrans surveillance program, SCan, as part of a national approach to screening workers involved in the repatriation of Australians from overseas. Following a successful trial in November 2020, SCan now includes daily saliva testing and weekly deep nasal or throat swabs, in addition to syndromic surveillance and detailed public health advice for participants. Government and hotel quarantine employees are required to provide information regarding second employment and maintain a list of their household and frequent close contacts for risk mitigation.

We recognise the need to ensure that our hotel quarantine and infection control measures are of the highest standard. Through SCan, ACT Health can minimise the risk of hotel quarantine to the Canberra community. Our hotel quarantine workers are at the front line and face an increased level of risk, particularly when managing an international flight arrival. I can assure members that ACT Health is constantly reviewing processes and learning from other jurisdictions to best protect our community. We have strengthened our hotel quarantine system in accordance with national best practice guidelines and in view of learnings from other jurisdictions and the advice of the AHPPC, and we will continue to prioritise safety in relation to hotel quarantine.

All returning international travellers on government-facilitated flights quarantining in the ACT are routinely tested for COVID-19 twice during their stay and again if they become symptomatic. National Cabinet has agreed that returning Australians and other travellers to Australia must return a negative COVID-19 test within 72 hours prior to departure. Exemptions will only be applied in extenuating circumstances, such as for seasonal workers from countries where there is limited access to testing.

In addition, air crew must take a COVID-19 test every seven days, or on arrival in Australia, and quarantine between international flights or for a full 14 days. A further step agreed at National Cabinet now requires all passengers and air crew to wear masks on domestic flights and in all airports around Australia, including Canberra Airport, except children under 12 years or those who have a particular reason for being unable to wear a mask. This is an additional safety measure to reduce possible risks associated with air travel. Canberra Airport remains safe and the risk of flying domestically remains low with these protective measures in place.

Madam Speaker, as I have indicated, the ACT is continuing to support efforts to return Australians wishing to return home from overseas. Just yesterday we received a government-facilitated flight from Chennai, India, with 166 passengers on board. I am pleased to inform the Assembly that all passengers are safely quarantining in hotel accommodation, supported by ACT Health, ACT Policing and the Australian Defence Force.

To date, the ACT has supported the repatriation of 790 Australian citizens and permanent residents seeking to return home, with our safeguarding Canberrans surveillance program minimising the risk of these flights to our community. We will continue to support repatriation efforts, and ACT Health is working closely with the Australian government to arrange further government-facilitated flights, where the ACT can accommodate these flights.

On 7 January the Prime Minister announced that the rollout of the COVID-19 vaccination program would be brought forward to February 2021. The commonwealth government is leading the program, in close partnership with all state and territory governments. This continues to be an enormous effort for everyone involved.

I would like to acknowledge the ACT government officials who worked extremely hard over the Christmas and New Year period on planning for this significant operational and logistical challenge. The rollout of safe and effective COVID-19 vaccines is being guided by the Australian COVID-19 vaccination policy, which sets out the roles and responsibilities of the commonwealth government and ACT government in relation to the implementation of a COVID-19 vaccination program. In designing the rollout of this program, the commonwealth and ACT governments have consulted with medical and technical experts and peak bodies.

Through today's budget, the ACT government is contributing \$19 million, plus \$4.5 million in capital funding, to support a timely national rollout of the vaccines. We are in the final stages of establishing vaccination clinics. We are also working with peak bodies, employers and key sectors to identify priority populations for each stage of the program rollout.

I want to emphasise to Canberrans that the initial stages of this program will be targeted and limited. It will build over time but is dependent on the commonwealth and the supply of vaccines. We have been working, and will continue to work, closely with the commonwealth government to ensure that Canberrans are well informed about the vaccination program. Our priority is to deliver a safe, efficient, targeted vaccination program for Canberrans.

Madam Speaker, we all know that COVID-19 had a major impact on our community and our health system in 2020. I am pleased to advise that progress is continuing, following the ACT government's significant investment in public health services that were affected by COVID-19 restrictions and the suspension of many category 2 and 3 elective surgeries. On 30 June 2020 the territory had 1,505 patients overdue and awaiting surgery. By 31 January 2021 only 254 of those patients remain.

I am also pleased to advise that the ACT hospital system is on track to undertake a record number of elective surgeries in 2020-21. In addition, I am pleased to advise that the recovery plan has offered more than 1,600 long wait dental patients an appointment through the program, delivering those appointments to those most in need, children and vulnerable community groups. I would like to thank all those who are continuing to work together in delivering this important initiative, assisting to fast-track the recovery of the public health system.

We are currently at stage 4 easing of restrictions. The impact of easing restrictions is being closely monitored to inform future decisions, and a further COVID-safe checkpoint is scheduled for 12 February 2021. I am pleased to advise members that, as of 4 February, 6,050 venues are registered with the Check In CBR app and there have been nearly 315,000 downloads of the app since its launch in September.

The public health emergency declaration remains in force in the ACT until 17 February 2021. The Chief Health Officer is keeping me informed on the status of the COVID-19 emergency and the ACT's public health situation. In the coming days the Chief Health Officer will provide further advice about the public health emergency declaration, which, in light of the current situation, appears likely to be extended for a further period of 90 days to enable essential public health emergency directions to remain in place. I will table the Chief Health Officer's reports provided to me for the previous two months—December 2020 and January 2021.

The public health emergency declaration enables the Chief Health Officer to continue to take the necessary actions to reduce threats to public health, including issuing public health directions that aim to limit the spread of COVID-19 in our community. These directions include the requirement for returned travellers to undertake hotel quarantine and for confirmed cases of COVID-19 to self-isolate. We expect quarantine to remain a requirement for returning international travellers for some time to come.

While the situation in Australia has stabilised, AHPPC advises that it is likely that we will continue to see COVID-19 outbreaks until vaccines have been rolled out to a large proportion of the community, which will take some months to achieve. We are doing well and should be proud of our efforts, but the pandemic is not over and we must remain vigilant.

Madam Speaker, the past two months have been challenging for Canberrans, with the re-emergence of COVID-19 in nearby states, particularly where travel and leave plans, and plans to spend time with loved ones, have been impacted. I am proud of how Canberrans have responded to this challenge, despite these difficulties, and

congratulate all involved and affected for their combined efforts that have seen the ACT remain free of community transmission.

I would particularly like to thank our public health teams and supporting teams across government, which surged to assist across Christmas and New Year when needed. This was a huge collaborative effort involving staff from across the ACT government who have all stepped up to support our COVID-19 response at short notice over this period. On behalf of everyone in the ACT, I sincerely thank you for your tireless work.

On that note, I remind all Canberrans who may be planning to travel interstate to please be mindful of travel restrictions currently in place for any COVID-affected areas. I urge Canberrans to follow and keep abreast of the advice before considering any non-essential travel. Please continue to follow the guidance on both ACT Health's COVID-19 website and the COVID-19 website of the state or territory you may be travelling to. And remember that, while travelling, it is your responsibility to maintain physical distancing and practise good hygiene as well as to be aware of and adhere to the restrictions in place in the jurisdiction you are travelling to.

In closing, I encourage all Canberrans to remain vigilant and keep up the good work that has kept us in such a strong position in the face of this pandemic.

I present the following papers:

COVID-19—Update on Government response—Ministerial statement,
9 February 2021.

Status of the public health emergency due to COVID-19—

Chief Health Officer Report, dated 14 December 2020.

Chief Health Officer Report, dated 14 January 2021.

I move:

That the Assembly take note of the statement.

Question resolved in the affirmative.

Legislative Assembly—program

MR GENTLEMAN (Brindabella—Manager of Government Business, Minister for Corrections, Minister for Industrial Relations and Workplace Safety, Minister for Planning and Land Management and Minister for Police and Emergency Services) (10.35), by leave, I move:

That the resolution of the Assembly of 3 December 2020 setting the order of business of the Assembly for the sitting period 9 to 11 February 2021, be amended by omitting paragraph (1) and substituting:

“(1) the ordinary business of the Assembly for 9 February 2021 shall be:

Prayer or reflection

Presentation of petitions

Ministerial statements

Private Members' business (one item as ordered by the Standing Committee on Administration and Procedure)

Questions without notice

Presentation of papers

Notices and orders of the day (Executive business)

provided that at 2 pm the Speaker shall interrupt the business before the Assembly in order that questions on notice shall be called on;

(2) the ordinary business of the Assembly for 10 February 2021 shall be:

Prayer or reflection

Presentation of petitions

Ministerial statements

Executive business - presentation of Bills

Notices and orders of the day (Executive business)

Private Members' business (one item as ordered by the Standing Committee on Administration and Procedure)

Questions without notice

Presentation of papers

Presentation of Private Members' business (two items as ordered by the Standing Committee on Administration and Procedure)

Notices and orders of the day (Executive business)

provided that at 2 pm the Speaker shall interrupt the business before the Assembly in order that questions on notice shall be called on; and

(3) the ordinary business of the Assembly for 11 February 2021 shall be:

Prayer or reflection

Presentation of petitions

Ministerial statements

Executive business - presentation of Bills

Notices and orders of the day (Executive business)

Questions without notice

Presentation of papers

Presentation of Private Members' business (2 items as ordered by the Standing Committee on Administration and Procedure)

Notices and orders of the day (Executive business)

provided that at 2 pm the Speaker shall interrupt the business before the Assembly in order that questions on notice shall be called on;”.

The alteration to the sitting pattern for this week has been agreed across the chamber, and I thank Mr Hanson and Mr Braddock for working with my colleague Ms Orr on this. The change does not alter the number of private members' motions that would have occurred and is consistent with the number normally listed by the Standing Committee on Administration and Procedure for debate prior to COVID-19.

The motion before us enables the Assembly to adjourn after the presentation of the appropriation bill by the Treasurer. This is a longstanding practice of this place, to enable the opposition to begin preparing its budget reply, which will be presented on Thursday afternoon. To achieve this longstanding practice, the opposition will have its private members' motion debated this morning, with the second motion that would otherwise have occurred today being listed for debate tomorrow morning. I commend the motion to the Assembly.

Question resolved in the affirmative.

Justice and Community Safety—Standing Committee Scrutiny report 1

MR HANSON (Murrumbidgee) (10.36): I present the following report:

Justice and Community Safety—Standing Committee (Legislative Scrutiny Role)—Scrutiny Report 1, dated 2 February 2021, together with a copy of the extracts of the relevant minutes of proceedings.

I seek leave to make a brief statement.

Leave granted.

MR HANSON: Scrutiny report No 1 contains the committee's comments on five bills, 66 pieces of subordinate legislation, one national regulation and proposed amendments to the Justice and Community Safety Legislation Bill 2020. The report was circulated to members when the Assembly was not sitting. I commend the report to the Assembly.

Administration and Procedure—Standing Committee Report 2

MS BURCH (Brindabella) (10.37): I present the following report:

Administration and Procedure—Standing Committee—Report 2—*Report on the Conduct of Mr Coe, MLA*, dated 9 February 2021, together with a copy of the extracts of the relevant minutes of proceedings.

MS ORR (Yerrabi) (10.37), by leave, I move:

That the report be noted.

Question resolved in the affirmative.

Economy and Gender and Economic Equality—Standing Committee Report 1

MS LAWDER (Brindabella) (10.37): I present the following report:

Economy and Gender and Economic Equality—Standing Committee—Report 1—*Inquiry into COVID-19 Emergency Response Legislation Amendment Bill 2020 (No 3)*, dated 27 January 2021, together with a copy of the extracts of the relevant minutes of proceedings.

I move:

That the report be noted.

I am pleased to speak to the Standing Committee on Economy and Gender and Economic Equality report on the committee's inquiry into the COVID-19 Emergency Response Legislation Amendment Bill 2020 (No 3). As members will be aware, this bill is for an act to amend legislation to provide for emergency measures in response to the COVID-19 emergency and for other purposes. The bill is the fourth in a series of omnibus COVID-19 bills.

The bill per se falls into the category of legislation to respond to exceptional or emergency circumstances. In reaction to the coronavirus disease, or COVID-19 pandemic, countries across the globe have passed emergency laws or declared states of emergency to respond to the unfolding and continuing crisis. This action followed the World Health Organisation's declaration that COVID-19 was a global pandemic and that all countries urgently needed to take the required measures to prepare emergency response systems.

The committee observes that, as reported in an international symposium analysing the global use of emergency powers in response to COVID-19, approximately 80 per cent of the global population, including the ACT community, has been affected in some way by emergency and executive action taken in response to COVID-19. It is useful to consider the measures the bill is seeking to enact against the UK Hansard Society's principles to guide the UK parliament's response to the pandemic.

In a contribution jointly authored during April 2020 by Professor Meg Russell of the Constitution Union at University College London, the UK Hansard Society set out principles that should govern the UK House of Commons's decisions on arrangements for the pandemic. These principles include that crisis arrangements should be based on wide and transparent consultation with members to maximise support. They should be sunsetted to make clear that they are temporary and create no automatic precedent for the post-crisis era. They must ensure fair representation for all members and parties. The crisis and the parliament's response to it should not become a pretext to shift power further towards the executive and the party managers, and these principles should continue to guide the House's decisions as it considers its future arrangements.

The committee acknowledges that, due to the urgency of action needed to respond to exceptional or emergency circumstances, such as in the case of the COVID-19 pandemic, executive action and emergency measures do not undergo the same level of scrutiny or stages of approval that would be the default outside of such circumstances. Notwithstanding that, this does not imply, or should not give rise to emergency measures that are without limits or conditions. The committee is of the view that the measures the bill seeks to either extend, repeal, and/or revise, together with consultation processes used in the drafting stage, broadly comply with the UK Hansard Society's principles to guide parliaments response to the pandemic.

The committee has made four recommendations in relation to its inquiry. The committee considers that exceptional or emergency circumstances support extraordinary scrutiny and has made three recommendations that align with this concept. These recommendations are focused on reporting arrangements to the Assembly on emergency response measures. The committee has also made a recommendation to the Assembly regarding the time frames specified in reporting on inquiries undertaken by Assembly committees into referred bills.

In concluding, the committee acknowledges the extraordinary efforts that have been undertaken by the ACT public service and its employees to manage the risks for the ACT community at the time the COVID-19 crisis was unfolding in March 2020, throughout 2020 and now into 2021. The committee further acknowledges that these efforts have managed the health response, worked to keep the ACT community safe, provided economic support to businesses and individuals under considerable stress, and supported operational areas to provide services during the pandemic. The committee also recognises the cooperation, work and contribution from the federal government, the private sector, non-government organisations, the ACT community and countless other organisations and individuals that have been instrumental in the efforts and initiatives to support the health, economic and social challenges faced by our community during this unprecedented time.

As chair, I also want to thank my fellow committee members, Ms Suzanne Orr and Mr Johnathan Davis for their contributions, and offer our thanks to the secretary, Dr Andréa Cullen, for her exemplary work, as usual. I commend the report to the Assembly. My committee colleagues may also wish to comment.

Question resolved in the affirmative.

Statement by chair

MS LAWDER (Brindabella) (10.44): Pursuant to standing order 246A, I wish to make a statement on behalf of the Standing Committee on Economy and Gender and Economic Equality relating to statutory appointments in accordance with continuing resolution 5A. Continuing resolution 5A was agreed by the Legislative Assembly on 23 August 2012. The schedule is required to include the statutory appointments considered and, for each appointment, the date the request from the responsible minister for consultation was received and the date the committee's feedback was provided.

