



QUESTION TIME
OF THE
LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY
FOR THE
AUSTRALIAN CAPITAL TERRITORY

HANSARD

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Ministerial arrangements

MR BARR: The minister for climate change is absent from question time today attending a ministerial council. I will endeavour to assist members with any questions in Mr Rattenbury's portfolios.

Questions without notice Gaming—Casino Canberra

MR COE: My question is to the Minister for Economic Development. Minister, when did your directorate first become aware of Aquis's plans to redevelop the Canberra Casino, and what role have executives in your agency played in evaluating the proposal?

MR BARR: The exact date, I imagine, would coincide with when Aquis made public to the stock exchange their intention to acquire the Canberra Casino; that would have been when it was first made public. I will need to check with the directorate as to whether there was any contact made prior to that time.

Members who were not here in the previous Assembly might be aware that Canberra Casino was for sale for some time and Aquis, as part of an expansion of their activities—

Mr Hanson interjecting—

MR BARR: in Australia—

MADAM SPEAKER: Mr Hanson, I know it is very early in the Ninth Assembly, but your interjection habits of the Eighth Assembly will not be greeted with any great favour in the Ninth Assembly. Please refrain.

Mr Hanson interjecting—

MR BARR: Thank you. I did perhaps invite some interjections from the former Leader of the Opposition, but he said he would only interject if I said something silly. I was simply saying—

Members interjecting—

MR BARR: I am not sure—

MADAM SPEAKER: Chief Minister, there is no encouragement in reply.

MR BARR: I am not sure that outlining that Aquis made public their intention to the stock exchange qualifies as a statement that would prompt an interjection from the former Leader of the Opposition. As I said yesterday, I am delighted that in spite of the election result he still has some fight. He is one of the few on that side who still want to carry on past battles.

But back to the subject of the Leader of the Opposition's question. In relation to plans for the Canberra Casino, Aquis made their intentions very public, as they are required to do as a publicly listed company in this country.

MR COE: Chief Minister, have you met, whilst abroad, with the owners of Aquis or their representatives?

MR BARR: I would need to check the record on that. I held a number of events in Hong Kong and Singapore on a previous trade mission, where Austrade—

Members interjecting—

MR BARR: They were lunches, where Austrade facilitated—

Mr Coe interjecting—

MR BARR: Jamie Briggs knows a bit about that. One of my favourite Liberals; that is right. The one who called you guys economic lunatics.

Mr Hanson: You model yourself on him.

MR BARR: Not at Stormies, Madam Speaker; not at Stormies. But I digress.

MADAM SPEAKER: I think you do, Chief Minister.

MR BARR: Austrade facilitated a number of events where I spoke, and there would have been 50 people in the room. I cannot be certain exactly who attended and what connections they may or may not have had to Aquis. But I was presenting on investment opportunities in the ACT more broadly. There was an open invitation to companies who were interested in investing in Australia. Many companies attended those various events in both Singapore and Hong Kong. And that is exactly what you would expect the economic development minister to do whilst abroad: present opportunities for investment in their jurisdiction. That is exactly what I did, at an open invitation event organised through the Austrade network.

MR PARTON: Can we ask: what work is being done to revalue the casino licence?

MR BARR: That is an interesting question. I am not sure that there would need to be any work done to revalue the casino licence, but I will check with the regulator to see whether that is necessary. It is a private sale from one private owner to another. Given the lecture we got this morning from the Leader of the Opposition in relation to government involving itself in private-commercial transactions, it is fascinating to get this line of questioning today.

Australian Pesticides and Veterinary Medicines Authority—proposed relocation

MR STEEL: My question is to the Chief Minister. Can the Chief Minister outline the impact of the decision by the federal government to move the Australian Pesticides and Veterinary Medicines Authority to the Deputy Prime Minister's electorate? How

will this affect the ACT economy?

MR BARR: Yes, I am pleased to be able to provide some information to Mr Steel, and I thank him for the question. I think it is universally agreed, even by those on the other side of the chamber, that this is one of the worst decisions made by a federal government in living memory.

Ms Fitzharris: And that is saying something.

MR BARR: The minister is right. That is saying something. But in this case, it goes close to being true. It is a bad decision for the agency; it is a bad decision for Canberra; and it is a bad decision for the sector. You do not need to listen to me. You need to listen to the National Farmers Federation, to CropLife Australia, to Animal Medicines Australia, who all opposed this very bad decision from the Deputy Prime Minister.

All of these peak industry bodies are, of course, headquartered in Canberra. The Deputy Prime Minister's decision will undoubtedly disrupt what is a niche and specialist industry. The move raises the prospect of a considerable deterioration in the agency's capacity to perform the functions that the Australian people have entrusted to it.

Reports are that fewer than 10 scientists in this regulator will move to Armidale; fewer than 10. So this agency is effectively being gutted and moved to Armidale—pork-barrelled into the Deputy Prime Minister's electorate in one of the most blatant political decisions that I think we have seen in this country in recent times.

