



**QUESTION TIME**  
OF THE  
LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY  
FOR THE  
AUSTRALIAN CAPITAL TERRITORY

**HANSARD**

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## Questions without notice

### ACT Health—reporting accuracy

**MR COE:** Madam Speaker, my question is to the Minister for Health. Minister, is the data contained in the 2015-16 annual report for the Health Directorate accurate?

**MS FITZHARRIS:** I thank Mr Coe for his question. As I said in my statement this morning, this is a serious issue that I take very seriously. I have asked for a system-wide review of all processes to do with ACT Health data and reporting. I will not only have the certainty after this process is finished that all health data can be verified and are accurate in the future but we will also be undertaking a process to look at 2015-16 data. With the assurance processes that were provided to the directorate in November last year, which also informed the processes of assurance support in the 2015-16 annual report, and as this process takes place, the annual report will be verified. I look forward to further questions in the annual report hearings next month.

**MR COE:** Minister, at the time of tabling the annual report, were you confident about the data it contained?

**MS FITZHARRIS:** Yes, I was.

**MRS DUNNE:** Why did you not explain to the Assembly, given your admissions today, that there were problems contained in the annual report data?

**MS FITZHARRIS:** As I stated in my previous answer, at the time of tabling I did have assurances on the data provided in the 2015-16 annual report. On my return from leave last Monday I was made further aware of further issues in health data within ACT Health and have subsequently spent the last week in discussions with my directorate and providing them direction on the system-wide review which I have announced today.

### Budget update

**MR PETTERSSON:** Chief Minister, can you inform the Assembly of how the government is getting on with the job of delivering its election commitments through last week's budget update?

**MR BARR:** I thank Mr Pettersson for the question and for his support, and indeed that of all of my colleagues, in the delivery of our election commitments. Last week's budget update demonstrated that we are getting on with the job of implementing those commitments that we took to the October election.

We are already getting stage 2 of light rail underway by delivering the funding to start scoping and design works. Over the course of the parliamentary term that work will progress. Whilst we will still be at a point in a few years' time to enter into the contractual arrangements of stage 2 of light rail, there still exists an opportunity for those opposite to have a third crack at running a negative campaign against public transport provision in the city.

We certainly look forward to them continuing their negative approach to this important infrastructure project for the territory.

*Opposition members interjecting—*

**MR BARR:** I am hearing some interjections. There might be a change of heart, having lost two elections now on light rail. We are hearing a little that maybe the Leader of the Opposition's position of outright opposition to light rail might be beginning to soften, but the interjections continue. Perhaps we can be confident that the Liberal Party will continue their outright opposition to public transport investment in the city.

The budget update also delivers on a number of other government commitments: commencing consultation on the new ice sports facility, boosting our city's events calendar, a strong arts funding package, and giving seniors and concession card holders access to free off peak public transport. We continue to focus on sound fiscal management of the territory's finances, and I note the significant \$85 million improvement in the territory's budget position as outlined in the update.

**MR PETTERSSON:** How is the territory's economy performing?

**MR BARR:** The budget update indicates very strong economic performance for the territory, in spite of quite an array of headwinds that we have been facing, particularly some fairly poor decisions coming from the federal Liberal government. But across the forward estimates we have maintained our clear path to return the budget to balance. We do not see a budget surplus as an end in itself—

*Opposition members interjecting—*

**MADAM SPEAKER:** Members, please let the Chief Minister continue.

**MR BARR:** It is called 'enough rope', Madam Speaker: give these guys enough rope and they might just lose a sixth election in a row, because we have a series of former leaders, wannabe leaders, across the chamber there. Over an extended period—the adult life of many of my colleagues, in fact—we have seen you guys consistently take the wrong position on economic matters and consistently take the wrong position on major infrastructure projects for this city. Long may that continue, because on this side of the chamber we will put the jobs of Canberrans first, we will put economic growth first and we will put simple, fair and efficient taxation reform at the forefront of our economic agenda in order to ensure that we have the lowest unemployment rate that we possibly can have, that our economy triples in growth, which it has done over the past three years, and that we continue to see Canberra more nationally and internationally focused. The benefits of that are seen in terms of economic growth, low unemployment, rising business confidence, strong retail sales and significant construction activity. The ACT's economy is performing very strongly.

**MS CODY:** What has the government already achieved towards its election commitments and priorities in the first 100 days since the 2016 election?

**MR BARR:** I thank Ms Cody for the question. We went to the last election with a very clear vision for the city's future and we took a progressive policy and platform across infrastructure, health, education and community service. That was a big policy agenda, almost big enough for two parties. Whilst those opposite had very little to say positively—

*Opposition members interjecting—*

**MR BARR:** and continue today in the Muppet gallery interjections that we see to this answer. They continue their negative approach to politics in this territory. Infrastructure was a clear priority for the government at the last election. Inside the first 100 days of this term we have kick started work on stage 2 of light rail. Major construction works are underway on stage 1.