The reporting period, 1 July 2020 to 31 December 2020, to which this statement relates bridges two Assemblies—namely, the former Ninth Assembly and the current Tenth Assembly. For the reporting period 1 July 2020 to 31 December 2020 the committee—and its Ninth Assembly predecessor, the Standing Committee on Economic Development and Tourism—considered nil statutory appointments. I now table that schedule:

Economy and Gender and Economic Equality—Standing Committee—Schedule of Statutory Appointments—9th Assembly—Period 1 July 2020 to 31 December 2020.

Alexander Maconochie Centre—racism

MRS KIKKERT (Ginninderra) (10.46): I move:

That this Assembly:

(1) notes that:

- (a) in 2020, the ACT Government promised to commission a review of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander overrepresentation in the Territory's incarceration rates, which remains the highest in Australia;
- (b) in 2019, the ACT Government committed \$1.35 million in Justice Reinvestment funding to help address the incarceration rates of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people;
- (c) it has been acknowledged that the systemic racism that exists across our community may also exist within the Territory's prison and impact its operation; and
- (d) certain historical incidents, along with alleged incidents now under investigation, have damaged the confidence of some Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Canberrans in the prison as an institution; and

(2) calls on the ACT Government to commission and fund an external, independent inquiry with the obligation to:

- (a) investigate and document the incidence of institutional and/or systemic racism in relation to the Alexander Maconochie Centre;
- (b) develop advice and recommendations to address and eliminate this racism; and
- (c) report back to the Assembly by the last sitting day of September 2021.

I am pleased to bring this motion before the Assembly this morning. I do so on behalf of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Canberrans who have specifically asked this of me. I am honoured to be trusted to speak in this place on behalf of them, to raise their concerns and to bring their petition to this government.

I first want to acknowledge some ACT government commitments. These commitments are important because, when it comes to Indigenous incarceration rates, the ACT is performing very poorly. The latest *Prisoners in Australia* report shows

that Canberra has the nation's highest over-representation of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people in prison—21.3 times greater than for non-Indigenous people, using crude rates, and 19 times greater using age-standardised rates.

The 2020 report of the Productivity Commission, which looks at average daily numbers but uses older data, reveals similar figures. The crude imprisonment rate for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people in the ACT across 2018-19 was 18.93 times greater than for non-Indigenous people—just slightly behind Western Australia. When the crude data are adjusted according to age-standardised rates, the ACT has the worst ratio of over-representation in the entire nation, with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people one-third more likely to be locked up than in Australia as a whole. I therefore welcome the government's 2019 commitment to provide \$1.35 million in justice reinvestment funding to help address Indigenous incarceration rates in the ACT.

Justice reinvestment, as defined by the Australia Law Reform Commission, involves the redirection of resources from the criminal justice system into local communities that have a high concentration of incarceration. Done right, this approach addresses the causes of offending, both reducing the rate and creating savings. Locking people up is not just expensive but, very often, too damaging.

Spending on justice reinvestment measures is, therefore, good for the budget but, more importantly, good for individuals, for families and our communities. As Change the Record, a coalition of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander human rights and community organisations, said in their *Blueprint for Change*, we should invest in communities, not prisons. To be effective, a justice reinvestment approach must be done with care and also with wisdom. I sincerely hope that the ACT government will succeed at this endeavour, for everyone's sake.

I likewise support the government's promise, announced in August last year, to commission a review of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander over-representation in the territory's incarceration rates. I am keen to see this review go forward and, hopefully, help lead to good outcomes. I was also happy to read, over the weekend, that the Chief Minister has agreed that more ambitious targets for reducing the rate of Indigenous incarceration and recidivism in the ACT need to be on the agenda. The government's goal of a mere five per cent by 2028 is simply not good enough, so now we need the government to be proactive with this agenda and not just talk.

But the rate at which they and their kin are locked up is not the only issue for First Nations people in Canberra. As I have listened to those who have spoken with me, it has become clear that the experience of incarceration is a major concern as well. An incident that was reported in the media a year ago provides a glimpse into some of what has contributed to these concerns. This incident, which I choose not to discuss in detail, involved a drawing of a hangman game on a whiteboard in a staff-only area of the prison, with the hanged figure labelled with the name of an Indigenous detainee. This incident was, of course, roundly condemned by all involved, but it certainly emphasises the vulnerabilities that can be experienced by those who, deprived of many of their freedoms, may find themselves dependent on those who do not respect them.

This motion is not about the racist actions of any one individual or group of individuals. Interactions that communicate hostile, derogatory or negative racial slights and insults can be labelled as interpersonal racism. Such occurrences are relatively easy to recognise and reject. In contrast, the subject of this motion is institutional or systemic racism, which can be defined as the sometimes unconscious and unintentional embedding of practices, policies or processes within systems or institutions that maintain and reproduce avoidable and unfair inequalities.

Essential to the concept of institutional racism is a focus on the outcomes of activities and processes, rather than on the intentions and attitudes of any individual involved. The best and most decent and most fair people may operate within systems that nonetheless contribute to avoidable inequalities. This is specifically the kind of racism that the Minister for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Affairs recently acknowledged almost certainly exists in the territory's prison. She said:

There is systemic racism right across our community and I think it would be naive to think any part of the ACT Government is the one place where systemic racism does not exist.

The minister is right. This kind of racism is certainly common, but, as I mentioned above, a prison is no ordinary place. It is a place where detainees are placed in an unnatural state of dependence, and therefore vulnerability, and this inevitably amplifies any incidents of institutional racism. A place of incarceration should be one of the very first places to start, especially when one group of people already carrying the multigenerational trauma of displacement and dispossession make up such a large cohort of those affected. It is for this reason that standard 57 of the Healthy Prisons Review insists that "the distinct cultural rights of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander detainees, also protected in the Human Rights Act 2004, must be met".

As noted by the report of the Australian Human Rights Commission's inquiry into Indigenous deaths in custody, these rights include, for example, recognising the special kinship and family obligations of Aboriginal prisoners, and giving favourable consideration to requests for permission to attend funeral services and burials and other occasions of very special family significance.

The appeal that has been specifically put to me, both by Ngunnawal and other First Nations people, is for an independent external inquiry. As a Victorian inquiry found, Indigenous Australians often have a lack of confidence in justice and related institutions. This certainly appears to be the case here in the ACT. For example, the Healthy Prisons Review notes that 43 per cent of detainees at the AMC reported that their needs as an Indigenous person were rarely or never met, and fully 20 per cent of the staff felt that the AMC does not respect or recognise the needs of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people.

Beyond this, other people have shared their personal experiences and the stories of their kin with me. They have made it clear that they have lost confidence in the system, and that something needs to happen to regain their trust. Consequently, all those who have approached me have insisted that an inquiry must be truly

independent and external to the government. Anything less, in their eyes, will be insufficient to help restore their trust in an institution that affects people they know and care about.

My motion calls for this independent inquiry to develop advice and recommendations, the implementation of which can then be tracked by this Assembly. It is my strong belief that this is the right, fair and respectful thing to do. We owe it to the territory's Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people to listen to those who have raised these concerns and to take this action. I commend this motion to the Assembly.

MR GENTLEMAN (Brindabella—Manager of Government Business, Minister for Corrections, Minister for Industrial Relations and Workplace Safety, Minister for Planning and Land Management and Minister for Police and Emergency Services) (10.57): I thank Mrs Kikkert for bringing this motion today. I will move the amendment circulated in my name, which reflects much of what Mrs Kikkert has said already:

Omit all words in (1) (a) after “in 2020, the ACT Government promised to commission” and substitute:

an Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander led review of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander overrepresentation in the Territory's justice system;

- (b) it has been acknowledged that systemic racism exists across our community and addressing systemic racism has been identified as a priority whole-of-government action under the ACT Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Agreement 2019-2028;
- (c) in 2019, the ACT Government committed \$1.35 million in Justice Reinvestment funding to help address the incarceration rates of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people;
- (d) the ACT Government has also provided funding to pilot the Functional Family Therapy program to prevent young people from entering or becoming involved in the justice system, with a particular focus on Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander families;
- (e) the 2020-21 Territory Budget will work with the Territory's local Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community to strengthen services and promote healing and reconciliation, building on investments made in previous budgets;
- (f) the requirement of one Official Visitor appointed under the *Official Visitor Act 2012* to be Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander, with two Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander Official Visitors currently supporting Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander detainees;
- (g) the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Services Committee was established to oversee the delivery of initiatives in the ACT Corrective Services arising from the Justice and Community Services Directorate Reconciliation Plan;
- (h) there are a range of training and programs that custodial officers undertake to support Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander detainees. These include:
 - Cultural Awareness training;

- Indigenous Liaison Officer and Royal Commission into Aboriginal Death in Custody session;
 - Diversity training;
 - Certificate III in Correctional Practice, which covers working effectively with diversity, protecting the safety and welfare of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander offenders and protecting the safety and welfare of vulnerable offenders;
 - Certificate IV Correctional Practice, which covers working effectively with culturally diverse offenders and colleagues; and
- (i) supporting Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people in custody is a key concern for ACT Corrective Services Staff and that they will continue to implement positive initiatives to enable the safe, secure, and humane treatment of offenders in custody; and
- (2) calls on the ACT Government to:
- (a) proceed with the review into over-representation of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people in the ACT justice system in a timely way; and
 - (b) report back to the Assembly on progress by the last sitting day of September 2021.

As members are aware, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people continue to be significantly over-represented in the criminal justice system as both victims and offenders. This is of great concern to all members of the government and, no doubt, this Assembly. Since colonisation, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people have faced oppression, systemic social disadvantage, social exclusion and racism.

The key issues and drivers of the over-representation of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people in the criminal justice system today often stem from these experiences. We know that Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people are affected by intergenerational trauma, poverty, unemployment, higher levels of family separation and violence. These cycles of disadvantage are hard to break.

The ACT has experienced a steady increase in the numbers of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander detainees from 2014 onwards, with a small decrease in the 2019-20 financial year. While the decision to place a person in custody lies with the judiciary, ACT Corrective Services is committed to addressing the over-representation of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people through maximising culturally responsive practices and rehabilitation.

In my short time in this portfolio, I have met with our Corrective Services officers several times and have seen firsthand that they come from all parts of our community and reflect the values of this city. They are committed to the work that they do, the detainees and the community that they serve. I am committed to working with our corrections staff to improve and enhance our service. I am confident that these dedicated officers are devoted to improving inequality. They have a number of initiatives to address this important issue, which I will speak to.

ACT Corrective Services has commenced the development of an Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander offender framework, which will outline best practice principles to assist operational staff in working with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people in custody and under community supervision. The framework will also provide mechanisms to improve social outcomes both during and after incarceration. The framework is due to be completed and launched in mid-2021.

As a precursor to this framework, ACT Corrective Services has developed an Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander policy statement that supports the distinct cultural and other rights of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people to maintain, protect and develop their cultural heritage, language, knowledge and kinship ties under the Human Rights Act 2004.

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander detainees at the AMC are able to access programs, services, and education available to the general AMC population, as well as culturally safe programs and services specific to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people. The AMC has an Indigenous Services Unit which consists of four staff members, including a female Indigenous liaison officer. Indigenous liaison officers provide information on assessing cultural support, community elders, and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultural programs. They can also assist in maintaining connections through acting as a contact point for family and kinship supports in the community.

ACT Corrective Services recognises that culturally appropriate support, activities and events are critical elements to assist Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander detainees to succeed in rehabilitation. In 2020 the newly appointed female Indigenous liaison officer coordinated Indigenous detainee art programs and other community initiatives, including the AMC Indigenous detainee art catalogue. A visual art exhibition, *Totems*, was held, which included 40 detainee artworks selected from this catalogue. The exhibition showcased the connection each artist had to their totem animal, to the spirits of creation and to their traditional lands. This exhibition builds on the successful ACT Corrective Services annual Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander detainee art exhibition, which has been running since 2013 and provides a source of income for Indigenous detainees in custody.

The Indigenous Services Unit has identified opportunities for new programs that provide enhanced interaction between Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander detainees at the AMC, and between female Indigenous detainees and their children in the community. These opportunities will focus on strengthening identity, connection to culture, and resilience as a family unit.

The Elders Family Engagement Program commenced in December 2020 and will be offered on a quarterly basis—March, June, September, December—at the AMC for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander detainees who have extended family members in ACT Corrective Services custody. The engagements will be held in a social lunch setting and include community elders to direct the conversation toward important topics of culture, country and community, which are intrinsic to the wellbeing of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people.

The Elders Family and Culture Program is due to commence following the relaxation of the COVID-19 restrictions and has been developed for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander female detainees who have children in the community. Eligible female detainees will be able to have their children brought into the facility, with the option of including another family member who is at the AMC for specific family and cultural engagements, strengthening cultural connections and maintaining parental and family bonds. This will include activities such as artwork, jewellery making, storytelling or traditional dance, provided by a local Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander service provider.

These new programs build on many other services offered by the ACT Corrective Services Indigenous Services Unit, working in partnership with the community, elders and local service providers. By creating strong partnerships with the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community we know we can achieve positive outcomes for Indigenous people in custody.

As members are aware, in January 2018 Winnunga Nimmityjah Aboriginal Health and Community Services began delivering their holistic Indigenous model of care for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people in the AMC. This service includes primary health care as well as social, emotional and wellbeing services and is an Australian first and a model of successful partnership with an Aboriginal community-controlled health provider.

The ACT government is proactively managing the issues presented by the rise in detainee numbers through strategies such as committing to reducing recidivism by 25 per cent by 2025 and Building Communities, Not Prisons, which enhance supports to reduce reoffending, both in custody and the community. The ACT government provided recurrent funding of \$5.347 million in the 2017-18 budget for the extended throughcare program. This funding includes an additional full-time employee in the designated position of Indigenous throughcare transition officer, to focus on supporting Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander ex-detainees reintegrating into the community. ACT Corrective Services also works closely with Yeddung Mura, which delivers an Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander throughcare support program that provides culturally appropriate support, enabling people to succeed on their journey from custody to community.

ACT Corrective Services is working hard to support and maximise opportunities for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander detainees to maintain links to culture, connection and community. However, we know there is always more work to do to strengthen rehabilitative options and community partnerships. I will continue to work with ACT Corrective Services to address the concerning rate of incarceration of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people in the ACT.

My interest is to find solutions to ensure that we can support and improve the experience of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people as detainees in custody and, more importantly, to stop them entering the justice system in the first place. Regarding the former, I have met with Ms Tongs and have asked her to work with me to find solutions and opportunities for improvement at ACT Corrective Services.

As I have said, we need to address the broader issue of having too many of our Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Canberrans in the justice system in the first place. This is not an issue that can be solved by focusing on one part of the justice system; it requires a whole-of-government approach and a review led by our Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community. I also recognise that each part of our justice system works hard to address the challenge of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander incarceration. But we can and should do better.

I am supportive of this initiative, initiated by Minister Stephen-Smith and the former Attorney-General, and I am pleased that my colleague Minister Rattenbury is committed to leading this broader work and reporting back to the Assembly on progress in September. I will assist in any way I can. The over-representation of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people in the criminal justice system is a challenge across Australia. We all need to work together, beyond partisan lines, to address this challenge. I am hopeful that the Attorney-General, through the review, can assist in identifying solutions.

MR RATTENBURY (Kurrajong—Attorney-General, Minister for Consumer Affairs, Minister for Gaming and Minister for Water, Energy and Emissions Reduction) (11.08): I welcome the opportunity to discuss these very important issues today. Much has already been said in debate about the over-representation of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people, both in the corrections system and in the justice system more broadly.