The impact, as estimated by the commonwealth's own business case, is that Canberra will lose 365 direct and indirect jobs or 0.2 per cent of total employment in the territory. Of these job losses, nearly 190 come from the APVMA itself and 176 indirect jobs are lost to the economy. The ACT is \$155 million worse off as a result of this pork-barrelling exercise.

MR STEEL: Chief Minister, how is the government ensuring Canberra's economy is supported in the face of ongoing cuts by the federal Liberal government?

Mr Coe interjecting—

MR BARR: The Leader of the Opposition interjects, "Ongoing cuts". Well, yes, they are ongoing, and this is another example. Even he will not try to defend this decision. What we are doing is focusing on the role the territory government can play in supporting the ACT economy at this time and continuing that support into the future.

Canberrans voted overwhelmingly for this economic direction. Let's be very clear about this: two months ago all Canberrans were given a very clear choice about the future of economic policy, infrastructure policy and social policy in this city, and they returned this government with a bigger majority than we had four years ago. They did so because we have put in place the policies that have led to very strong economic growth in the territory and to the lowest unemployment rate in the nation, and we have plans for the future to continue to diversify our economy, to invest in the

infrastructure that our city needs and to support the private sector to grow. We will continue to do that through taxation reform and regulatory reduction through the economic development portfolio and in promoting investment, both nationally and internationally sourced, into our economy.

We are proud to do that because we believe in Canberra. We believe in our city's future, and we are prepared to do the hard work to achieve a better future for all Canberrans. That will be our focus in economic development over the next four years.

MR PETTERSSON: Chief Minister, how does that contrast with the government's policy around public service jobs?

MR BARR: It is very clear that, of the two governments in Canberra, only one is committed to this city's economic future. Only one is committed to the strength of the public sector in this city. The prospect of further cuts that might emerge from next Monday's midyear economic update from the commonwealth government and what they are foreshadowing in their budget next year ought to be a cause for concern for those of us who are supportive of Canberra and supportive of our city's role as the centre of public administration in this country.

We generally know we have hit on the raw nerve of those opposite when we start getting the interjections and they are all running away from the legacy that their political party has left for this city.

Mr Hanson interjecting—

MADAM SPEAKER: Please stop the clock. Mr Hanson, I have asked you to refrain from interjecting. Whilst we understand this is vigorous debate, I think you have been described as the most frequent interjector, and I do ask you to show some level of restraint. Chief Minister.

MR BARR: Thank you Madam Speaker. As I was saying, those opposite continue to run away from the record of their federal colleagues in relation to this city. It is disappointing to see, in this decision from the Deputy Prime Minister, that the business case was set aside, common sense was set aside and the worst of pork barrelling has come to the fore.

The contrast is that we will support the continued moderate growth of the ACT public sector to provide essential services to this community and we will provide for the maintenance of real wages for public sector workers in this territory. That will go to support many small businesses and will ensure that the ACT economy continues on this growth path.

Alexander Maconochie Centre—security

MRS JONES: My question is to the Chief Minister, who has assumed responsibility for questions to the Minister for Corrections today. Minister, in September this year two men escaped from the Alexander Maconochie Centre. How was it that they were able to escape from our prison?

MR BARR: I think this matter was canvassed in this place prior to the election. You or one of your colleagues asked a similar question of the corrections minister at that time. The issues associated with that incident are the subject of a significant security review, and I will leave it to the minister to provide further information in relation to the response of Corrective Services. Suffice to say I am not going to detail publicly exactly how those two inmates managed to have a brief burst of freedom, for obvious reasons. Suffice to say that Corrective Services are responding appropriately to the issues raised in that incident.

MRS JONES: In the interests of completing the question, minister, what actions have been taken to ensure that inmates cannot escape from the AMC?

MR BARR: As I indicated in my initial response, there has been a security review initiated. The works associated with the additional capacity and extra infrastructure inside the prison, I believe, have reached or are very close to reaching completion, so the specific issues associated with the incident earlier in the year have been addressed. But, as I say, I will leave it to the minister to provide a more detailed response, no doubt when he next appears before the relevant Assembly committee.

MR MILLIGAN: Chief Minister, how committed is your government to making sure that our community is safe from threat to the community?

MR BARR: Very committed, Madam Speaker.

Waste—management

MS LE COUTEUR: My question is to the minister for transport and community services in relation to the FOY Group's proposal to develop a plastic liquid petroleum processing facility. Can you tell the Assembly if the FOY proposal is consistent with the ACT government's waste management policy and advise whether the government will facilitate FOY Group's accessing the ACT waste stream.

MS FITZHARRIS: I thank Ms Le Couteur for her question and I know of her longstanding interest in waste management policy. It is certainly the case that the FOY Group have, as members will know, submitted an EIS, which is subject to planning processes—both the EIS and, subsequent to that, should it reach that stage, a development application. As members will also know, the waste management feasibility study, which has just commenced its second stage, is looking at how we develop waste management practices and pathways that lead us toward reaching our recycling targets, in particular, set out for 2025. If there are proposals that enable waste to be recycled and reused in a clean and sustainable way, we will welcome them in the ACT.