Health will always be a priority for the government. That is why we have provided additional funding to combat obesity, to assist people with spinal injuries and to increase organ donation rates. We will progress major school infrastructure upgrades over the summer holiday period and we maintain our steadfast support for the safe schools program.

On environment, on social inclusion, on the arts and on urban renewal a wide range of programs and projects is already underway. The government will continue to deliver its agenda during this parliamentary term. It was a positive agenda that we took to the people and we received overwhelming support for it. We will implement that agenda over the next four years.

I anticipate that it will be opposed by the conservatives, the Australian conservative movement that misrepresents itself under the guise of the Liberal Party in this territory, the mini Bernardis over here. You will be opposing us all the way. That is a good thing because it will allow the progressive voice of this city to be heard loudly over the noisy conservative rabble that is this long-term party of opposition. This long-term party of opposition, of negativity, is a party that has nothing positive to offer this community. (*Time expired.*)

### **Planning—Curtin master plan**

**MS LE COUTEUR:** My question is to the Minister for Planning and Land Management and relates to the Curtin master plan. In light of the petition with almost 2,000 signatures tabled this morning, can the minister assure the Curtin community that the government will ensure that the building approved will be consistent with the height limits shown in the draft Curtin master plan, and that these height limits will be continued in the final master plan?

**MR GENTLEMAN:** I thank Ms Le Couteur for her question. It is very important, as we go forward in planning for the territory, to ensure that we have all of the community's views in place when we are doing these important pieces of work. Master planning, of course, is a very important planning process across the territory, and we have seen some fantastic, successful results from master planning as well.

It is important that we look at opportunities for master planning in some of the older areas where residents have asked for some renewal. Curtin is a really good example, I think. We are going through that master planning process now. It began some time ago, in early 2015. The second round of community engagement on the master plan concluded early last year.

Some of the key messages from the community engagement indicated that there was strong community support for the recommendations within that draft master plan. There was also a range of community concerns raised about parking, building height, bulk and scale of development—close to that central courtyard as well. It is important that we take on board the representations this morning from the community regarding their views on whether developments fit within the master planning process. Of course, it still is a draft master plan, so it is yet to be concluded.

In regard to the development application, I can assure members of the Assembly that the independent authority will take into consideration whether or not the development application fits into the current rules and requirements of the territory plan. It is important that during the process of a development application, while the master plan process is occurring, the directorate works with property owners to prepare the right material that could go back to the community for another round of consultation on the master planning process. In the meantime, as we have heard, the owner at 44 Curtin Place has lodged that application now. (*Time expired.*)

**MS LE COUTEUR:** Can the minister assure the community that if the owners of section 62 block 7 carry out their threat to close the shops if they do not get their way, the government will use compliance actions and any other options to ensure that residents continue to have a shopping centre?

**MR GENTLEMAN:** I thank Ms Le Couteur for the supplementary question. It is important, of course, that we provide these sorts of conveniences for the residents of Curtin and other areas as well. Within that context, of course, there is a decision yet to be made by the independent authority, and it is important that we do have that independent authority to make a decision on that case.

In regard to earlier comments about what the proponent intends to do if they do not get approval or if they do get approval, it would be, I think, improper for me to make comments in that regard whilst it is going through that development application process.

### **ACT Health—reporting accuracy**

**MRS DUNNE:** My question is to the Minister for Health. Minister, when were you first advised about the current data problems with the Health Directorate data?

**MS FITZHARRIS:** I thank Mrs Dunne for the question. As I noted in my previous answer, I was advised of the current problems on my return from leave last Monday.

**MRS DUNNE:** Were you briefed on issues relating to data problems when you were the Assistant Minister for Health?

**MS FITZHARRIS:** Yes. As I indicated in my earlier answer, I was briefed on the issues regarding the quarterly performance reports last year when I was Assistant Minister for Health. I was not responsible for those reports, but I was briefed at the time. As I noted in my statement, the Director-General of ACT Health took immediate action to further understand those issues when she became aware of them after budget estimates last year.

**MR HANSON:** Minister, when did your directorate first become aware of the discrepancies, and how long did it take them to inform you?

**MS FITZHARRIS:** My directorate informed me, on my return from leave last Monday, on broader data accuracy issues, as I have previously stated. I was advised last year—

**Mr Hanson:** When did they become aware?

**MS FITZHARRIS:** Monday, 6 February.

### **ACT Health—reporting accuracy**

**MR HANSON:** My question is to the Minister for Health. Minister, which health services are you concerned about with regard to the accuracy of data?