A number of statistics have been cited. I am always struck by the fact that in the ACT around 1.6 per cent of the population of the whole city is First Nations people, but they tend to be 22 to 25 per cent of the population in our jail at any one time. This is clearly a significant over-representation and one that we must seek to address—and one that I have been seeking to address in my various roles in this place.

We have a number of strategies already in place. Clearly, we need to continue to really focus on those areas. I think that the one thing that we can agree on is that this problem has built up over a sustained period of time and we cannot keep doing what we have always done. We need to make sure that we do not have just more reports but that we look at some of the existing reports and really focus on implementing recommendations that have come from some of those earlier reports. In many ways, we know a lot of the answers, but we need to really focus on action to get those done.

The ACT has put in place the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Agreement, which has a particular focus on justice. I think there are some strong and positive issues in there. The government has adopted an approach focused on justice reinvestment. This has been spoken about in the debate already. I think it is a very important approach, where we seek to invest the money at the front end of the system, rather than simply continuing to build larger and larger jails which will see more people end up incarcerated, and particularly more Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people. The goal of reducing recidivism by 25 per cent by 2025, I think, will have a particularly proportionate impact on our Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities.

At the last election the Greens took a policy that we wanted to see parity between the rate of incarceration of both Indigenous and non-Indigenous people. As we have spoken about today, it is far higher for First Nations Australians. I think having that goal of parity by 2030 is extremely ambitious, but that is the goal we should set for ourselves because the current situation is not an acceptable one. That therefore requires concerted effort across a range of areas. There is no single answer to address this problem. It is a series of deliberate decisions, deliberate efforts and deliberate investment to make sure that we turn things around for the First Nations people of our community.

There are, of course, already a number of programs in place that, I think, are proving effective, that have often, though, been in trial stages and now need to be scaled up. Certainly, in my new role as the Attorney-General, I look forward to seeking to continue to get funding directed toward these programs and to seeing the ones that have been successful scaled up. Regarding the ones where, perhaps, some things are not right, we should be willing to put those to one side and try new initiatives.

I think these are the sorts of things that will continue to come from engagement with the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community, where the feedback comes, where the programs that are working get supported and where people have new ideas, or new players who come into the scene get an opportunity to trial new things.

There are a range of programs that I could talk about that I think are having an impact, but I will touch on just a few because I think they illustrate the sorts of initiatives that we need to take: ones that have been supported by the community and do make a difference, programs like the Ngurrumbai bail support program, where we seek to make sure that people develop plans to address their immediate needs and set goals to assist compliance. We see that a range of justice procedure offences often result in people either breaching their bail or ending up back in custody and getting further entrenched in the justice system.

This is matched with the Front-Up program, which is a program to assist First Nations people with outstanding warrants or who have breached bail or a community-based sentence order, to assist them to present in court and negotiate to resolve the matter while trying to avoid custody. These are both programs that have been operating for a number of years now and really focus on making sure that Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people do not end up in custody. These are the sorts of investments we should be making to keep people out of the Alexander Maconochie Centre, to help them meet the conditions of their bail, or to simply not end up with those sorts of justice procedure offences which are a real trigger for people getting more and more entrenched in the justice system.

Another program which I think has been very successful is the Yarrabi Bamirr program. This is a partnership predominantly led by the Winnunga Nimmityjah Aboriginal Health and Community Services which seeks to target families who are at risk of involvement with the criminal justice system.

Winnunga's leadership is particularly important here because they know the families in their community. We have seen, through that program, not just impacts on people's interactions with the criminal justice system but other outcomes such as an improved rate of children attending school and better engagement with health services. So we are seeing here outcomes that improve Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people's whole lives and, in many ways, go to addressing a range of targets under the Closing the Gap programs. These are the sorts of programs where the leadership of Winnunga, I think, has been particularly important.

There are legislative reforms that we can take that will make a difference. I was pleased last term, in my capacity as justice minister, to bring through parole time credit. This is, again, impacting on all detainees but particularly those in our Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities. We were getting feedback that people were not seeking parole because they felt that the previous system set up the wrong incentives and if they had a minor breach they would end up back in custody, having to serve the balance of their sentence, whereas now they will be rewarded for their successful time in the community without breaching.

I highlight this because it goes back to my earlier point. There is no single answer here. There are a series of steps we can take that will make a significant difference for people who are seeking to get their lives back on track and make sure that the system is supporting them to do that where possible.

The drug and alcohol court is another example. I think that this therapeutic approach to justice, which seeks to target underlying behavioural issues, drug dependencies, mental health issues for people who find themselves involved in the criminal justice system, particularly Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people, is an important initiative that needs further work. The drug and alcohol court has been operating for just over a year now and I think that it is important to see how these things are operating and to continue to seek to make improvement.

Similarly, the Galambany Circle Sentencing Court and the Warrumbul Youth Circle Sentencing Court are initiatives which seek to bring elders in our community in to support people of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander heritage who find themselves involved in the criminal justice system. All of these things can play a part.

In terms of the specific motion today, I wanted to indicate that the Greens will be supporting Minister Gentleman's amendment.

Ms Lee: Surprise!

Mrs Kikkert: Did you all work together?

MR RATTENBURY: Actually, we are seeking to work together to tackle these issues.

Ms Lee: It was nice that we were invited to the party then, wasn't it?

MR RATTENBURY: We are seeking to work together to solve these important issues because they go beyond snide remarks in the chamber.

Members interjecting—

MR ASSISTANT SPEAKER (Mr Pettersson): The member will be heard in silence.

MR RATTENBURY: They actually go to really important social issues.

Members interjecting—

MR ASSISTANT SPEAKER: Members! Mrs Jones! Mr Rattenbury.

MR RATTENBURY: This is about getting the best possible outcomes. My particular responsibility in this, as the Attorney-General, will be to take on working with our Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities to proceed with the review into over-representation that was committed to by the previous Attorney-General just before we went into caretaker mode.

The way I intend to proceed with this is, over the near future, to start to meet with members of the community informally to get some guidance so that we design this in the right way, to look at how much of previous inquiries warrants further work, and also get to community input into how we put a process together that gets the best possible outcomes.

I do not have a predetermined view on what it is going to look like. We have a direction. Minister Stephen-Smith and I have discussed this in light of the commitment she and the former attorney made late last term. We have some ideas, but we are keen to get community input into what that looks like, how we structure it and who should be involved. Those are the consultations we will be undertaking in the first part of this year. I look forward to reporting back to the Assembly in September 2021 on the progress of that work.

MS STEPHEN-SMITH (Kurrajong—Minister for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Affairs, Minister for Families and Community Services and Minister for Health) (11.18): I rise to speak in support of Minister Gentleman's amendment, but in doing so I want to thank Mrs Kikkert for bringing forward this motion today, in her new role as the Canberra Liberals spokesperson for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander affairs. This is a very important issue and I welcome the opportunity to discuss it in the Assembly.

The motion acknowledges, as does the amendment, that institutional racism exists across our society, and I think that is important. Institutional racism does not necessarily manifest in overt individual acts of racism but as a fundamental inequality of systems and processes. Institutional racism is the subtle undercurrent that defines every instance where our laws, bureaucracies and institutions fail to deliver equal outcomes for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people.

But institutional or systemic racism can also mean an environment in which those individual acts of racism that we all know do occur from time to time are not called out or addressed. The recent discussion of Collingwood Football Club's experience has highlighted the devastating impact that institutional racism can have on individuals and ultimately on organisations.

In the ACT, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community leaders have been proactive in pushing the government to do more and do better in relation to outcomes for their community, and this includes the ACT Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Elected Body, which has identified that addressing systemic racism must be a whole-of-government priority under the ACT Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Agreement.

The over-representation of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people in our justice system is an issue of deep concern to the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities and to the ACT government. The ACT Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Agreement 2019-2028 includes justice as a significant focus area. The government is committed to building on our justice reinvestment approach to deliver on the targets of the agreement. In national discussions on Closing the Gap targets, the ACT consistently supported strong and ambitious targets for justice and youth justice.

For our own justice system as a whole, we have set a target to reduce recidivism by 25 per cent by 2025. We have said that we want to build communities, not prisons. But there is no doubt that we have more to do to achieve these targets. We know that there is no single answer, but we also know that the best answers, the answers most likely to deliver real change, will come from the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities themselves.

The most effective services, the supports that are most likely to change the lives of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander individuals and families will be delivered by Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people and organisations. That is why the then Attorney General, Gordon Ramsay, and I last year committed to a review of the over-representation of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people in the justice system that would be led by the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities.

For me, this is in a similar way to the Our Booris, Our Way review that has been led, steered and driven by a wholly Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander steering committee and has delivered real change—not as fast as we would all like to see but real change in addressing the over-representation of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children and families in the child protection system in numbers and experience.

That has been an eye-opening experience, I think, for the Community Services Directorate and for the ACT government in the way that we work with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people. For this review, it is important that it is not seen as a first step, nor as the last step, and certainly not as the only step in our efforts to eliminate institutional racism and the over-representation of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people in the justice system.

My hope is that this review will bring together all of the stakeholders and agencies who are involved in determining the experience of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people in the justice system and will shine a light on the system in its entirety, informed by the lived experience of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people themselves, so that we can clearly see what steps are next on our long journey to true equality.

I am pleased that the government's amendments to Mrs Kikkert's motion provide the opportunity for the Assembly to endorse this important work, and I look forward to seeing this progress. I also acknowledge the significant work that is already underway in this space, some of which is included in the government's amendments to this motion and which Minister Gentleman and Minister Rattenbury have outlined in their comments. I recognise that Mrs Kikkert also acknowledged a number of those investments that we have already been making.

We must also keep doing, as we did with *Our Booris, Our Way*—investing in family group conferencing and functional family therapy at the same time that we were progressing the review. We must keep investing in those things that we know are already making a difference and those things that have an evidence base elsewhere: things like Yarrabi Bamirr justice reinvestment program that both ministers have spoken about, which started as a trial with Winnunga Nimmityjah Aboriginal Health and Community Services, expanded to include the Aboriginal Legal Service and the Women's Legal Centre, and now has ongoing funding.

Yarrabi Bamirr is a family-centric support model, working with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander families to improve life outcomes and reduce or prevent contact with the justice system, particularly in relation to transgenerational offending. More recently, my colleague Ms Davidson, the Assistant Minister for Families and Community Services, announced the commencement of a trial of functional family therapy youth justice, which has been funded through the confiscated assets trust as part of the ACT government's work towards raising the minimum age of criminal responsibility.

This pilot, to be delivered by OzChild, builds on the success of functional family therapy child welfare which is delivered by OzChild and Gugan Gulwan Youth Aboriginal Corporation. The success of these types of programs and more, including programs run by Yeddung Mura Aboriginal Corporation and Tjillari Justice Aboriginal Corporation, highlights a number of things.

Firstly, it is not enough to intervene in one individual's life at the point where they are incarcerated, or even at the point at which they interact with police and the courts. This is critically important, and I take Mrs Kikkert's point that people who are incarcerated are in a position where they deserve the protection of the community and they need the protection of the community. While that is critically important, working with families and communities and delivering early support for children and young people is what will change the trajectory of people's lives.

Secondly, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander led and delivered programs are what make the real difference. As I have said before in this place, while we here can intellectually understand the experience of intergenerational trauma and institutional racism, while we can empathise and do our very best to work in culturally safe ways, we simply cannot live this experience in the way that Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people and organisations do.

That is why one of the priorities identified for the healing and reconciliation fund is supporting the growth of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community-controlled organisations, in line with the priorities identified and commitments made in the National Agreement on Closing the Gap. Over the weekend, the Chief Minister, the Deputy Chief Minister and I announced the initial investment to establish the \$20 million healing and reconciliation fund, alongside additional funding to support the new building for Gugan Gulwan Youth Aboriginal Corporation and to deliver on the recommendations of the Our Booris, Our Way review.

The healing and reconciliation fund will be co-designed with the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities to support our commitments under the National Agreement on Closing the Gap and the ACT Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Agreement 2019-2028. Both agreements include specific targets to address the over-representation of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people in the justice system, and these are commitments we take very seriously.

I commend the government's amendment to the Assembly.

MS DAVIDSON (Murrumbidgee—Assistant Minister for Families and Community Services, Minister for Disability, Minister for Justice Health and Minister for Mental Health) (11.26): As noted by the previous speakers, systemic racism exists across our community. It is the responsibility of each one of us to be conscious of our own biases and attitudes, and to work collectively for a more inclusive, fair and respectful society, free from prejudice and discrimination.

When a person is detained in a corrections facility with less access to support networks and advocates than they would have in the community, it is even more important that we ensure that human rights are protected. For this reason, there is independent oversight of incidents and systemic issues within the Alexander Maconochie Centre, including by the Human Rights Commission, official visitors, and the Inspector of Correctional Services.

The recent incident at AMC has brought to my attention that the Minister for Justice Health cannot refer an incident to the inspector for potential investigation. Only the Minister for Corrections can refer matters. This applies even if justice health staff are involved in an incident or if the health and wellbeing of a detainee is impacted by an incident.

I understand that the Minister for Corrections will refer this most recent incident to the inspector, and I thank Minister Gentleman for his efforts to ensure that the matter is independently investigated. A broader independent inquiry could identify any other

systemic improvements that might be needed, whether to procedures within AMC, regulatory processes, or culture. For that reason, I support the government's amendments.

MS LEE (Kurrajong—Leader of the Opposition) (11.28): I had not planned to speak on this motion, but after having listened to the debate and the previous speakers, I could not help but get on my feet.

Mrs Kikkert brought a very important motion to this Assembly. This is a significant issue, not only for our Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community but for the entire Canberra community. I commend Mrs Kikkert for bringing on this motion, drafted in a way designed to bring all the parties together and work together on an issue that is of such importance. But no. Despite all the rhetoric about this ACT Greens party coming in under the guise of bringing in a new normal, what we see is business as usual.

This sorry excuse for an amendment by Minister Gentleman is patronising and completely misses the entire point of Mrs Kikkert's motion. There is Minister Gentleman, who has taken on this portfolio, hiding and protecting the former failed Minister for Corrections and talking about calling on the ACT government to "proceed with the review in a timely way" and "report back by the last sitting day of September 2021".

We are talking about issues of systemic racism; he talks about putting on lunches and jewellery-making classes. We are talking about issues of systemic racism and he spruiks everything that apparently—apparently—works. The truth is that we know it does not. The stats speak for themselves.

Mr Rattenbury quoted those stats. They are staggering—staggering. And it has all happened under the watch of this Labor-Greens coalition. It is fine for Mr Rattenbury to come into this place and say, "It is not about reports. It is about action and implementation." You have had 20 years to do this—20 years. Don't come into this place, patronise our Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community and say, "It's not about more talk." You have had your time. You have failed time and again.

As Ms Stephen-Smith said, we cannot even begin to understand what it is like. But as somebody who has faced at least a little bit of racism all my life—the sad reality being that I probably always will—I will tell you what does not help: talking the talk by people in power and not taking action. That is what does not help.

This amendment by this government shows that they are willing to sweep this issue under the carpet, that they are willing to turn a blind eye and leave behind our Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community. That is a government that does not deserve to be here.