MS LE COUTEUR: Minister, are you aware of the reasons that the FOY Group did not receive approval to operate in New South Wales from the New South Wales EPA?

MS FITZHARRIS: No, I am not.

MS LEE: Minister, can you advise whether the government has made any inquiries or asked any questions about the harmfulness or not of emissions arising out of this

waste plant?

MS FITZHARRIS: Certainly that is the subject of the environmental impact statement, which is not my responsibility. I understand that submissions for that closed last month.

Health—investment

MR PETTERSSON: I have a question to the Minister for Health. Minister, how will the ACT government meet the growing demands placed upon the health service and ensure that services are provided to Canberrans when and where they need them?

MS FITZHARRIS: I thank Mr Pettersson for the question. Of course the growing demands on our health system and the way in which we meet those demands were subject to considerable debate throughout the recent ACT election, and that is why I feel very privileged to be here today as the Minister for Health. We also knew throughout the election campaign that the community had a strong sense of how fast we are growing—almost 5,000 new people each year—and we need to plan for this growth across all our infrastructure needs.

It is important to this Labor government that we deliver the care when and where people need it. Under our 10-year health plan we are modernising our health services, making sure we can deliver those services when and where they are needed and making sure we have the health infrastructure we need to meet the future health needs of Canberrans. We will continue to invest in health infrastructure and in health services right across our city. We will build new nurse-led walk-in centres and improve access to bulk-billing doctors. The Centenary Hospital for Women and Children will be expanded, and planning will soon get underway to build the new, world-class surgical procedures, interventional radiology and emergency centre, or SPIRE for short, on the Canberra Hospital campus. We recognise that much of the population growth in our city will occur north of the lake, so detailed planning will also commence early in this term to consider future north side hospital facilities.

We also need to make sure we can keep people out of hospital where it is clinically appropriate to do so. The capacity of our hospital in the home program will benefit from the \$40.2 million election commitment we made to fund more nurses and doctors and expand into community health centres as well as into people's homes. This will mean around 3,000 more patients a year can receive health care, while relieving pressure on our hospitals. In response to the growing demands on our health services we are developing a clinical services framework which will set the principal strategic planning tool for future health services.

We are focused on providing a range of healthcare options right across our city for Canberrans where and when they need them.

MR PETTERSSON: Minister, what role will preventative care play in the delivery of the government's 10-year plan for health?

MS FITZHARRIS: Preventative health care will play a major role in the delivery of healthcare services under this term of government. The government is committed to

preventative healthcare approaches that protect the health of Canberrans. This forms another important part of our long-term investment in health care. We will develop a preventative health strategy and appoint a preventative health coordinator to focus on keeping Canberrans healthy and out of hospital.

The coordinator will be responsible for developing preventative health strategies with a focus on addressing smoking rates, alcohol consumption and obesity, the burden of disease and reducing the growing incidence of chronic healthcare conditions. The appointment of a preventative health coordinator will drive a more effective alignment of prevention programs across ACT government and the private and non-government sector to start reducing the main causes of chronic disease.

We know that the majority of the burden of disease experienced by the community extends from chronic conditions. About a third of this burden is potentially preventable by reducing lifestyle factors like smoking, poor physical activity, poor diet and the unhealthy use of alcohol, as well as physical factors like obesity, high blood pressure and high cholesterol levels.

We have made significant investments in prevention which have yielded some important wins like children drinking fewer sugary drinks, adults increasing their levels of active travel and slowing the growth in obesity among children. But we must build on this work and consider ways to strengthen it by looking at what has been working well and what has not.

Long-term investment in preventative health programs will help Canberrans stay healthy, help our community thrive and ultimately assist the health system to remain sustainable into the future.

MS CODY: Minister, what improvements are being made to the delivery of emergency care for Canberrans?

MS FITZHARRIS: I thank Ms Cody for the supplementary question. The ACT government will make sure that Canberra's public hospitals continue to provide excellent emergency care for patients in and around the ACT. It is a little-known fact, as I mentioned yesterday, that the Canberra Hospital emergency department is one of the 10 busiest emergency departments in Australia. In the last financial year ACT public hospital emergency departments recorded 135,307 presentations, a four per cent increase when compared to the same period last year. But we are working to address pressures in our emergency departments, and the recent expansion of the Canberra Hospital ED will increase the capacity by more than a third.

Patients are already benefiting from the improvements the government has made to emergency care at the Canberra Hospital ED. The number of patients completing their emergency department treatment within a four-hour period has significantly increased. The daily average was around 63 per cent more than a year ago; in June this year the result had lifted to an average of almost 74 per cent.

So far this year we have seen the opening of key areas of the ED expansion: the new mental health short-stay unit, paediatric streaming, a new discharge stream and the extra emergency medicine unit. The resuscitation area also now has two additional

bays that have the ability to be used for negative pressure isolation if required. Upgrades to the triage and main waiting areas have been completed. They are a huge improvement, and ED medical imaging equipment has been installed and will soon be fully operational. This will be the final component of the rebuild and it will open before Christmas.