**MS FITZHARRIS:** I am not concerned about health services, but we will be doing a system-wide review of all data processes. Some datasets, not all, were unable to be ready in time to be provided to the Australian Institute of Health and Welfare for their input into the 2017 report on government services produced by the Productivity Commission. I have no specific datasets that I can comment on right now, other than to say that all datasets will be verified over the course of the system-wide review.

**MR HANSON:** Minister, are the problems related to the original collection of the data, to any subsequent reporting of that data to another authority or with manipulation of the data?

**MS FITZHARRIS:** I would like to assure all members of the Assembly, through you, Madam Speaker, that I have no concerns about manipulation of any data but the review will be into data processes, data warehousing analysis for the purpose of reporting on a wide range of reports to the community, to the Assembly and to our commonwealth stakeholders.

**MRS DUNNE:** Minister, have any system changes been made since this issue was identified, going back to estimates last year, and what action has been taken to rectify previous datasets?

**MS FITZHARRIS:** As I have noted, action was taken to verify datasets specifically for the 2015-16 series of quarterly reports but since then the system-wide review will look into all processes to do with data and data reporting.

**Schools—2017 school year**

**MS CODY:** My question is to the Minister for Education and Early Childhood Development. Minister, can you update members on the start of the 2017 school year, please.

**MS BERRY:** I thank Ms Cody for the question. This is a very important question. Many here will know firsthand that school has now gone back, and I am sure that any of you with young children now have your afternoons and evenings full of chattering conversation about the school day's activities and what is going on at school. It is a really exciting time for many, and I can report that the start to the 2017 year has gone very well in our schools.

On 30 January, I started my day visiting Palmerston District Primary School to welcome kindergarten students starting their first day of school. I enjoyed meeting parents and carers as well as their children as they began their education journey into big school and beyond. The first day at school can be a nervous but exciting moment for parents as much as students, so it was nice to be able to meet with them and share in that experience.

This year across the whole of the ACT's school system, approximately 75,000 students are studying across our 132 schools: 87 government and 45 non-government schools. This includes the 4,500 preschoolers who started their school experience within our schools. In our government schools specifically, we have nearly 25,000 primary school level students, around 10,500 high school students and over 6,500 college students. Our schools are diverse and welcoming.

I was also able to hand out the new edition of the popular guide *Starting school: a guide for families*, which provides some useful and important information for parents and carers as their children begin formal schooling. I am confident that parents and carers will find the advice and practical tips in this guide useful to help them and their children prepare for those first few weeks of preschool and kindergarten.

**MS CODY:** Minister, what support is available for students and families who are attending school?

**MS BERRY:** School communities are a great source of support for new students and families. The ACT government also supports low income families by providing additional funding to individual students and schools. The student resource allocation funding provides for an additional means-based loading of \$10.6 million and the school equity program around \$280,000.

We also have a range of other grants to assist students that need additional support. The secondary bursary scheme provides an annual one-off payment to low income families who have students in year 7 to year 10. The schools equity fund provides targeted assistance to low SES schools for a range of activities such as targeted literacy and numeracy programs, cultural events and establishing stronger community connections to encourage parent participation.

The student support fund supports individual students in areas such as clothing, food and cultural experiences and the tutorial support scheme provides funds for schools to implement targeted strategies and programs to meet individual the learning needs and aspirations of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students.

Through the future of education discussion paper, which I will speak about later this week, we will take a close look to make sure that these initiatives continue to support our children and young people to reach their full potential and to get the best outcomes through their education years.

**MS CHEYNE:** Minister, what investment has the government made in teaching and learning facilities available to students over the coming year?

**MS BERRY:** This government continues to invest in additional funding to ensure our learning facilities are continuing to improve for our students every year. We will continue to expand schools in the Gungahlin district through the schools capital upgrades program, which includes Harrison School, Amaroo School, Neville Bonner Primary School and Palmerston preschool.

The Belconnen High School modernisation program, which places an emphasis on science, technology, engineering and mathematics—STEM—curriculum programs will enable the school to continue to deliver modern facilities for students, staff and visitors and support enrolment demand in south Belconnen and the future development areas of Riverview and Molonglo.

Work is progressing at the Caroline Chisholm School on the centre for innovation and learning, which will deliver, science, technology, engineering and mathematics programs to students in the Tuggeranong school network. The new centre will include multipurpose learning spaces and state-of-the art equipment to support students enrolled at Caroline Chisholm School, feeder primary schools and the Tuggeranong school network as well as providing professional development to teachers from across the ACT public school system.

This, of course, is just a snapshot of some of the work that is going on across our schools. This year we also have new IT across our schools, which includes 2,625 new PCs delivered for teachers and expanded wireless in schools. ACT secondary schools are now the best connected in the country.