MRS KIKKERT (Ginninderra) (11.31): The motion that I have brought before the Assembly today is an important one. It represents the clear request of many Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Canberrans. I am deeply disappointed that those

opposite do not have enough respect for this request to accept the need for an independent external inquiry. In fact, they do not have enough respect for this request or the lived experiences behind it to accept the need for a separate inquiry of any kind. What a shame and what a missed opportunity to rebuild the confidence and trust in the system.

The Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people who have spoken to me are specifically concerned about the possibility of systemic racism impacting the operation of the AMC once people are locked up. Though systemic racism also almost certainly contributes to the problem of over-representation in incarceration rates, this is clearly a separate issue. You all know that. Merely promising to proceed with the review into overrepresentation misses the entire point of this motion and what our Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander friends are seeking.

I am disappointed, but sadly not surprised, considering this government's known track record over many years. I strongly suspect that many Indigenous Australians in the ACT will see the decision made by you lot to ignore their request as further evidence of institutional and systemic racism. Congratulations. Abandoning those on the inside, sweeping racism under the rug, this whole debate is a distraction from the issue of racism within the facility of the AMC.

I am deeply disappointed at the government's stubborn refusal to have an independent inquiry into institutional and systemic racism at the AMC. They have not listened to the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people. By dismissing this inquiry, they are not respecting them. By saying no to this important inquiry, they have placed racist treatment of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people as being not very important.

It is easy for someone who is white and privileged, who has never experienced racism, to behave this way and to come to this disappointing conclusion. As someone who has been a victim of racial hate, let me say that it is painful and can paralyse an individual at their lowest point in life.

For people and the government—you lot—not to listen to the pleas and the cries of our Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people within the ACT, shame on you. I say to each and every one of you in the cabinet room who decided to amend this important inquiry into systemic racism, "Shame on you." You have no respect for our Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people. You have no respect for their feelings. You have no respect for their experiences. Don't come into this Assembly and pretend you do with your words. You know what? They know it. They know that you do not care. You have just proven that today.

For this reason, I oppose this soft, disrespectful response to my motion with their non-answer amendment.

Question put:

That the amendment be agreed to.

The Assembly voted—

Ayes 16

Noes 9

Mr Barr	Ms Orr	Mr Cain
Ms Berry	Dr Paterson	Ms Castley
Mr Braddock	Mr Pettersson	Mr Coe
Ms Burch	Mr Rattenbury	Mr Hanson
Ms Cheyne	Mr Steel	Mrs Jones
Ms Clay	Ms Stephen-Smith	Mrs Kikkert
Ms Davidson	Ms Vassarotti	Ms Lawder
Mr Davis		Ms Lee
Mr Gentleman		Mr Parton

Amendment agreed to.

Original question, as amended, resolved in the affirmative.

Sitting suspended from 11.40 am to 2.00 pm.

Questions without notice

Hospitals—emergency department performance

MS LEE: My question is to the Minister for Health. In January the latest *Report on Government Services* was released, showing that just 48 per cent of emergency department patients were seen on time in ACT hospitals, the worst result in Australia. In response, you told the ABC:

... our target—and the national target—is 70 per cent. We are nowhere near that at this point in time. We want to get to that target within nine months.

Minister, if by the end of October 2021 the target of 70 per cent of all ED patients seen on time is not met, what will be the consequences for you and your government, and, more importantly, the Canberra public?

MS STEPHEN-SMITH: I thank the Leader of the Opposition for her question. She is, as some in the media have done, conflating two issues. The 70 per cent target that I was talking about is what is called the NEAT—the number of people who are seen within the emergency department and either admitted to the hospital or discharged to home within four hours. It is one of the national measurements in relation to the performance of emergency departments.

Of course, there is a relationship between the people who are seen and have their treatments started within clinically recommended times and the speed with which people are seen in the emergency department and either then discharged to home or admitted into the hospital.

With that clarification, I have been having a lot of conversations with Canberra Health Services, as I have talked about in this place many times over the last 18 months,

about how we improve the emergency department performance. Part of that has been about the rest of the hospital, and how we improve the flow through the emergency department into the hospital. That is the timely care strategy that we have talked about a number of times.

I also acknowledged on radio—and this goes to the exact question by the Leader of the Opposition—in my interview, which was a 10-minute sit-down interview with a journalist, of which, as you are aware, Madam Speaker, a very short amount was played, that we are trying to deliver change in a very busy, 24/7 environment. It is not just at Canberra Hospital; it is also at Calvary. Canberra Hospital has one of the busiest emergency departments in the country. It sees a lot of different types of activity. We then need to change processes within that 24/7 environment. We will continue to work to do that. We have a range of strategies in place. If October comes around and we have not, I guess we will see what happens.

MS LEE: Minister, given that your government has failed to meet these targets for several years now, what is different this time?

MS STEPHEN-SMITH: As I was saying, we have taken a very whole-of-hospital and whole-of-system approach to this. We have focused, within the rest of the hospital, outside the emergency department, on ensuring that people can be discharged in a timely way. The red-to-green strategy identifies barriers to discharge and gets patients discharged from the hospital in a timely way, to free up those beds in the rest of the hospital for the emergency department, to address what is commonly known as bed block. There are still some issues when we have high levels of mental health patients, but across the rest of the hospital that strategy is now working extremely well.

To connect the emergency department to the rest of the hospital, we have established a process in both Calvary and Canberra hospitals so that they are now doing direct admissions into wards. That enables people within the emergency department to admit onto a hospital ward rather than having to wait for a consultant to come down from the rest of the hospital to agree to that admission.

There is rapid assessment by senior clinicians to improve the flow through the emergency department and identify when people do need to be admitted. There is increased sharing of information, looking at what other jurisdictions are doing in their emergency departments, so that we can learn from where other jurisdictions have had success within the emergency department.

A range of things have been considered within the emergency department itself, from the beginning of triage right through to the fast-track process, and having senior clinicians in charge of ensuring that people get through the process where they are going to be discharged from the emergency department to home, and having someone at the back end who is really in charge of making sure that those people who are going to be admitted are being admitted in a timely way. So it really is a whole-of-hospital at Canberra Hospital and a whole-of-system with Calvary approach to addressing this issue.

MRS JONES: Minister, given that you are already walking back your commitment, is this an early admission that you do not expect to be able to achieve it?

MS STEPHEN-SMITH: I reject the premise of the question.

Hospitals—emergency department performance

MRS JONES: Madam Speaker, my question is to the Minister for Health. I refer to the latest *Report on Government Services*, showing that the ACT had the worst performing emergency department in Australia by the statistics. In your response to the media you said:

It is something that we talk about every single week at my catch-up with Canberra Health Services.

Minister, apart from talking about it every single week, what are you and your government doing to fix the worst emergency department results in the country?

MS STEPHEN-SMITH: I thank Mrs Jones for her question. I do note, and I have said before, that our emergency department outcomes and timeliness are not where we want them to be. But I also note, for the record, that interjurisdictional comparisons are not really an apples-to-apples comparison when you compare the whole of the ACT to other jurisdictions around the country.

I have already talked in my previous answers about a number of the things that we are doing to address this. One thing that I have not had an opportunity to speak about is what we do at the front end to try to ensure that people who do not need to be at the emergency department are not presenting to the emergency department.

That includes our incredibly popular and successful nurse-led walk-in centres, which are able to treat minor injuries and illnesses closer to home for people, with our really excellent advanced practice nurses and nurse practitioners providing that treatment to people. We have a commitment now to expanding the Weston Creek walk-in centre with a new imaging service that has been announced and will be included in the budget that is being brought down today. That will enable people to get those imaging services outside of the hospital as well.

It also includes the Geriatric Rapid Acute Care Evaluation service, or GRACE, which is run out of Calvary Public Hospital but is now covering all residential aged-care facilities across the city and is working with Canberra Hospital now as well. The trial of that program saw a reduction, if memory serves correctly, in the number of people coming into hospital through the emergency department of about 25 per cent of residential aged-care residents. It is better for them and better for the hospital system if they do not have to come to hospital unnecessarily because they can be treated at home. They are just a couple of examples of the things that we are doing.

MRS JONES: Minister, given the history of these statistics and what has not been achieved by your government, what will be different from now on that will actually achieve an outcome in the statistical profile that we have?

MS STEPHEN-SMITH: I thank Mrs Jones for the supplementary. Some of the things that we had started in February last year did get disrupted by COVID. I do not want to use that as an excuse, because I know that, as Mrs Jones has said, this has been an issue in the ACT system for some time. But we did have quite a clear set of priorities in place in February last year, which, obviously, it was going to be difficult to implement in the COVID environment, although we saw improved outcomes with fewer presentations at our emergency departments in the first half of last year.

The real focus that the leadership of Canberra Health Services and Calvary have put on this issue, and the message that they are sending to our hospitals, is that this is a whole-of-hospital responsibility: that everybody has a role to play in ensuring that patient flow is working appropriately, that patients can be admitted when they need to be admitted, and also that there are things we can do within the emergency department to improve this outcome. This is a continuous focus. It is a challenge. It is about delivering change in a busy 24/7 environment—one of the busiest emergency departments in the country at Canberra Hospital and a very busy emergency department also at Calvary. So it absolutely is a challenge, but we are very focused on meeting this challenge.

MS LEE: Minister, if you are confident in being able to fix the emergency department wait times within the next nine months, why have you not done it sooner?

MS STEPHEN-SMITH: I thank the Leader of the Opposition for the supplementary question. As I mentioned in one of my earlier answers, there were quite a number of strategies in place from February last year that could not be implemented for various reasons, including the disruption around COVID. But what has been implemented and what is now working well across the hospital is that whole-of-hospital approach, improving the capacity to discharge patients in a timely fashion—things like the all-care discharge lounge. People can be discharged into the discharge lounge even if they need some ongoing support because they are going to be returned to a residential aged-care facility or a home-based environment where they require some ongoing support.

There is still more work to do in terms of collaboration with Hospital in the Home. There are a range of strategies that we need to put in place. But, as I have said, one of the key challenges is that we are trying to deliver change in a busy 24/7 environment where people have a lot of things being thrown at them all day every day. We cannot take everybody off site and have a bit of a yak about it, have a bit of a brainstorm and then come back and practise for two days what our new arrangements are going to look like. We actually need to deliver change in a 24/7 environment. That is our key challenge, but we are very focused on achieving that.

Schools—hazardous materials

MR HANSON: My question is to the Minister for Education and Youth Affairs. Minister, more than 69 schools are affected by lead paint or asbestos. Some \$15 million has been allocated to address this issue and an Assembly inquiry has recently been established. During the last sitting's question time you were asked about

these schools, and you have not addressed which schools they are. You have not listed them. That information is yet to be provided, and teachers and parents remain in the dark. Minister, why will you not tell parents if their child's school is affected by hazardous materials and advise parents what is being done in each school to ensure that their children are not exposed?

MS BERRY: I thank Mr Hanson for the question. Mr Hanson knows, and I have repeatedly said, that the number of schools that have hazardous materials—and that includes lead paint—is 73. Those schools have hazardous material plans and fact sheets at the front office. All those school communities can access those fact sheets at any time, and that is the best way to get the most informed information about what is going on in an individual school.

I would rather not have individual schools notified or have fingers pointed at them or a scaremongering project conducted by the Liberal Party on an issue that is being dealt with, based on advice from the experts. I absolutely cannot agree with the question that parents and school communities are not aware. They can be aware; they can go to their schools and they can access that information.

MR HANSON: Minister, will you provide that information to parents so that they are aware of what is affected in their school and what is being done to address it, rather than requiring them to all go to the front desk and dig for that information?

MS BERRY: I think I have answered the question already: the information is available. They do not need to dig for it; they need to just ask for it from the front office.

MR PARTON: Minister, when will the hazardous materials be removed and remediated from these 70-odd schools, and at what cost?

MS BERRY: The ACT government takes its advice on the management of lead paint in our schools from the experts. The experts will guide the work that the ACT government has committed to, with the \$15 million, which will be prioritised across schools that need that remediation done more immediately.

The experts tell us that the best way to manage lead paint in schools is to encapsulate it with non-lead paint. That ensures that it is safe for students, teachers and the school community to occupy those school environments. The ACT government always acts on the advice of experts. In this case we have set up a task force within the Education Directorate and we have set up an expert panel to guide us and guide the task force in managing lead paint in our schools, as is appropriate, based on expert advice.

Gungahlin—swimming pool

MR BRADDOCK: My question is to the Minister for Sport and Recreation. Minister, the Gungahlin pool tiles first started falling off in June 2020, causing the closure of this much loved and utilised pool. Can you please provide an update to the Assembly on the government's management of this issue.

MS BERRY: I thank Mr Braddock for his question. I know that the Gungahlin community and the members for Yerrabi have been very disappointed and frustrated at the closure of Gungahlin pool, in June. It is incredibly frustrating, and I share the community's frustration. I understand that the issues that are occurring at the pool are based on the tiles falling off and that there will be repairs done to the pool to remediate the membrane and the tiles in the pool. That will be publicised in about hour by the Chief Minister, in the budget.

MS BERRY: I understand the concern of the community, so as soon as I have information about how that incident occurred at the pool I will provide that to the Assembly.

Mr Hanson: We do not have to go to the front desk for that!

MADAM SPEAKER: Mr Hanson, that is enough.

MR BRADDOCK: Minister, when is the pool scheduled to be ready for use by Gungahlin residents?

MS BERRY: I really do not have an answer on that at the moment. I know that that will be frustrating for the community as well. As soon as I have some advice on the extent of the repairs, the cost of the repairs and the length of the time that the pool will be closed to do those repairs, I will make sure that I provide that detail to the Assembly and to the community. I just do not have that information—

Mr Hanson: Why don't we get all this information—

MADAM SPEAKER: Mr Hanson, please!

MS BERRY: I just do not have that information to hand at the moment. Again, the government is taking the advice of experts on the repairs that need to be made at the pool, and when we have that advice in full detail I will provide that information.

Mr Hanson: They are pretty sensitive about their dorothy dixers from last time.

MADAM SPEAKER: Mr Hanson, that is three times I have called you to order; do not make it four.

MS CLAY: Minister, given that the pool was built just six years ago, will ratepayers be required to pay for the repairs?

MS BERRY: I refer the member to my previous answers. As soon as I have some more information that I can provide to the Assembly and the community, I will.

Schools—infrastructure projects

DR PATERSON: My question is to the Minister for Education and Youth Affairs. Minister, last week was an exciting week for students, the first week of the 2020-21 school year. How did students settle back into school?

Opposition members interjecting—

MADAM SPEAKER: It's the start of the year for the Assembly as well, so we're all excited about it.

MS BERRY: Thank you, Madam Speaker. It is a really great question because it is always an exciting but sometimes nervous time for students and teachers, and families as well. Mrs Jones and I were just talking this morning about our own children settling—

Opposition members interjecting—

MS BERRY: Well, I did ask her how her kids were going, returning to school, because it can be an interesting time for everybody. It is mostly an exciting time and a time that most families will remember and enjoy for many years. I was happy to be there at Evelyn Scott School, our 89th public school, at Denman Prospect in Dr Paterson's electorate. It was so wonderful to be down there and share that experience with young people and their families.

It was exciting to walk through a brand-new school that built that culture from the start. I know that the school principal, Jackie Vaughan, was really keen to make sure that the students and the school community were part of building that culture from the very start. I cannot wait to see how that school grows, how it develops and how its culture develops. I know that the Denman Prospect community were so excited to have that school ready to go from the start of this year.

DR PATERSON: Thank you, Minister. I was wondering if you could please give the Assembly some more information on the Evelyn Scott School and how it will serve the community of Denman Prospect.