I should also point out that a new emergency department will be built next to the SPIRE centre, allowing the existing emergency department to be dedicated to women and children. Work on this scoping study, as I mentioned, will start early in 2017.

Alexander Maconochie Centre—methadone program

MS LEE: Madam Speaker, my question is to the Minister for Health. How many times have prisoners been placed on a methadone program when they were not addicted to heroin?

MS FITZHARRIS: Thank you for the question. I will take that on notice and provide the Assembly with more detail. It may well happen within the prison environment.

MS LEE: How many times have prisoners been prescribed methadone for pain?

MS FITZHARRIS: I will take that one on notice.

MRS JONES: Again, perhaps operating in corrections as well, what action has been taken to review methadone use at the AMC since the Moss report? If no action has been taken, then why not?

MS FITZHARRIS: I will take that on notice. I certainly know the government is focused on implementing the recommendations of the Moss report.

Domestic and family violence

MS CODY: My question is for the Minister for the Prevention of Domestic and Family Violence. Minister, can you please advise the Assembly of the work being undertaken to reduce family violence in our community, in particular the significance of the recent 16 days of activism global campaign.

MS BERRY: I thank the member for her question. Unfortunately, domestic and family violence remains an issue that continues to affect our entire community, something that the member reminded us all about yesterday in her first speech. Domestic and family and sexual violence are overwhelmingly perpetrated by men against women in their homes and many children witness and are affected by this violence. We know that we must continue to build on better ways to change this reality.

After the election in October, one of the great things that our government did immediately, led by our Chief Minister, was to clearly articulate our firm commitment to tackling and eliminating domestic and family violence in our community. We did this through the establishment of a dedicated portfolio, a ministry that has been created for the first time in the ACT specifically for the prevention of domestic and

family violence, which I have carriage of. This action ensures that we stand out as one of the most committed and progressive governments across the nation on this matter. This decision follows on from Labor's commitment through the 2016-17 budget, which provided a dedicated funding stream and allocated \$21.42 million to the safer families package.

On 25 November, which many of us know is the United Nations International Day for the Elimination of Violence against Women and also White Ribbon Day, the world began to observe 16 days of activism, which is a global campaign against gender-based violence. The campaign ran until last Saturday, 10 December, which was Human Rights Day. The significance, of course, is that the 16 days of activism are designed to raise awareness about and reduce gender-based violence in our community and across the world.

In the ACT, the Canberra community participated in a social media campaign designed to raise awareness, educate and talk about how we can all play a part in making our community safer.

MS CODY: Minister, how does the 16-days campaign contribute to making families safer in the ACT?

MS BERRY: The 16 days of activism campaign provided us all with the opportunity to join together locally, across Australia and around the world to raise awareness about the need for collective action and talk about what action we could take to ensure that we all live free from violence. As I said during the campaign, I believe that if we work together, we can stop the violence that is happening in our community.

Real change takes a whole-of-community effort. We need to start the conversation to build understanding and change attitudes. Over the 16 days the ACT government participated in this global campaign in a number of ways: through a dedicated social media campaign that included messages from personalities such as Allen Tung, Amanda Whitley, Camille Young and our coordinator-general, Jo Wood, as well as others in our community who are all working together to do their bit to eliminate violence.

The campaign colour is orange and we did our best to reflect this across our campaign. We encouraged members of the community to wear orange—if ever there was a time to make orange look good, this was it. In this vein, we were able to have a number of Canberra landmarks also don orange, such as the Carillon, the Telstra Tower and the new Majura bridge.

Across the ACT there were a number of community events held—launches and morning teas—all enabling us to spread the 16 days message. Over the 16 days I was also able to talk at the launch of the women's legal centre's domestic violence program, which provides a service to women who have experienced domestic or family violence.

Last Friday I invited about 50 Canberrans, many of whom work on the front line to reduce violence in our community, to come together to celebrate how far we had come and to look to the progress that we needed in the future. As a final push, last

week at COAG on 9 December, which was the last working day of the campaign, domestic and family violence was on the agenda. It is important that we keep this debate going—(*Time expired.*)

MS ORR: Minister, can you provide more information about the ACT's safer families package?

MS BERRY: Thank you for the supplementary question on this important issue. As I said, through the 2016-17 budget we made the first big commitment to this area through a \$21 million safer families package. This is how we plan to ultimately deliver a safer community for everyone. Importantly, we now have a dedicated minister to lead this issue.

We are already making some great progress through the delivery of the safer families package. In late November, we appointed the first full-time Coordinator-General for Family Safety to drive the cultural change and lead reform in partnership with government agencies, non-government services and the Canberra community. I know that this position has been well received in the community, and I look forward to hearing more good things as she progresses through the initiatives.

We have also commenced work on the development of the ACT's first family safety hub, to provide a multi-agency service response, including safety risk assessments and safety plans, coordinated support, including case management and referral pathways, as well as information sharing. We know that creating this hub is complex and it will take some time to get it right, but I believe we are on the way to achieving the outcome that we want.