MS BERRY: The 89th public school, Evelyn Scott, enjoyed the experiences of 187 students who enrolled in that school and started their first school day on Monday or Tuesday of last week. There were many excited parents and children attending on the day. The approach to learning at the Evelyn Scott School is based on the foundation principles of the future of education strategy, and that is around equity and inclusion. You will see that in everything that that school does with regard to teaching and learning, and in how its facilities are open and available for the Denman Prospect community as well.

That school is a zero emissions school, purpose-built for future-focused learning—something that the school principal is absolutely dedicated to do for those young people at that school. There will be 600 places available for students at that school, with a purpose-built gymnasium being available for use from May this year. The high school is under construction and it will open in the first week of term 1 in 2023. I know, just from that visit to the Evelyn Scott School last week, how proud those families in Denman Prospect are of their new school being brought to life by very talented teachers.

MS ORR: Minister, now that Evelyn Scott School has opened, what are the next school infrastructure projects to cater for our growing city?

MS BERRY: I thank Ms Orr for the question. Last week the Chief Minister and I announced \$27.4 million in the budget to progress work to build new schools and expand existing schools in Gungahlin. The funding will go to design and preparation work for a new high school in Taylor and the expansion of Margaret Hendry School in Taylor as well. It will also go towards supporting road infrastructure for the new suburb of Kenny and enabling works for a new high school there.

Margaret Hendry School will be expanded to cater for up to 600 additional primary school students, ready for the 2023 year. The new high school in Kenny will be available for 800 students, in time for the 2023 school year. The new high school in Taylor will have capacity for 800 students and will be open in time for 2024. But before then, Canberra will also see expansions to Gold Creek senior school and Amaroo School, as well the new primary school in Throsby, which will be opening in the 2022 school year.

Health—nurse-led walk-in centres

MS CLAY: My question is to the Minister for Health and it relates to the proposed west Belconnen walk-in centre. Minister, with the recent closure of the National Health Co-op in Charnwood, when will the residents of Charnwood and west Belconnen be able to access affordable and timely care at a walk-in centre in west Belconnen?

MS STEPHEN-SMITH: I thank Ms Clay for the question. The National Health Co-op is an important model of health care and we were all disappointed with the closure of the Charnwood clinic. That was bad news for many people and a very real example of the wide-ranging impacts of COVID-19 last year. I was pleased at the time that the National Health Co-op was able to relocate its clinicians to clinics in Macquarie and Higgins to provide continuity of care for its patients in Belconnen. Indeed, Belconnen and west Belconnen are some of the best-served parts of Canberra when it comes to accessible GP bulk-billing. There is another bulk-billing practice in Charnwood. From that point of view, the people of Belconnen are relatively well served, considering it is the ACT, when it comes to general practice bulk-billing and primary care.

In relation to our commitment to a new walk-in health centre in west Belconnen, it is important first to understand that this model of care will not be the same as the current walk-in centres. This will provide both immediate care and also ongoing care coordination and preventive health care for the people of the local region.

The budget that the Chief Minister will bring down shortly includes \$2 million for feasibility for the four new walk-in health centres in west Belconnen, north Gungahlin, south Tuggeranong and the inner south. That will start the conversation with the community about exactly what is needed, where it is needed and where it could go within the west Belconnen region. Through that work, we will determine the order in which those four new walk-in health centres will be delivered and what exactly they will deliver for local communities, delivering exceptional health care closer to home.

MS CLAY: Minister, when will the government announce the location for the new walk-in centre in west Belconnen, and will it include mental health and dental health?

MS STEPHEN-SMITH: I thank Ms Clay for the supplementary question. We will be doing this feasibility work, and part of that will be determining the order in which the four new walk-in health centres will be delivered. As I just said, there will be work with the community as well as with clinicians and others, as part of our territory-wide health services planning, to determine which services will go into those centres. Belconnen is already served with a walk-in centre in Belconnen town centre and a community health centre in Belconnen. The services in Belconnen have recently been expanded to include an opioid replacement therapy service in the north part of Canberra, which is a really significant expansion of that service, so that people do not need to travel to Canberra Hospital to access that service.

We continue to deliver improved services right across the city. Belconnen Community Health Centre includes mental health services. That will be part of the conversation with the community: exactly what will go into that new centre.

MR DAVIS: Minister, did the government consider assisting the National Health Co-op to retain its Charnwood location?

MS STEPHEN-SMITH: We were informed of the National Health Co-op's decision to close its Charnwood clinic and we were advised that there was not anything that the ACT government could do. We have, of course, over time, invested considerable amounts in boosting GP bulk-billing across the ACT. As I mentioned earlier, Belconnen, particularly west Belconnen, is one of the best-served parts of the ACT when it comes to bulk-billing, and Charnwood itself does have a family owned and operated practice that offers bulk-billing to all patients with a valid Medicare card.

As I said earlier, those patients who had attended the Charnwood National Health Co-op were able to continue to access services at other National Health Co-op clinics. Patients who have seen a GP from the National Health Co-op in the last 12 months are also able to have a telehealth appointment with the Health Co-op. And, as part of our response to COVID-19, the ACT government has worked with Carers ACT to undertake a project to identify and address barriers to accessing and taking up telehealth opportunities for individuals. We know that is not going to be accessible for everybody, but we will continue to work with the National Health Co-op as well in the delivery of the new walk-in health centre in Molonglo, which is going to be collocated with the National Health Co-op there, delivering outstanding ACT public health services, particularly in maternal and child and family health, alongside and integrated with general practice services.

Schools—hazardous materials

MR COE: I have a question for the Minister for Education and Youth Affairs. Last week it was revealed that lead contamination at eight times the acceptable level had been found at Richardson Primary School. Minister, at that school, prior to the remediation, how many children and staff were exposed to the paint?

MS BERRY: The lead dust that was found at Richardson Primary School was found in the HVAC system, not across the school classrooms, so there was no exposure to anybody that made it unsafe.

MR COE: Minister, what action have you taken to inform the parents of current and past students of the school about the finding of the paint?

MS BERRY: The lead paint at Richardson Primary School is lead paint that is post 1965, so there are very low levels of lead in the paint. The dust particles that come off that have very low levels of lead paint. The schoolteachers and the school principal were advised as soon as those lead particles were discovered, on Friday. The school community and parents were advised on Monday.

MR HANSON: Minister, what are the potential health risks to children if they are exposed to dust from lead paint?

MS BERRY: All of the advice that I get comes from the experts. With respect to the existence of lead paint particles to the thresholds that appear in our schools occasionally, I am advised by the experts that the risk is very low. One of those experts happens to be the Chief Health Officer, who has also expertly led us through an international health pandemic. The ACT government always takes the advice of the experts in circumstances like this, just as we have over the last 12 months with the Chief Health Officer. A Health official is on our panel of experts to advise the Education Directorate on managing lead paint in our schools, as well as ensuring that the communities in those schools can access information about lead paint when that is required. The ACT government always depends on and works on the advice of the experts, and in this case it is no different.

Sport—facilities

MR DAVIS: My question is to the Minister for Sport and Recreation and relates to the need for multi-sport facilities in my electorate of Brindabella. Noting ACT Labor's election commitment to build an ice rink in Tuggeranong, has the ACT government considered purchasing and developing the much-loved Fadden multi-sports facility, the Mpowerdome, which has just recently been placed on the market?

MS BERRY: The facility that Mr Davis refers to has been, I understand, on the market for quite some time now. I understand that there were some parties interested in the purchase of that site, but for whatever reason—financial or otherwise—it did not meet the needs of those particular organisations.

The ice sports facility is one facility in Tuggeranong that will be a much-loved facility, and work is happening in that space to get that facility going. But it will be more than an ice sports facility because it will also include a world-class climbing gym for the Tuggeranong community. We are making sure that our facilities are purpose-built but also available to not just one sport alone but many supports.

That is the focus of the ACT government, and that is what we are doing when we are building our school halls as well—making sure that they are accessible to a whole range of different sports. That includes the school gym at Denman Prospect, which will be a facility where sports like roller derby can be enjoyed. I know Emma Davidson is a keen roller derbier, if that is the term that you use, and she will be skating around that gymnasium once it is completed in May.

MR DAVIS: Minister, to ensure economy of scale and best return for ratepayers, can you list a number of other sports that you would consider including in a purpose-built multi-sports facility in Brindabella?

MS BERRY: That might be a question for me to ask Mr Davis, for his views on what a multi-sport facility might entail and which sports might be included in that. Of course, our gymnasiums at schools are available for many, many different sports—basketball, netball, table tennis, roller derby. There are a whole range of different sports that use our gymnasiums in schools as multi-sport facilities. I am sure people would have ideas about what sports facilities would be appropriate in any multi-sport facility.

MR BRADDOCK: Minister, does the ACT government have a plan to develop a strategic plan for the funding and development of community sport in Tuggeranong?

MS BERRY: The ACT government has committed to supporting Canberrans to participate in sporting activities all across our community. In Tuggeranong in recent years the government has undergone a number of different works across a range of different sports, including upgrades to Lake Tuggeranong Rowing Club; upgrades to the pavilion at Gowrie district playing fields; upgrades to floodlighting and irrigation at Calwell district playing fields; upgrade of the pavilion and floodlighting at Kambah district playing fields; and family-friendly upgrades to the pavilion at Wanniasa district playing fields as well as Gordon district playing fields.

Inclusive of that, the upgrade of the pavilion at Kambah DPF is currently in the design stage and is scheduled for completion in mid-2021. That work will likely include the upgrade of facilities to meet the ACT government's objectives for female-friendly facilities guidelines; the upgrade of facilities to ensure the sustainable use of resources such as water-wise devices and LED lights; pavilion refurbishments; the upgrade to accessible facilities; the upgrade of ageing services; the installation of bike racks; external bin enclosures for waste project management; as well as the installation of water refill stations.

Mr Hanson: A question, if I may, Madam Speaker, I notice that the Greens backbencher questions have been notified to the ministers. They have already got their notes ready to go, it would appear. Is there a standing order you might be able to advise me of, or take it on notice: if the Greens backbenchers have already emailed the questions to ministers, do they still constitute questions without notice or would they be questions on notice, if what the Greens are doing is giving a heads-up to the Labor ministers of what the questions are in anticipation of question time?

MADAM SPEAKER: You have asked your question, Mr Hanson; sit down. I've given you far too much time on that. The minister has concluded.

Mrs Jones: On the question from Mr Hanson, does the chair have an answer so that he will be got back to or is that question not to be taken seriously?

MADAM SPEAKER: As far as I am concerned, a backbencher is entitled to ask a minister a question. The minister will answer it. If anyone wants to provide a heads-up—for want of a better word—or not that is entirely a matter for anyone. But if there is no standing order, I am not going to interfere.

Mr Hanson: There you go. All very cosy, isn't it? All very cosy.

MADAM SPEAKER: Mr Hanson.

Mr Hanson: Hold that government to account, guys. Well done.

MADAM SPEAKER: Mr Hanson! The next time you will be warned.

MS BERRY: I was just going to note that it would have been no surprise that I would be asked questions from Yerrabi members of the Assembly on the Gungahlin pool, because I know there is significant interest in that. It is no surprise to me that Mr Davis would ask about Tuggeranong sports facilities. It's no surprise that Mr Hanson would ask me about education as well. We get all kinds of questions from everyone in this place.

Mr Hanson: Are you saying you didn't get a heads-up?

MADAM SPEAKER: Members, please. Can everyone resume their seats and we will move on with question time.

Mr Hanson: You didn't get a heads-up?

MADAM SPEAKER: Mr Hanson, I said you would be warned. You are now warned. There is a new question. Ms Orr has the floor.

Budget—health funding

MS ORR: My question is to the Minister for Health. Can the minister update the Assembly on the ACT government's additional funding to support our public health response to COVID-19?

MS STEPHEN-SMITH: I thank Ms Orr for her ongoing interest, which I am sure we all have, in the response to COVID-19. To date, with the support of Canberrans and our fantastic health staff, the ACT government has managed an effective response to the COVID-19 pandemic. However, we are acutely aware that the pandemic has no current end date, and the situation can change quickly, both in the ACT and across the country. That is why, through this year's budget, the government is providing

\$39 million in additional funding to ensure that our public health team can continue to respond and protect Canberrans from the risk of COVID-19.

Through this budget the Health Emergency Control Centre, which was established on 29 January 2020, will receive additional resources to manage the ongoing public health emergency. Our clinical resources will also be supported to ensure that we have continued clinical capability at testing centres and hospitals across the ACT.

The budget also supports the ACT's efforts to play our part and bring more vulnerable Australians home, with dedicated resources and funding for our hotel quarantine program and the health services required to support up to six government-facilitated flights to June 2021.

We have seen information spread in the media in the last couple of weeks which has only highlighted how vital it is for our public health messaging and communications to be based on science and evidence to ensure that the public receive factual and accessible information. That is why we are also investing \$1.9 million to support the Public Information Coordination Centre to continue advising the community on critical public health information.

MS ORR: Can the minister update members on the COVID-19 vaccine rollout preparation and planning in the ACT?

MS STEPHEN-SMITH: I am sure we are all interested in progress in relation to the vaccination program. It is indeed fast moving and on a very significant scale across the country and the ACT. Our priority is to deliver a safe, efficient and targeted vaccination program for all Canberrans. The commonwealth government is, of course, leading the vaccination program under the Australian COVID-19 vaccination policy, in partnership with all states and territories.

The ACT is well advanced in preparation to roll out vaccine delivery in time for anticipated program commencement in late February 2021. The exact commencement date will, of course, be subject to vaccine availability and dependent on the commonwealth supply and distribution processes. However, ACT government preparation is, and has been for some time, well underway.

The government is supporting this mammoth task by providing around \$19 million, plus \$4½ million in capital funding, to ensure that we are well placed to begin rollout of the vaccination program later this month and to run the program through most of this year. The vaccination program will start slowly, with the highest priority population groups that have been identified by the commonwealth government, drawing on advice from the Australian Technical Advisory Group on Immunisation.

To support the rollout, we will deliver a local communications campaign to ensure that the community and priority populations for each phase of program rollout are well informed. To inform our communications, we have recently asked Canberrans to respond to a YourSay panel survey and let us know what they would like to know about the vaccination program. Thank you to everyone who has responded to that survey, which will help us to communicate in a clear and targeted way.

MR PETTERSSON: Minister, how is the government supporting our health system to meet continued growth?

MS STEPHEN-SMITH: I thank Mr Pettersson for his supplementary question. The government is providing record investment in our health system, not just in our response to COVID-19 but in ensuring that we are prepared to meet the health needs of our growing population.

We know that the healthcare needs of our population in Canberra's north are changing. That is why this year's budget includes \$6½ million to enable Calvary Public Hospital Bruce to meet the needs of our growing and ageing population. As our north-side general hospital, Calvary complements and supports Canberra Hospital, the broader ACT health system and the community in the delivery of key hospital and health services. It represents around 40 per cent of emergency department presentations in the territory, 30 per cent of births and 25 per cent of acute admissions.

We are also investing more than \$16½ million to undertake critical building upgrades and refurbishments at the Canberra Hospital as part of our ongoing infrastructure investment. The Building 10 electrical upgrade project will support service delivery for critical pathology services and research activities undertaken in Building 10. These infrastructure projects are central to modernising our facilities for the ongoing delivery of excellent care, and will allow ACT Pathology to continue delivering their critical 24/7 service to support clinical operations at the Canberra Hospital, as well as supporting the ACT government's COVID-19 response. We cannot thank them enough for this essential work.