The office of the coordinator-general will be working across the government on this issue, and she will also engage with our state and federal counterparts to ensure that we are getting the best outcomes nationally. Having a dedicated portfolio clearly represents our commitment to addressing family violence and ensuring that our community continues to become safer for everyone. It also presents us with the opportunity to tackle this situation of violence once and for all: a whole-of-government and whole-community response. The ACT is a small but dynamic city, and I know that if any place can drive change for our vulnerable, particularly in this area of policy, the ACT can.

Gungahlin—public school places

MR MILLIGAN: My question is to the Minister for Education and Early Childhood. Minister, parents are advising that there is a shortage of places in primary schools in Gungahlin, particularly in new suburbs such as Franklin. What is the government doing to address the shortage?

MS BERRY: I thank the member for the question. In June last year the ACT government tabled its report on school capacity and I refer the member to that report. With particular reference to Franklin, I might have to come back to the Assembly with detail on that specific school. But the report on school capacity is available for you to refer to.

MR MILLIGAN: Minister, what is your advice to parents of young children living in Franklin as to where they can enrol their children?

MS BERRY: I would advise parents in Gungahlin to have a look at all the public schools and all the schools that are available for enrolment but also to go to the education website which is the best place that they can get information about where they can enrol their children.

MR COE: Minister, what are the specific plans for the expansion of Franklin school as per what you announced in the election campaign? Specifically is it about expanding the kindy to year 2 or is it about lengthening the school to year 6?

MS BERRY: I will have to get some detail back to members about what the future plans for school capacity across the city are. Of course in Gungahlin we have a community that has been growing faster than any other community in the country. Indeed, in all our schools we need to have a look at the shifting and changing behaviour of our community. We never thought that people would start moving from the suburbs into higher density accommodation. So we have to look at the capacity of the schools currently in the city because human behaviour is changing. This is a challenge for any government to be able to manage.

Mr Coe: What was your election promise?

MS BERRY: I have responded to the question. They keep interjecting. I have said that I will provide detail, and I will.

Mr Coe interjecting—

MS BERRY: You have asked about school capacity. So I am trying to respond to that. I have responded to the question.

MADAM SPEAKER: There is no need to respond to the interjections, minister.

Aboriginals and Torres Strait Islanders—grants programs

MS ORR: My question is to the Minister for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Affairs. Minister, can you please provide the Assembly with further details about the current round of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander grants

MS STEPHEN-SMITH: I thank Ms Orr for her question and her interest in Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander affairs. I am delighted to talk about the ACT Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander grants program, which I announced the opening of earlier this month. The 2016-17 grants program has three streams with a total of \$200,000 in funding available. The three streams are cultural grants, leadership grants, and a scholarship program to support employment.

Under the cultural grants scheme, individuals can apply for up to \$3,000 and organisations up to \$5,000 to assist in a program or event that will promote wider understanding of the cultures of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people living in the ACT community.

The aim of the leadership grants stream is to provide financial assistance to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people so that they can undertake learning activities to enhance their leadership skills and abilities. Under this stream individuals can apply for up to \$3,000 and organisations up to \$10,000.

Under the scholarship program, individuals can apply for up to \$5,000 to undertake study and training that will enhance and support their employment prospects in the ACT and further develop the skills needed to sustain a career.

All three grants programs work towards fostering an engaged and connected community in which Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander culture is valued and celebrated. These grants programs demonstrate the ongoing commitment of the ACT government to the aims of the ACT Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander agreement 2015-18 by working with the ACT Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community to improve cultural and educational outcomes to share a positive vision for the future of our community.

Applications close at 5pm on Tuesday, 31 January, and I would encourage all eligible applicants to consider submitting an application. (*Time expired.*)

MS ORR: Minister, what outcomes for the ACT's Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community have been achieved following previous grants rounds?

MS STEPHEN-SMITH: I thank Ms Orr for her supplementary question, and I apologise that I will have my back to her again. Madam Speaker, the 2015-16 grants program supported some very exciting community projects and I am pleased to share some examples with you.

The Tuggeranong Community Arts Association received a grant of \$15,000 towards its documentary on the life of Ngunnawal elder Aunty Agnes Shea, whom I am sure we all think of with great fondness. This project is an important living history which shares stories of the Ngunnawal connection with our region and the wider ACT community. The film, titled *Footprints on Our Land*, was made by acclaimed documentary film-maker, Ms Pat Fiske. The film shows Aunty Agnes as a survivor, an advocate for her people and a much-respected and loved figure of reconciliation in the ACT.

Another project funded under the leadership grants was for \$6,560 to 2XX FM to provide an announcement and presentation workshop for aspiring Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander broadcasters. Namadgi School, YWCA Canberra and Carers ACT were also awarded grants through the leadership stream, with the funding being used for a range of activities designed to develop the leadership skills of young Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women.

Another example of what has been achieved by a cultural grant is the Capital Woodland and Wetlands Conservation Association's establishment of the Jerrabomberra wetlands bush tucker garden. This natural resource will be used to educate Canberrans, particularly school groups, about native plants and the traditional uses of bush tucker.

I am very pleased to say that the training and employment program related activities were successfully supported in 2015-16, with almost \$69½ thousand of scholarship grants. (*Time expired.*)

MS CHEYNE: Minister, what outcomes would you like to see following the 2016-17 grants?

MS STEPHEN-SMITH: I thank Ms Cheyne for her supplementary question. The aim of the ACT Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander grants program, as I said, is to encourage and support ACT Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander residents to undertake study and training and to promote Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander culture in the broader community. The outcome I hope to see from this grants round is the funding of projects and initiatives that will empower Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Canberrans, create confidence and self-esteem and celebrate Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultures.

With the 50th anniversary of the 1967 referendum and the 25th anniversary of the Mabo High Court decision, I would especially encourage community organisations to consider applying for a grant for community events that celebrate these two important cultural milestones in our nation's history.

In respect of the scholarship grant stream, I look forward to continuing to support Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community members to be fully engaged in opportunities for lifelong learning, particularly those community members wishing to undertake vocational and tertiary education and training.

Last Friday, I spent an enjoyable evening at the graduation ceremony for the Australian Indigenous Leadership Centre's certificate II and certificate IV graduates. These young, and some not-so-young, people represent the future of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander leadership in our country. I encourage Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Canberrans to apply for these grants programs and to participate in activities like that that are going to strengthen their leadership skills and their capacity to stand up for their community into the future.

I look forward to announcing the details of the successful grant applications next year, and I encourage all members in this place to speak with their local communities about what they may be able to apply for and achieve under this program.

Trade unions—workplace health and safety funding

MR HANSON: My question is to the Minister for Workplace Safety and Industrial Relations. Minister, has the government implemented the recommendations of the 2014 review into the WHS liaison officer funding allocated to Unions ACT?

MS STEPHEN-SMITH: Thank you very much, Mr Hanson, for your question. I am going to have to take that question on notice. I can tell you that we have looked into that but I have not got the information with me at this time.

MR HANSON: Thanks, minister. Given that one of the recommendations of the

2014 review was that a further review be undertaken in three years time, could you advise the schedule for that next review and when it will occur.

MS STEPHEN-SMITH: Thank you again for the supplementary question. I have now found some more information. An annual grant is provided to support UnionsACT's work health and safety awareness activities, as you are aware. Specifically, the grant enables UnionsACT to engage one or more persons to assist in raising and increasing awareness of work health and safety issues and resources in territory workplaces, facilitating access to work health and safety training for employers and employees, providing other work health and safety services advice and support to employers and employees, and undertaking research into work health safety and related matters. The agreement has been the subject of two independent reviews, as you noted. Both reviews supported the effectiveness and continuation of the grant.

MR COE: Minister, when will the next review take place; what value for money is being received for the \$371,000 budgeted for the next three years; and has any of the research which has been undertaken by UnionsACT actually been published?

MS STEPHEN-SMITH: I thank the Leader of the Opposition for the supplementary question. I will have to take the last part of the question on notice, in regard to whether the research has been published. I can advise the Assembly that in July 2016 the funding mechanism was converted to a deed of grant for a period of three years, from 1 July to 30 June 2019. This change was responsive to a recommendation in the previous independent review. Going to the first question I was asked, the total funding amount over this grant period is \$371,394.

ACTION bus service—sustainability

MRS KIKKERT: My question is to the Minister for Transport and City Services regarding ACTION bus services. Is the current ACTION budget sustainable and what cuts to services are being developed?

MS FITZHARRIS: I thank Mrs Kikkert for her question. Certainly ACTION under the Transport Canberra agency is a very sustainable operation. As members will know, we have made investments this year and we also, prior to the caretaker period in the last Assembly, made significantly more investments in the ACTION bus network. We have seen innovations, for example, the city loop service, which is very successful, carrying 350 people each weekday around the city, a service not previously available which we have funded.

We also have innovated with the new Nightrider service where not only are we taking more people home at night in the December period but we are partnering in a really innovative partnership with Uber to get people what is commonly called the last mile home.

We are planning to increase the number of people in Canberra who choose to walk or cycle or catch an ACTION bus. We plan to do that by providing them with a more appealing service and giving them real opportunity to leave the car at home and catch public transport. Of course, over all that is an integrated transport system, and key to

that will be building light rail stage 1, getting underway with the planning of light rail stage 2 and integrating our bus network into the light rail network as well.

MRS KIKKERT: What is the rationale for changing the livery of ACTION buses, and is it your plan to change the livery on all existing buses or just for new ones as they are delivered?

MS FITZHARRIS: I thank Mrs Kikkert for the supplementary. Certainly new buses will contain new livery but on many occasions you will see buses with a lot of different livery operating around the city. That is a legacy issue of buses being bought at different times. Members of the previous Assembly will have been familiar with the relaunch of the Transport Canberra agency. The city loop bus, which you will see operating around the city, has some new and exciting and quite a dynamic design. We are certainly looking to be able to expand that across the fleet as we bring new buses into the fleet, which we are expecting to do in the very near future.

MR DOSZPOT: Minister, when will the city loop bus be cancelled?