ACT Corrective Services—ministerial responsibility

MRS KIKKERT: Madam Speaker, my question is to the Minister for Corrections. Minister, on 2 December, when asked about any messes at the AMC left behind by Mr Rattenbury, you said, "I think Mr Rattenbury did a fantastic job as corrections minister and I hope to follow that up." Mr Rattenbury's legacy includes overcrowding, inappropriate accommodation of women, rampant drug abuse, riots, staff shortages, out-of-date policies, distressed and overworked staff, and deaths at the AMC. With this in mind, does the minister still stand by his earlier statement that Mr Rattenbury did a fantastic job?

MR GENTLEMAN: I thank Mrs Kikkert for her question. I refute a number of the allegations that she has made in her question today. Numbers reduced in the AMC in the time that Mr Rattenbury was minister. He introduced quite a number of programs and policies to assist the detainees within the AMC. I think he has a record to be proud of, and I hope to follow that through.

MRS KIKKERT: Should Canberrans, staff and inmates be concerned that you regard Mr Rattenbury's work in this space as "fantastic" and something "to follow up"?

MR GENTLEMAN: As I said, I am going to continue the work that Mr Rattenbury started. We have announced most recently a number of reviews and inquiries, and support for AMC staff as well.

MRS JONES: Minister, what will you do differently to ensure that a better job is done than Mr Rattenbury did?

MR GENTLEMAN: As I said in my last answer, I have initiated a number of reviews already. I have indicated to staff, on several visits, that I want to support them into the future and will be looking at providing more training for staff, and more assistance to detainees into the future as well, as part of our process to ensure that we can reduce recidivism across the ACT.

ACT Corrective Services—review

MS CASTLEY: My question is to the Minister for Corrections. Minister, Mr Rattenbury promised a full review of all correctional services policies and procedures, to be completed by mid-2019. In late 2020 the inspector's review of the Court Transport Unit found that some policies were woefully out of date and even referenced facilities that closed in 2009. This remains the case. Has this review of all ACT correctional services policies and procedures, promised for mid-2019, been completed yet?

MR GENTLEMAN: I thank Ms Castley for her question. The review of the CTU was tabled in the Assembly on 3 January 2020. The Court Transport Unit transports, manages and cares for hundreds of people in custody at the ACT law courts every year. The report made 12 findings and 22 recommendations, which the ACT government and ACT Corrective Services take very seriously. While work has begun on many of the issues highlighted in the report, it is of course essential and reassuring that independent oversight identifies and confirms issues that need to be addressed. There were some positive comments by the inspector about the professionalism of the CTU and staff as well. We welcome that report.

Mrs Jones: I raise a point of order, Madam Speaker. The question was not about the Court Transport Unit report but about the things that the report asked to be done, which included the upgrade of policies and procedures, promised for mid-2019. The minister so far has not referred to the policies and procedures promised to be updated by 2019, and we would really like to know the answer.

MADAM SPEAKER: He is on the policy area, so it is in order. Minister, in the time you have left—

MR GENTLEMAN: There are a number of policies that we are implementing from the correctional inspector's report, which is the report that Ms Castley referred to.

MS CASTLEY: When can we expect the implementation of the report to be completed?

MR GENTLEMAN: The government response to the report is currently being prepared and is scheduled to be tabled in the Legislative Assembly in the February period.

MRS KIKKERT: Minister, why did it take so long for the government to deliver on this promise?

MR GENTLEMAN: The corrections inspector gave his report on 3 December 2020. We will be tabling the response this month.

Planning—Chisholm

MR PARTON: Madam Speaker, my question is to the Minister for Planning and Land Management. Minister, I refer to a petition tabled by your colleague Joy Burch MLA in this place in August 2020 relating to the proposed development of a McDonald's in Chisholm village. Minister, given your colleague's strong stance against this proposed development, will you overrule the ACT planning and land authority's decision and stop this development from going ahead or, at the very least, not sign off on the sale of the toilet block?

MR GENTLEMAN: The decision was that of ACAT, not of the planning authority. It resulted in an approval of the development application, subject to a sale of public unleased land attached to the development proposal. I will not be commenting while there is a live proposal in for a sale of public attached land, unleased land.

MR PARTON: Minister, what correspondence or contact, if any, have you had with your colleague Joy Burch MLA about the proposed development?

MR GENTLEMAN: Madam Speaker, I think the only contact and correspondence I brought to you was the outcome of the ACAT case.

MS LAWDER: Minister, what does it say about your leadership as a minister if your own colleagues cannot get you to listen to them on an issue they personally campaigned on during the recent election?

MR GENTLEMAN: Madam Speaker, I think that was a question asking for an opinion. That is not within the standing orders.

Planning—territory records

MS LAWDER: My question is to the Minister for Planning and Land Management. Minister, can you explain how a series of territory records, which pictured historic architectural plans of Canberra amongst other things, were almost illegally sold off at auction recently?

MR GENTLEMAN: I understand that, in the movement of EPSDD from Dame Pattie Menzies House to the new complex at 420 Northbourne Avenue, a number of—if you like—accessories were put up for sale. Of course, once the directorate understood that this was an inadvertent error, it removed those from sale.

MS LAWDER: Minister, is this what your government calls ensuring the safekeeping and proper preservation of its records, as outlined in the Territory Records Act?

MR GENTLEMAN: As I mentioned in my answer, the products were removed from sale, so they have not been sold.

MS CASTLEY: Minister, how many mistakes will occur before your department starts adhering to the Territory Records Act?

MR GENTLEMAN: None of those accessories were sold. As I said, they identified the items for sale and brought them back into the directorate.

Planning—green space

MR CAIN: My question is to the Minister for Planning and Land Management. My question concerns Margaret Timpson Park in Belconnen town centre, a park that is not only popular with locals but also memorialises the important work of an influential leader of the women's movement in Canberra. An article published by *CityNews* on 8 December last year discussed community concerns that part of Margaret Timpson Park may be encroached upon by an adjacent development. Minister, will the government commit to protecting the green space at Margaret Timpson Park and other green spaces in Belconnen?

MR GENTLEMAN: Belconnen has been the subject of master planning that I have been involved with for quite some time. It is important that we protect green spaces in Belconnen, as well as identifying those areas that can be subject to development in the future. We do that with both the master planning process and precinct plans. There is a very strong theme in government and in EPSDD to ensure that we have enough green space across the territory, and we will continue with that action.

MR CAIN: Minister, what plans does the government have in place to maintain the amenity and accessibility of Margaret Timpson Park to ensure that it remains a key green space for the people of Belconnen?

MR GENTLEMAN: Madam Speaker, it is not being built on. It is, as you have heard, the former health centre. We intend to keep it as a green space.

MRS KIKKERT: What plans does the government have to ensure that green spaces like this across Belconnen are enhanced rather than left to deteriorate, as is currently happening across Canberra?

MR GENTLEMAN: I guess the best way is to keep it as a park and ensure that it does continue as a green space. We have learnt from the people of Belconnen, as we have done the master planning process and precinct plans, what they would like to see for the future. I want to thank them for their comments. We will continue with the theme of ensuring that green space remains across the ACT.

Budget—Parks and Conservation Service

MR PETTERSSON: My question is also to the Minister for Planning and Land Management. Minister, what support is the government providing for the Parks and Conservation Service?

MR GENTLEMAN: I thank Mr Pettersson for his question and for his interest in parks and conservation. The government has committed to providing an additional \$2.4 million to incorporate additional knowledge into land management practices through the permanent employment of Ngunnawal rangers. Their work will involve tackling weeds; repairing tracks and trails; and working with the community to educate and promote conservation, nature and culture.

This is building on the success of the temporary Ngunnawal rangers employed as part of the government's COVID-19 response. These positions were part of the Jobs for Canberrans Fund, which provides work opportunities for Canberrans in the casual, semi-skilled workforce who lost their jobs or who were significantly impacted during COVID-19.

The investment builds on significant funding provided to the Parks and Conservation Service in recent budgets and is part of a wider \$4.4 million in funding to enhance the natural environment, including through weed and invasive plant management.

MR PETTERSSON: Minister, what work have the Ngunnawal rangers been involved in since they were brought on during the COVID-19 public health emergency?

MR GENTLEMAN: Six rangers that were brought on as part of the COVID-19 economic recovery program last year have been making a great contribution to the ACT Parks and Conservation Service. Their work has been essential to our recovery from the Orroral Valley bushfire in 2020, as well as working on projects that are helping our vital catchments.

Their work has also contributed to improving land management practices. We have made improvements in how land managers undertake early monitoring of invasive plants and animals and native species. This also allows us to understand how the landscape responds after a bushfire and will inform best practice management into the future.

I want to thank those who have so far been involved in the program, as well as PCS staff, who have worked extremely hard this past year looking after our bush capital and surroundings and supporting bushfire recovery.

DR PATERSON: How does the budget fund the work of Parks and Conservation Service staff?

MR GENTLEMAN: The ACT government funding also funds additional invasive species management in our parks and reserves, targeting priority areas across the ACT. That includes a major effort to reduce and manage incursions in the weeds area, such as Coolatai grass and Paterson's curse. The budget includes \$626,000 to implement more invasive species management programs, following significant invasive plant growth and new land management challenges as part of the La Nina weather system. This funding will establish an invasive species rapid response ranger

team to tackle new and emerging species and establish long-term control programs, in partnership with land managers and community groups. The budget also provides support for ParkCare groups and three ACT regional catchment management groups to deliver Frogwatch, Waterwatch and other programs to care for our bush capital.

I know that Canberrans love and value our bush capital and I am pleased that this budget reflects the importance of the Parks and Conservation Service to the ACT.

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

Papers

Madam Speaker presented the following papers:

Annual Reports (Government Agencies) Act—

Pursuant to section 14— Extension of time for presenting Annual Reports—
2019-2020—Letter to the Speaker from the ACT Integrity Commissioner,
dated 17 December 2020.

Pursuant to section 15—Annual Reports—2019-2020—

ACT Electoral Commission, dated 11 December 2020.

ACT Integrity Commission, dated 3 February 2021.

Auditor-General Act—Auditor-General's Reports—

2020—No 10/2020—2019-20 Financial Audits - Financial Results and Audit
Findings.

2021—No 1/2021—Land Management Agreements.

Climate Change and Greenhouse Gas Reduction Act—

Pursuant to subsection 12(4)—ACT Greenhouse Gas Inventory for 2019-20—
Prepared by Strategy. Policy. Research., dated October 2020.

Pursuant to subsection 12(5)—Correspondence from the Minister for Water,
Energy and Emissions Reduction to the Speaker, dated 15 December 2020.

Economy and Gender and Economic Equality—Standing Committee—Bill
referred and being inquired into—COVID-19 Emergency Response Legislation
Amendment Bill 2020 (No 3)—Correspondence to Speaker, dated 10 December
2020.

Justice and Community Safety—Standing Committee—Bills referred and not
being inquired into—

Crimes Legislation Amendment Bill 2020—Correspondence to Speaker, dated
10 December 2020.

Justice and Community Safety Legislation Amendment Bill 2020—
Correspondence to Speaker, dated 10 December 2020.

Legislation Act—Pursuant to subsection 228(1)—

Schedule of relevant committees to be consulted in relation to appointments
made by Ministers to statutory offices, dated 15 December 2020.

Schedule of relevant committees to be consulted in relation to appointments
made by Ministers to statutory offices, dated 18 January 2021.

Planning, Transport and City Services—Standing Committee—Bills referred and not being inquired into —

Planning and Unit Titles Bill 2020—Correspondence to Speaker, dated 8 December 2020.

Plastic Reduction Bill 2020—Correspondence to Speaker, dated 8 December 2020.

Mr Gentleman presented the following papers:

Annual Reports (Government Agencies) Act—Pursuant to section 13—Annual Reports—2019-2020—

ACT Building and Construction Industry Training Fund Authority, dated 28 October 2020.

ACT Commissioner for Sustainability and the Environment, dated 16 November 2020.

ACT Gambling and Racing Commission, dated 9 November 2020.

ACT Health Directorate, dated 2 December 2020.

ACT Human Rights Commission, dated 11 December 2020.

ACT Inspector of Correctional Services, dated November 2020.

ACT Insurance Authority, dated 25 November 2020.

ACT Policing Special Projects, dated 17 September 2020.

ACT Policing Special Purposes, dated 17 September 2020.

ACT Policing, dated 29 October 2020, in accordance with the Policing Arrangement between the Commonwealth and Australian Capital Territory Governments.

ACT Public Service—State of the Service Report, dated 9 December 2020.

Canberra Health Services, dated 12 October 2020.

Chief Minister, Treasury and Economic Development Directorate (3 volumes), dated 30 November 2020.

City Renewal Authority, dated 18 November 2020.

Community Services Directorate, dated 13 November 2020, together with a corrigendum.

Cultural Facilities Corporation, dated 11 December 2020.

Director of Public Prosecutions, dated 11 December 2020.

Education Directorate, dated 3 December 2020.

Environment, Planning and Sustainable Development Directorate, dated 9 December 2020.

Icon Water Limited, dated 2 September 2020.

Independent Competition and Regulatory Commission, dated 25 November 2020.

Justice and Community Safety Directorate, dated 10 December 2020.

Legal Aid Commission (ACT), dated 26 November 2020.

Long Service Leave Authority, dated 5 November 2020.

Public Trustee and Guardian, dated 17 September 2020.

Major Projects Canberra, dated 20 November 2020.

Suburban Land Agency, dated 4 November 2020.

Transport Canberra and City Services Directorate, dated 4 December 2020.

Auditor-General Act—Auditor-General's Reports—2020—No 7/2020—Management and care for people living with serious and continuing illness, dated 10 September 2020—Government response.

Australian Commission for Law Enforcement Integrity—Summary of issues relating to ACT Policing 2019-2020, as reported.

COVID-19 Emergency Response Act—pursuant to subsection 3(3)—COVID-19 Measures—

Report No 8—Reporting period 1-30 November 2020.

Report No 9—Reporting period 1-31 December 2020.

Education, Employment and Youth Affairs—Standing Committee (9th Assembly)—Reports presented—2020—No 9—Youth Mental Health in the ACT, dated 10 August 2020—Government response, dated December 2020, together with a statement, dated February 2021.

COVID-19 Pandemic Response—Select Committee—*Interim Report 4—Final Report*—Government response, dated December 2020.

Crimes (Assumed Identities) Act, pursuant to subsection 38(4)—Australian Crime Commission Assumed Identities—Annual Report 2019-20, dated 13 September 2020.

Freedom of Information Act—Pursuant to section 39—Copy of notice provided to the Ombudsman—Community Services Directorate—Freedom of Information request—Decision not made in time—(CYF-20/64 & CYF-20/67, CYF-20/74, CYF 20/16).

Loose Fill Asbestos Insulation Eradication Scheme—Implementation—Report—1 July to 31 December 2020.

Official Visitor Act, pursuant to subsection 17(4)—Annual reports 2019-20—Official Visitor (Mental Health), dated February 2021, together with a statement.

Planning and Urban Renewal—Standing Committee (9th Assembly)—Reports presented—2020—No 14—Inquiry into Planning for the Surgical Procedures, Interventional Radiology and Emergency Centre (SPIRE) and the Canberra Hospital campus and immediate surrounds—Government response.