MS FITZHARRIS: There are no plans to cancel the city loop.

Cycle paths—signage

MR DOSZPOT: My question is to the Minister for Transport and City Services. The *Canberra Times* reported on Monday, 5 December the very sad story of Ravinder Singh from Monash whose family pet dog was killed by a cyclist on a shared path near her home as she and a friend were out walking with a two-year-old girl in a pram. During the 2015-16 estimates hearings, Roads ACT Director, Mr Tony Gill, outlined the importance of promoting good and acceptable behaviour on shared paths and improving behavioural sign posting across the shared path network. The committee recommended that the government consider installing behavioural signposts around Lake Tuggeranong and Emu Inlet, as well as line markings for the benefit of pedestrians and cyclists. The government agreed with this recommendation. Minister, could you advise the Assembly if these works have been undertaken? If so, what is the status of these works?

MS FITZHARRIS: Thank you, Mr Doszpot, for the question. I certainly sympathise with the family who lost their pet and would take the opportunity to encourage everyone on all our paths and all our roads to be considerate. I certainly remember that, Mr Doszpot. I was a member of that committee that made that recommendation. My understanding is that there is work underway to improve signage across a number of paths. I do not know the status of any particular improved signage around Lake Tuggeranong but I will take that on notice and come back to the Assembly.

MR DOSZPOT: Minister, it would be good to know how many signs were installed, and where, but what powers does a ranger have to control behaviour on shared paths, and how often does a ranger patrol shared paths?

MS FITZHARRIS: I thank Mr Doszpot for a supplementary question. I will take that on notice but, again, to the extent that we could all do with being a bit more considerate just a bit more of the time, it would prevent incidents like this on our

roads, on our footpaths and on our cycle paths. I will take the specifics of the question and come back to the Assembly.

MRS KIKKERT: Minister, what are you and your department doing about shared paths to ensure that a terrible situation does not happen again?

MS FITZHARRIS: Certainly, our path network, our shared paths and our on-road and off-road cycle paths will be a priority for me in this term. They are part of building an integrated transport system. They are part of keeping us active and healthy. The Labor Party made a number of commitments to improving shared paths, footpaths, both in terms of maintenance and upgrades and in terms of building new footpaths. We invest in footpaths every year. We invest in their maintenance and we invest in their upgrade. One showcase election commitment that Labor made was to build the Belconnen bikeway, which will provide a showcase in Canberra for off-road segregated cycle lanes. This will mean that cyclists in and around the Belconnen town centre, pedestrians in and around the Belconnen town centre and traffic in and around the town centre will be segregated. This will provide a real opportunity not only to increase walking and cycling and make it more comfortable, but also to make it safer in the Belconnen town centre.

Access Canberra—government transactions

MS CHEYNE: My question is to the Minister for Regulatory Services. Can the minister please outline to the Assembly how the government is improving people's transactions with government?

MR RAMSAY: Thank you to Ms Cheyne for the question and for her ongoing and clear dedication to making sure that life is easier and more practical for her constituents. The government is absolutely committed to making sure that all of its services are easier, simpler and faster for Canberrans to use. Our aim is to ensure that we enable Canberrans to do business with government in the way that works best for them.

Access Canberra offices across a wide variety of previously separate functions have now come together and are working together more than ever to ensure that clear and consistent advice and assistance are provided to the public and to businesses through streamlined processes. As just one example, Access Canberra now has a coordinated inspection program for events such as the Christmas in the city markets that are being set up just outside this building right now. This coordinated inspection approach reduces the amount of time that event organisers need to spend in dealing with government officials, as nice as government officials are.

Access Canberra continues to provide flexibility in its approach to regulatory enforcement by supporting those members of our community, who may be struggling financially, to manage finances through a variety of options including entering into payment plans, undertaking social work or entering a social development plan and, in exceptional circumstances, seeking a waiver of the infringement notice penalty. We have been working to help our customers to interact with us in the simplest way possible, with those requiring birth, death or marriage certificates—something I have had some practice with in the past—now being able to apply on line; this is reducing

the need to attend a shopfront.

So we will continue to streamline our processes to provide seamless interactions for the services that we provide and make it easier for the public and for businesses to deal with us.

MS CHEYNE: Minister, are you able to tell the Assembly more about how the new Access Canberra website will make it easier to do business with government?

MR RAMSAY: Thank you, Ms Cheyne, for the supplementary. As Minister for Regulatory Services, one of the first things that I did was to launch the new Access Canberra website on 7 November this year. The new site structure was improved by paying close attention to the feedback that we received from the Canberra community and from businesses, again to ensure that we meet their needs. Access Canberra now delivers approximately 60 per cent of its transactional services digitally, which is fast and efficient, and still maintains accessibility issues for those who are less able to interact online.

The new website brings together consolidated information and the ability to complete more transactions online than ever before. It is now easier to find information online for business and regulatory services. Again, as one example, there are now interactive small business checklists. These help small businesses to find information that they need to comply with Australian consumer law and to comply with food business regulations. The website uses a smart form technology which enables Access Canberra staff to respond quickly to requests online by automating the gathering and the processing of information. A key feature of the new website is a live web chat assistant, enabling those who need help on the website to interact with an Access Canberra representative online.