Smoke and air quality—Development of a strategy—Government response to the resolution of the Assembly of 13 February 2020—Update—letter from the Minister for Health to the Speaker, dated February 2021.

Subordinate legislation (including explanatory statements unless otherwise stated)

Litter Act—Litter (Amenity Impact) Code of Practice 2020 (No 1)—Disallowable Instrument DI2020-287 (LR, 14 September 2020).

Medicines, Poisons and Therapeutic Goods Regulation 2008—Medicines, Poisons and Therapeutic Goods (Nurse and Midwife Immunisers) Direction 2020 (No 1)—Disallowable Instrument DI2020-290 (LR, 12 October 2020).

Motor Accident Injuries Act—Motor Accident Injuries (Premiums) Guidelines 2020 (No 1)—Disallowable Instrument DI2020-293 (LR, 29 October 2020).

Pest Plants and Animals Act—Pest Plants and Animals (Pest Plant) Declaration 2020—Disallowable Instrument DI2020-291 (LR, 8 October 2020).

Public Place Names Act—

Public Place Names (Strathnairn) Determination 2020 (No 3)—Disallowable Instrument DI2020-292 (LR, 22 October 2020).

Public Place Names (Taylor) Determination 2020 (No 4)—Disallowable Instrument DI2020-288 (LR, 18 September 2020).

Public Place Names (Taylor) Determination 2020 (No 5)—Disallowable Instrument DI2020-289 (LR, 18 September 2020).

Road Transport (Driver Licensing) Act—Road Transport (Driver Licensing) Instructor Code of Practice 2020 (No 1)—Subordinate Law DI2020-294 (LR, 5 November 2020).

Taxation Administration Act—

Taxation Administration (Payroll Tax) COVID-19 Exemption Scheme Determination 2021—Disallowable Instrument DI2021-11 (LR, 20 January 2021).

Taxation Administration (Payroll Tax—Businesses Not Permitted to Operate) COVID-19 Exemption Scheme Determination 2021—Disallowable Instrument DI2021-10 (LR, 20 January 2021).

Territory Records Act—

Territory Records (Advisory Council) Appointment 2020 (No 2)—Disallowable Instrument DI2020-262 (LR, 19 September 2020).

Territory Records (Advisory Council) Appointment 2020 (No 3)—Disallowable Instrument DI2020-263 (LR, 19 September 2020).

Territory Records (Advisory Council) Appointment 2020 (No 4)—Disallowable Instrument DI2020-264 (LR, 19 September 2020).

Territory Records (Advisory Council) Appointment 2020 (No 5)—Disallowable Instrument DI2020-265 (LR, 19 September 2020).

Territory Records (Advisory Council) Appointment 2020 (No 6)—Disallowable Instrument DI2020-266 (LR, 19 September 2020).

Environment—air quality

MR GENTLEMAN (Brindabella—Manager of Government Business, Minister for Corrections, Minister for Industrial Relations and Workplace Safety, Minister for Planning and Land Management and Minister for Police and Emergency Services) (3.01): Pursuant to standing order 211, I move:

That the Assembly take note of the following paper:

Smoke and Air Quality—Response to resolution of the Assembly of 13 February 2020, dated February 2021.

MS VASSAROTTI (Kurrajong—Minister for the Environment, Minister for Heritage, Minister for Homelessness and Housing Services and Minister for Sustainable Building and Construction) (3.01): I am pleased to note progress on this important issue. On 13 February 2020 my colleague Mr Shane Rattenbury MLA moved a motion in the Legislative Assembly calling on the government to create a whole-of-government strategy on smoke and air quality in the ACT, to be completed and released before the beginning of the 2020-21 fire season.

Granted, since that time there has been some significant development, such as a public health emergency declared in response to the outbreak of COVID-19, which has impacted on progress. This aside, the black summer of 2019-20 has highlighted a number of opportunities for futureproofing our city and ensuring long-term air quality in the face of climate change.

Air quality is a clear indicator of the health of the environment and it also directly impacts on our health. Of the 91 days in the 2019-20 summer, 56 exceeded national standards of pollution levels and 42 of those days had periods above hazardous health rating.

Young children, the elderly, those with pre-existing conditions and pregnant women are particularly vulnerable to the impacts of air pollution. People living under socio-economic stress are also vulnerable as they are more likely to have leaky houses that provide little protection from smoke and less access to air purifiers and air conditioners.

In September 2020 the Commissioner for Sustainability and the Environment conducted a survey to identify the ways in which Black Summer affected people's mental and physical health. Over 1,500 Canberrans responded, and I will now read through some of the alarming results: 68 per cent of respondents had difficulty breathing; 30 per cent of respondents suffered from vision difficulties; 82 per cent of respondents experienced skin or throat irritations or headaches over the 2019-20 summer; and 53 per cent of respondents with a history of mental illness experienced a worsening of symptoms due to the bushfires.

On top of the physical and mental health impacts, there were also large economic impacts. As detailed in the report by the Commissioner for Sustainability and the Environment, tourism businesses in Canberra reported a 20 per cent cancellation rate. Many businesses, tourist attractions and universities were closed. These included the National Zoo and Aquarium, Questacon, swimming pools, and some civic services. Australia Post was also unable to complete deliveries due to safety concerns for the workers.

While I am pleased to note the progress towards a whole-of-government strategy on smoke and air quality in the ACT, we need to strengthen our focus. Our health relies on it.

Question resolved in the affirmative.

Appropriation Bill 2020-2021

Mr Barr, pursuant to notice, presented the bill, its explanatory statement, a Human Rights Act compatibility statement and the following supplementary papers:

Budget 2020-2021—Financial Management Act—Pursuant to section 10—

Budget Speech (Budget Paper 1).

Budget Outlook (Budget Paper 2).

Budget Statements—

A—ACT Executive | ACT Integrity Commission | Auditor-General | Electoral Commissioner | Office of the Legislative Assembly.

B—Chief Minister, Treasury and Economic Development Directorate together with associated agencies.

C—ACT Health Directorate | Canberra Health Services | ACT Local Hospital Network.

D—Justice and Community Safety Directorate | Legal Aid Commission (ACT) | Public Trustee for the ACT.

E—Environment, Planning and Sustainable Development Directorate | City Renewal Authority | Suburban Land Agency.

F—Education Directorate.

G—Community Services Directorate | Housing ACT.

H—Transport Canberra and City Services Directorate | Transport Canberra Operations | The Cemeteries and Crematoria Authority.

I—Major Projects Canberra.

Financial Management Act—Pursuant to section 62(1)—Statements of Intent—

2020-21—ACT Long Service Leave Authority.

2020-21—Building and Construction Industry Training Fund Authority.

Title read by Clerk.

MR BARR (Kurrajong—Chief Minister, Treasurer, Minister for Climate Action, Minister for Economic Development and Minister for Tourism) (3.05): I move:

That this bill be agreed to in principle.

Introduction

Today's budget continues the fiscal and economic response delivered by the government during the COVID-19 public health emergency.

It is a budget delivered under difficult circumstances, but one which has a simple purpose: to deliver what we promised the people of Canberra and to drive Canberra's recovery from the COVID-19 pandemic.

This budget sets out how we will help grow the ACT's employment base with investments to support existing industries and grow new ones.

We will fund a strong infrastructure program with significant investments in health, transport, education and training.

We will continue our response to the pandemic with funding for public health management and the vaccine rollout.

We will begin initial works to further expand our walk-in health centre network, used by thousands of Canberrans every month.

We are funding new schools and upgrading existing ones.

And, after meeting our 2020 renewable energy goals, including 100 per cent renewable electricity and reducing net emissions by 40 per cent, we are taking the next steps towards a zero net emissions future.

Overview

The COVID-19 pandemic has posed the greatest economic and health challenge to the territory in our self-governing history. Within weeks of the start of the pandemic in Australia, over 10,000 jobs were lost in the territory.

The impact of this crisis has not been evenly distributed, with the effects being felt more intensely across hospitality, tourism and higher education—some of the ACT's biggest employment sectors.

The government was there to quickly bolster our health system and support the ACT economy with a series of economic survival measures throughout calendar year 2020—measures that protected thousands of local jobs.

We have acted on expert advice to reduce the risk of COVID-19 spread; and, when it was safe to do so, we carefully reopened our economy. Our investment totals \$4.9 billion—providing relief to households and businesses, protecting jobs and supporting our public health system.

I state absolutely categorically that this spending and the hundreds of millions of dollars of revenue forgone was absolutely necessary.

The government is determined to invest now to avoid an even bigger loss of economic output and jobs in the future.

Government financing costs have never been lower, so now is the time to invest in the social and economic infrastructure that will prepare our city for the future.

Never has the role of government been clearer: to respond quickly, to invest, to support our most vulnerable, and to protect and shape our local economy through the recovery period.

Economic and fiscal projections for the ACT

Madam Speaker, the ACT has, throughout this, maintained the lowest unemployment rate and one of the highest rates of economic growth in the nation.

In August of last year we were the first Australian jurisdiction to provide our estimated fiscal position over the full forward estimates.

Today I can update these figures and confirm that the ACT's fiscal position has improved by nearly \$600 million over the coming four years, including a \$300 million improvement in this fiscal year.

We also forecast economic growth at an average of 2.7 per cent a year over the next four years, reflecting our jurisdiction's strong economic position.

Properly funding essential government services is only possible through a stable tax revenue stream, which is why in 2012 we started a nation-leading tax reform program.

A stable tax system reduces potential revenue shocks and the flow-on risk to services. Our tax reform program is now well advanced.

We have abolished insurance duty, cut stamp duty to zero for around 80 per cent of commercial property transactions, and raised the payroll tax threshold so that around 90 per cent of Canberra's businesses no longer pay payroll tax.

We will continue to cut stamp duty and support prospective owner-occupiers to buy an affordable home.

Low population growth, due to low estimates for migration flows into Australia over the next four years, will place constraints on national and local economic growth.

However, the latest data shows that the ACT's strong response to the pandemic, principally driven by our success in controlling the virus, and the delivery of significant fiscal support where needed, has resulted in a strong recovery in the territory's labour market, with employment growth even higher than expected.

Employment growth is now forecast to continue across the budget and forward estimates at an average of 1.7 per cent.

Beyond these economic metrics, it is measures such as social equality, community safety, emissions reductions and the ability to participate in community life that go to the overall quality of life for Canberrans.

That is why we are embedding the Wellbeing Framework in our policy design and decision-making as we move into the next budget, a little over six months away, for fiscal year 2021-22.

The framework will be the guiding platform by which new policies, new programs and initiatives, and future budget decisions, will be developed and assessed.

Keeping Canberrans healthy

Over the past year, the government's focus has been to keep Canberra safe from COVID-19 and to protect local jobs.

Everything is predicated on the strength of our health response—a response that has, to date, worked exceptionally well.

With vaccines becoming available, this budget will deliver the additional funding necessary to support a successful and effective rollout across the territory.

It will be a major logistical and operational exercise, in partnership with the commonwealth government.

In addition to the vaccine rollout, we must continue to have the capability to respond quickly if the need arises. Therefore, the government is increasing funding for the Chief Health Officer and her team, and for our COVID-19 testing facilities. This includes funding for continued staffing and operational costs for case investigation, contact tracing, medical and public health specialists, and quarantine processes.

The government will continue the construction of the Canberra Hospital expansion, which will increase our health capacity and deliver more services for Canberrans.

Upgrades are also set to continue at Canberra Hospital to support the territory's COVID-19 response, with work to keep pathology running 24 hours a day, seven days a week, during the public health emergency.

We will continue to build on the success of our nurse-led walk-in centres and work with local communities by commencing work on four new walk-in health centres and opening the centre in Coombs—as the Minister for Health discussed at length in question time today.

As the pandemic unfolded there was also an increase in Canberrans, particularly young Canberrans, seeking mental health support. This budget will increase spending on mental health services, including Child and Adolescent Mental Health Services and the Adolescent Mobile Outreach Service.

Climate action—ACT will keep leading the nation

The government has a proud track record of implementing science-based action to mitigate and adapt to climate change.

Over the next four years Canberra will continue to be the renewable energy capital of the nation.

In the first half of this year we will support more Canberra home owners to access the benefits of cheaper and sustainable energy through our \$150 million Sustainable Household Scheme.

Offering zero interest loans for rooftop solar panels, household battery storage, zero emissions vehicles and energy efficient electric appliances, it will mean more households can make the right investments in their home. Canberrans can immediately start saving hundreds of dollars each year from lower energy bills, without having to meet the up-front costs of the installation of the new technology.

This fund will be one of the most significant investments in clean energy ever in the ACT, reducing the cost of living and creating hundreds and hundreds of jobs for Canberrans into the future.

To make sure that all Canberrans benefit from our sustainable infrastructure program, we will establish a \$50 million five-year program to improve building efficiency and sustainability for social and public housing for lower income owner occupiers and the lowest performing rental properties in our city.

This budget also sets aside \$100 million over the next five years to deliver the Big Canberra Battery. Canberrans will generate a significant amount of renewable energy through the Sustainable Household Scheme and existing renewable generators. The battery will allow us to store that energy and provide it back into the grid.

The global battery storage market is predicted to be worth \$400 billion by 2030, and the ACT is an ideal launching pad for those wanting to invest in this rapidly emerging industry.

We will partner with the community and the private sector to deliver the Big Canberra Battery, which, when operational, will be one of the biggest renewable battery storage systems in Australia.

This investment will generate new revenue opportunities for the territory and improve the resilience of our distribution network.

These investments, along with our participation in research and pilot projects, will cement the ACT's status as a nation-leading hub for renewables innovation.

Building Australia's best schools

Our city's strength lies in the lifelong education of its residents, from our youngest Canberrans through to the teaching and research conducted by our world-leading higher education institutions.

Canberra is the nation's Knowledge Capital, and the government recognises that one of the best investments we can make, for both our economy and our community, is in early childhood education and care.

That is why we are increasing the number of weeks offered to priority families accessing early childhood learning for three-year-olds, from 40 to 48 weeks per year. I commend the work of the Deputy Chief Minister in leading this initiative.

We are catering to population growth in our new regions by commencing works in preparation for a new high school in Taylor, to deliver an 800-place school by 2024. We will expand the Margaret Hendry School and deliver a new high school in east Gungahlin to open for the 2023 school year.

The government will fund 50 full-time Master of Education (Teacher Librarian) scholarships over the next five years.

One of the major achievements in the last term of government was the very successful rollout of Chromebooks, ensuring that every high school and college student had equality of digital access.

We will continue this important rollout as students enter high school and college every year.

We will begin rolling out the Digital Education Equity program to provide free internet to households that need it, to ensure that students continue to have access to the resources they need.

Transport investment for our city's future

The government is focused on building the major infrastructure that our growing city needs.

Light rail stage 1 was successfully delivered, and we will build on that success.

This budget funds the design work and planning approvals for the raising of London Circuit and the next step in the extension of light rail.

Federal environmental approval for the next stage of our city-wide light rail network is welcomed, and a recognition of the importance of this project to the future shape of the nation's capital.

Alongside this city-defining project, the government is working closely with the commonwealth to deliver a range of infrastructure improvements, including major road and cycleway improvements. This includes the construction of the John Gorton Drive extension, including a major bridge across the Molonglo River, continued work on upgrades of the Monaro Highway, and identifying future improvements to Canberra's south-western transport corridor.

Supporting our vulnerable Canberrans

Our city, and the government, should be judged on how we treat our most vulnerable citizens.

This budget sets out a plan to expand social housing and improve housing affordability over the next four years.

We will strengthen our homelessness and housing services, including expanding the Early Morning Centre to a seven-day-a-week service, increasing emergency accommodation, and improving specialist homelessness service capacity.

We will establish, in close partnership with the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Elected Body, an Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community controlled housing organisation.

We will keep working to ensure that Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander families have access to quality services and support that meet their cultural needs, by funding early works for the new accommodation for the Gugan Gulwan Youth Aboriginal Corporation.

Conclusion

Madam Speaker, this is a defining moment in the territory's history.

Our actions now will determine the speed and confidence of our city's social and economic recovery from this global pandemic.

Our plan for the territory, so strongly endorsed by voters last October, is set for immediate delivery: protecting Canberrans' health, rolling out the COVID-19 vaccines, taking action on climate change, protecting jobs, and supporting new industries.

In this budget, the first of five budgets in this parliamentary term, the government delivers what we said we would do. The budgets that follow in this parliamentary term will continue this approach.

As I noted, it is a simple purpose at a difficult time, but one that will ensure that Canberrans can have confidence that this city will emerge from the pandemic stronger than before.

I commend the appropriation bills to the Assembly.

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

Appropriation (Office of the Legislative Assembly) Bill 2020-2021

Mr Barr, pursuant to notice, presented the bill, its explanatory statement, a Human Rights Act compatibility statement and the following supplementary papers:

Budget 2020-21—Financial Management Act—Pursuant to section 20AC—
Appropriation (Office of the Legislative Assembly) Bill 2020-2021—
Departure from Recommended Appropriations—Statement of Reasons.

Title read by Clerk.

MR BARR (Kurrajong—Chief Minister, Treasurer, Minister for Climate Action, Minister for Economic Development and Minister for Tourism) (3.23): I move:

That this bill be agreed to in principle.

I present the Appropriation (Office of the Legislative Assembly) Bill 2020-2021 to the Assembly. The bill is straightforward. It contains appropriations of \$21.983 million to the Office of the Legislative Assembly, \$3.546 million to the Auditor-General, \$5.227 million to the ACT Integrity Commissioner, and \$13.664 million to the Electoral Commissioner.

The amount in the bill appropriated to the Office of the Legislative Assembly is a departure, Madam Speaker, from the amount that you requested. I provide the following statement of reasons regarding this departure, as is required under section 20AA of the Financial Management Act 1996. Budgeting in action, colleagues!

The Speaker recommended recurrent funding to permanently fill the position of an assistant technical officer that was established in 2019-20 on a temporary basis. As there has not been a reduction in funding from 2019-20 to 2020-21, the government considers it is appropriate for the Office of the Legislative Assembly to maintain the assistant technical officer position from within existing resources. Harsh but fair. I commend the bill to the Assembly.

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

Adjournment

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

That the Assembly do now adjourn.

Parking—Cooleman Court Migrant and Refugee Settlement Services

MRS JONES (Murrumbidgee) (3.25): On 4 February 2021 the ACT government finally backed down on its plans to develop Coolo Park into a car park. The community, supported by the Canberra Liberals, have been fighting hard to protect this necessary green space. It is disappointing that it took the ACT government this long to listen and new Minister Davidson to force the issue on the inside. A subsequent appeal to ACAT was also pursued and other representations that the car park did not have community support.

By not adequately consulting the community, the government made a mess of this project by envisaging a much bigger car park and then revising the design due to local concerns about traffic management and the loss of trees. The Weston Creek Community Council said that fewer parking spaces meant the project was not worth the expense. The government missed the central issue, which concerns people losing green space important to them for relaxing with family, friends and community and also for recreational use during a pandemic, when people have become more isolated in their communities than ever before.

In August 2020 a petition was presented to the Legislative Assembly with more than 1,000 signatures, and an ongoing campaign culminated in the Save Coolo Park Protest Picnic, which I attended along with my colleague Ms Davidson on 31 January. It was a fabulous day listening to music together in an outdoor setting, enjoying the benefits of this green space. It was a win for the community, and I congratulate them on their strong advocacy.

Perhaps the government could instead create more shops and services in the Molonglo Valley, which is putting pressure on Cooleman Court and the surrounding parking spaces. Other measures, as advocated by the Weston Creek Community Council, could also be pursued.

On 26 January 2021, along with my colleagues Elizabeth Lee and Peter Cain, I had the pleasure of attending the Migrant and Refugee Settlement Services Australia Day event at Glebe Park. We saw dancers from El Salvador, Iraq and Fiji and welcomed our newest arrivals to Australia and Canberra. As Mrs Matilda House said in her welcome to country, “You are welcome here.”

Celebrating Australia Day with traditional music and colourful dance is what diversity and inclusion is all about. I have been told by people that come from oppressive regimes that they appreciate that Australia is democratic and free, and accepts people of different religious and cultural backgrounds, and they want to contribute to their new country.

As a daughter of immigrant parents myself, I understand how important services such as information, advocacy and referral are in assisting migrants and refugees to settle into the Canberra community. From the conversations that I had on the day, there are some areas that are currently lacking. When you do not have the contacts, know the language or the systems, it helps to have access to services like those that MARSS provides, such as language, welfare and employment for people from diverse cultural and linguistic backgrounds.

I want to pay tribute especially to their volunteers, many of whom are migrants or refugees themselves, who know how it feels to come to a new country and who help our newest arrivals have a positive experience. I want to acknowledge the hard work and dedication of the MARSS leadership team, including Chairperson David Ng; Deputy Chair Andrew Alwast OAM; Treasurer Mithun Alexander; Secretary Andrew Ng; Public Officer Borhan Uddin Ahmed; board member Simon Kwan Kit Ng; board

member Raewyn Bastion JP; board member Syed As-Sayeed; board member Isaac Te Ao Cotter; board member Steve Taskovski; and CEO Dewani Bukkum.

It is important that we support those who support others in our community and for the wider Canberra community to be aware of the integral work that MARSS does in implementing a successful immigration and refugee policy. We expect that the ACT budget will assist MARSS in the delivery of greater services to those most vulnerable in our community, and we will be having a look to see if that has occurred.

Yerrabi community events

MS ORR (Yerrabi) (3.30): In case anyone was still unsure whether this place had got back into the swing of business after the recent election and holidays, I am delighted to inform you that today I will be fully settling into the familiar mechanics of this fine democratic institution by presenting the chamber with my first Yerrabi Yap of 2021.

Today I would like to take the opportunity to shine a light on some of the groups and individuals without whom my electorate would not be as rich in culture and community as we are. I start by sending a big thankyou to the Bangladeshi community and ATN Canberra for organising such a wonderful day down at the park on Australia Day for the Gungahlin community. Michael, Tara and I had a fabulous time mingling with our neighbours and friends while we absorbed the outstanding cultural performances and Bangladeshi street food. It takes a huge amount of effort to organise these kinds of events, so I reiterate my gratitude for the opportunity to attend.

Likewise, the newly formed Australian Muslim Friendship Organisation also held a day out in January at Yerrabi Pond, where we enjoyed a barbecue and got the opportunity to discuss AMFO's ambitions for an increased sense of trust and friendliness between ACT Muslim communities and the broader Canberra community.

Events like ATN's day out and AMFO's barbecue are a big part of what makes Yerrabi such a strong community. I once again reiterate how grateful I was to attend but also to witness such dedicated groups of people in action and enjoying life in a COVID-safe fashion. I genuinely believe events like these are fundamental in bouncing back from lockdown and I am looking forward to similar days like these in the future.

However, this would not be a classic Yerrabi Yap unless I updated this place on the state of play in the highly competitive and popular world of Yerrabi cricket. The Indian Australian Multicultural Sports Association—a Yerrabi-based not-for-profit organisation which runs various sports tournaments and activities—held a Pink Stumps Day back in November which helped raise money to fund the McGrath breast cancer foundation, particularly the care nurses who work in communities all over Australia. It was so encouraging to see such a diverse group of young people get stuck into a game and contribute to their communities near and far.

While I am on the topic of sport in Yerrabi, there is a really strong sense of engagement with very localised groups and a huge amount of potential for competitive success but also, as a crucial point, of much-needed socialisation and

friendliness, which I suspect we have all come to value even more than we thought we ever could over the past year.

At the end of last year I had the opportunity to join the Gungahlin Jets for their senior football presentation night, in which some really spectacular athletes got the chance to share their success with their community. Not long after this, I had the pleasure of celebrating the International Day of People with Disability with the Jets' all-abilities netball team, who received a well-earned I-Day grant and chose to use the funds to hold an all-inclusive skills session. I also congratulate the Jets on winning the minister's award for inclusion in sport in December.

For my final word on sports, I acknowledge the Northside Community Service, who have outdone themselves by organising Yerrabi's second ever sports and recreation fair. I am so excited to head over to the Amaroo district playing fields this Friday and see all the fantastic athletic opportunities within Yerrabi. Remarkably, and perhaps prophetically, this fair was originally organised in 2019 to connect families and individuals at risk of social isolation with a club or group that was right for them. The event was a smash hit and this year, with isolation now over, we know that everyone wants to get back out and see what they can do. The fair will be running between 3.30 pm and 7 pm, and I encourage all my colleagues who are able to join me to come along and see this great initiative.

Believe it or not, Madam Speaker, Yerrabi does have a non-sport related community event and has lots of events going on which are just as worthy of note. In this vein, I first congratulate the Gungahlin Mosque on opening their doors and hosting such a pleasant day at the end of last year in which they welcomed Gungahlin residents, including me, from all backgrounds, ethnicities, cultures and faiths to learn more about each other in a warm, welcoming environment and to foster even stronger communal bonds between neighbours.

I also took the opportunity to catch up with the Gungahlin Community Council, who are active as ever, and got the chance to meet with the Gungahlin Rotary Club, another crucial point of community contact and very vigorous in their representation of their members through their advocacy and concern for Gungahlin's development. I note that the club are holding their first community market since the beginning of the pandemic this Sunday on Hinder Street, in the town centre, from 9 am until 1 pm.

I have been engaging heavily with my constituents this year so far; we have hit the ground running. Thanks to everyone I have spoken to, particularly those in my home suburb of Giralang and everywhere else in the electorate.

YOGIE Awards 2020

MR DAVIS (Brindabella) (3.35): I rise today in my capacity as the ACT Greens spokesperson for young people. I am the youngest member of this place to speak to issues pertinent to young people in Canberra. In particular, I acknowledge that the speech I am about to present has been prepared by my new staff member, Jordan, who is a particularly young person who makes me look aged and distinguished by comparison. As a young member of this place, I take quite seriously my responsibility

to ensure that I can create ways, both paid and unpaid, for young people to access this building and have their voices heard in this space.

I rise today to acknowledge the achievements of the people that were awarded at the annual YOGIE youth worker awards in early December last year. The YOGIE awards seek to celebrate the outstanding work done by individuals within the community in order to assist struggling young people in the ACT.

The YOGIE award winners are divided into two categories: community groups and individual recipients. I congratulate the following programs and community organisations who received awards: Companion House; the Safe and Connected Youth Program; and CatholicCare Canberra and Goulburn in partnership with the Woden Community Council. I also congratulate Lisa Tolhurst, Michael Tabart, Annie-Lea Rowley, Joshua White, Jayson Perrin and Sophie Trevitt for their awards.

These awards are held in high regard within the community, in particular within the youth sector. I congratulate those winners of each and every award and wish them well for their future endeavours as distinguished community and social change makers.

As the ACT Greens spokesperson for young people, I have a passion for representing Canberra's young people and the issues they face. It is essential that we nurture, encourage and value young people and represent the issues they face in this place. I wonder if Jordan knows he made me rhyme today.

For young people, systemic issues such as domestic violence, homelessness and equal access to education and health care are all interlinked and are persisting issues within the community. Indeed, these are issues I have struggled with myself. The young people of today will inherit the world of tomorrow, and as such I believe that it is up to us as elected officials to leave young people with a healthier, more resilient and more developed environment than we have now.

Movements such as School Strike 4 Climate are prime examples of the expressions of young people concerned for the future of their world and the environment that they will inherit. I fully endorse and support all young people taking part in the School Strike 4 Climate movement.

I again credit those who were awarded in December as they continue to empower and care for the next generation within the ACT. I commend their efforts and I genuinely wish to offer myself in service in this place or in my capacity as a member of the Assembly for any assistance they require into the future.

World Wetlands Day 2021

MS VASSAROTTI (Kurrajong—Minister for the Environment, Minister for Heritage, Minister for Homelessness and Housing Services and Minister for Sustainable Building and Construction) (3.38): I rise today to note and celebrate the marking of World Wetlands Day last Tuesday, 2 February. This year's theme was the intrinsic link between wetlands and freshwater, making a strong case for the vital role

wetlands play in improving both the quality and the quantity of freshwater on our planet.

Wetlands store, absorb and clean our water, as well as protecting from extreme weather events such as storms, flooding and drought by slowing the progress of water through the landscape and retaining it in the soil and in the coastal settings, providing a barrier between oceans and higher ground.

With our human-centric bias, we are used to thinking of water treatment as something that happens in highly technical and engineered environments like the Lower Molonglo Water Quality Control Centre. It has only been relatively recently that scientists have come to realise how much wetlands can do to replace or complement human-made grey or black water treatment plants.

Around the world there is good news and bad news about wetlands and waterways. China has recently adopted laws to better protect the Yangtze River. Indonesia is home to the world's largest tropical peat lands, storing around 60 billion tonnes of carbon, and has recently formed a strategic coordination team for wetlands management. Meanwhile, however, the world's wetlands are disappearing three times faster than forests—and those are disappearing fast enough. Globally, 90 per cent of wetlands have been lost since the 1700s.

As the earth's driest continent, with much of our land predicated on becoming even drier as a result of climate change, Australia has a strong imperative and much to gain by paying close attention to the health of our wetlands and to the latest research on the benefits of wetlands on our water cycle. Peat lands can store twice the amount of carbons as forests, for example.

Canberra's wetlands perform several vital roles. They mitigate flooding by slowing the large volumes of water moving through our catchments during heavy rain. They allow us to capture stormwater for use on neighbourhood ovals and parks so that we are not pouring drinkable tap water from our precious reservoirs onto the grass. They clean and filter the run-off that goes into our drains so that it flows into Australia's most important Murray-Darling river system with fewer pollutants. They help keep our suburbs cool and create a beating green heart of natural beauty and biodiversity in each of our city's major catchments.

I was already a huge fan of wetlands, especially my beloved local Dickson wetland, and fully convinced of their benefits. But after visiting Jerrabomberra Wetlands last Wednesday I am an even bigger one. It is incredible to visit this rich and dynamic wetland, a hidden jewel nestled amongst Canberra's suburbs.

As Minister for the Environment, I am so happy that the ACT is investing even more in the health of our wetlands and waterways. As in so many parts of the world, it is, sadly, no longer a matter of protecting surviving, intact wetlands but also a matter of restoring and reviving degraded wetlands, with their vital ecosystem services. This year I am delighted that we will invest a further \$1.5 million to build on the Healthy Waterways project by continuing to restore the amenity, recreational, ecological and commercial values and benefits provided by Canberra's waterways.

I remind members that wetlands deserve much more than a single day of celebration each year. If you are looking for a relaxing way to enjoy a vibrant ecosystem close to home, I suggest grabbing your bike and cycling to a restored or soon-to-be restored wetlands nearest to you.

Question resolved in the affirmative/negative.

The Assembly adjourned at 3.42 pm.