The new site is a key step in the government's ongoing goal to make it easier for Canberra residents and businesses to interact with Access Canberra so that they can meet their obligations efficiently and effectively. We will continue to seek input from key stakeholder groups to look at ways that we can further streamline the site.

MR STEEL: Minister, how are Access Canberra shopfronts continuing to provide a consistent and modern service?

MR RAMSAY: I thank Mr Steel for his supplementary. Access Canberra is undertaking a relocation and a renewal of its shopfronts to help provide better counter service and to work towards being able to offer a genuine one-stop shop for all Canberrans' service needs. The existing Access Canberra Woden shopfront is relocating to the brand new Access Canberra service centre in the Cosmopolitan building in the Woden interchange in February 2017. The new Woden service centre will offer a number of new services, faster transactions and touch screen terminals so people can complete their transactions easily online. Payment at the new service centre will be electronic using debit or credit card, helping to speed up transactions.

The Access Canberra Fyshwick shopfront will close and cease operations on 23 December. Services that have been previously offered at that location will be available at existing Access Canberra service centres in Tuggeranong, Gungahlin,

Belconnen and the new centre in Woden when it opens.

Land titles and revenue services have moved from Fyshwick to Dame Pattie Menzies House in Dickson and are collocated with the Access Canberra environment, planning and land shopfront. These services have been available at the new shopfront since 1 December and make it easier to access these services all in one location.

This government's commitment to service is clearly demonstrated on the web, at the shopfront and all throughout its regulatory services. But we are continually looking to improve our services and will continue to make it easier for Canberrans to interact with us.

Electricity supply—Mitchell

MR PARTON: My question is to the Minister for Economic Development. Chief Minister, I have become aware of the administrative problems faced by Baldwin Distilling, regarding their situation accessing electricity at this Mitchell business. Baldwin Distilling is a locally owned small business and the only distillery in Canberra to make bourbon. I can tell you that your first mouthful of their bourbon will change your life, and it is never to be mixed with Coca-Cola! The Chief Minister spoke this morning of our need to sell products and services outside the territory and Baldwin Distilling are a classic example of a business doing just that. They are kicking goals. They have had a tremendous struggle to access electricity at their Mitchell property. At present the business is paying more than \$2,500 per week to hire a generator to power the site. Chief Minister, what discussions have you, your office or the planning directorate had with Mr Baldwin, and why has this issue with electricity not been rectified?

MR BARR: It is good to see that the habits of doing live-read ads have now been brought in to the Assembly. Once a talkback host, once a commercial radio host, always a commercial radio host! In fact you did that one better than the ones you did in the studio with me, as I recall. But good on you, and thank you—

Mr Coe: You've been doing a live-read for Aquis for a long time.

MR BARR: Madam Speaker, the Leader of the Opposition shouldn't give up his day job; he is not a comedian. As we go to the matter of substance, I do thank Mr Parton for raising this matter. Yes, there are, as I understand, a number of complexities associated with the electricity supply to this particular business. I understand that the relevant agencies—in this case that would be ACTEW—are seeking to work with the business owner—

Members interjecting—

MR BARR: Indeed; on the regulatory side as well. I will need to get an update on exactly where this particular issue is at. There may be a dispute, as I understand it, over the cost associated with the necessary electricity supply for the business. But I do appreciate the point that Mr Parton has raised about this particular business adding something to this sector of the ACT economy, and it would be pleasing if both the regulatory framework and the practical outcomes around electricity can be resolved to

everyone's satisfaction as soon as possible, not least so that we do not get more live reads from Mr Parton.

Mr Parton interjecting—

MADAM SPEAKER: You have not had the call, Mr Parton, so resume your seat. A supplementary, Mr Parton.

MR PARTON: Chief Minister, given the entrepreneurial nature of this business, I think it is extremely important for me to ask the question: why is your government making it so hard for this business to operate?

MR BARR: I do not believe that that is the case and I do not think—or I hope, anyway—that the member is suggesting there be any shortcuts in relation to electrical safety. Given the range of issues in this particular field of production and in this particular area—let us not forget that we have had incidents in this industrial area that caused significant damage to other surrounding businesses—I think it is important that an electricity connection is made safely and appropriately.

I am not an electrical engineer. I do not profess to have a complete understanding of all of the supply issues associated with this business but, given that it has been raised in here, I will seek some further information from the regulator and, indeed, from the electricity company as to when this issue can be resolved.

MS LEE: Chief Minister, will you commit to doing something to resolve this issue prior to Christmas, or is the government expecting the business to have a dark and dry Christmas?

MR BARR: No, I would not wish a dark and dry Christmas on anyone, Ms Lee. I must say that if there is a way to adequately resolve this issue to the satisfaction of the regulator in terms of electrical safety, the electricity company and the business before Christmas that would be a great gift to everyone in the community, to the business, to those who might enjoy the product and to those who still like reading live ads in the Assembly.

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