Of course, the \$100 million commitment for upgrades to schools which was announced during last year's election will continue this important work in building and further enhancing our learning spaces to support our teachers and students to achieve the best outcomes.

### **ACT Health—reporting accuracy**

**MRS KIKKERT:** My question is to the Minister for Health. What policy decisions were made on the basis of false data?

**MS FITZHARRIS:** I thank Mrs Kikkert for the question. None, to my knowledge.

**MRS KIKKERT:** What decisions take place within the hospital administration that rely on these sets of data?

**MS FITZHARRIS:** As I indicated this morning, health data is very important to a range of different stakeholders, both within the health system and the hospital, within the community and our health stakeholders. There is a process underway to assure the community and our stakeholders of the accuracy of all ACT data reporting. That process will take place and as each report and product is made available extra assurance processes will be applied to this.

**Mr Coe:** Point of order, Madam Speaker, on relevance. The specific question was: what decisions take place within the hospital administration? The minister has not come to that part of the question, which is in effect the question.

**MADAM SPEAKER:** The minister has some time left. She has answered and I am sure she will get to the point as she finishes.

**MS FITZHARRIS:** Decisions are made every day across the ACT health system, based on many different inputs, of course data being one of them. There is no falsified data that informs any ACT Health decision.

**MRS DUNNE:** Minister, how can you be confident that health administrators were not misled when making decisions regarding staffing, procedures or other resource allocations based on false data?

**MS FITZHARRIS:** It goes to the initial question from Mrs Kikkert. There was no false data. I want to be very clear: there was no false data, and no decision has been made on false data.

### **Electricity—outages**

**MS LEE:** My question is to the Minister for Regulatory Services. Minister, last Friday and over the weekend there was speculation that the ACT may experience power outages due to the predicted hot weather conditions and people were asked to consider how best to conserve their power needs. Who made that judgement that there could be power outages and on what basis was that assessment made?

**MR RATTENBURY:** Madam Speaker, I am the minister responsible for those matters. I was advised, through you Madam Speaker to Ms Lee, that, based on feedback from the Australian Energy Market Operator, otherwise known as AEMO, they were monitoring the New South Wales network for the likely outcomes last Friday and they formed the view most of the way through Thursday afternoon that the demand between about 4 pm and 6.30 pm on Friday would exceed the available supply.

This was a combination of two factors. One was that because of the extremely hot conditions affecting large parts of New South Wales and the ACT there would be increased levels of demand, particularly for air conditioning.

The second factor was that there was some lack of availability in New South Wales. There was speculation that two coal-fired power stations in New South Wales would not be able to operate at full capacity due to the heat that the state was likely to experience.

**MS LEE:** In the last week what and where did power outages occur? What was the cause?

**MR RATTENBURY:** I would have to take the specific details on those on notice. But I can give Ms Lee a broad statement now. My advice is that there were no outages caused by what might be considered a power shortfall, or deemed power shortfall. There were some outages in the Belconnen area last Friday afternoon. They were unrelated to that. I will need to provide members with detailed answers. I will do that as soon as I can.

**MR PARTON:** Minister, what preventative measures are being considered in the event of a similar situation occurring again this season?

**MR RATTENBURY:** To my knowledge this is the first time this has ever happened for the ACT, largely driven by broader events in the New South Wales grid. For a couple of reasons I have instructed my directorate to undertake a close evaluation of how last Friday played out. Going back to Ms Lee's original question, in light of that energy shortfall, we asked the community to consider switching off unnecessary power use to try to avoid that situation where there was an energy shortfall. We need to evaluate how effective that was. There are certainly indications that both in the ACT and across New South Wales, where a similar call was made, the community responded and there was a reduction in demand. That appears to be what ensured there was not a shortfall.

I have asked my directorate to also review the communications side of that. In going to Mr Parton's question directly, it is likely this will happen again in the future. We are likely to experience more extremely hot days. That is certainly the modelling for the future climate of the ACT and surrounding regions. We need to look very closely at what worked on this occasion, what did not and what protocols we might put in place if this is required again in the future.

### **Planning—Curtin master plan**

**MS LAWDER:** My question is to the Minister for Planning and Land Management. Minister, in relation to the Curtin group centre master plan, which began in early 2015 and had a second round in early 2016, why has it taken so long, and when do you expect the master plan for Curtin to be finalised?

**MR GENTLEMAN:** I gave some information earlier, in a preface to an answer in regard to the Curtin development application. Master plans do take a while, and it is important that we go through all of the opportunities to engage with the community on the master plan. Interestingly, what occurs on a number of occasions is that, as master plans and the draft process go forward and community consultation begins, more people get involved and there are more opportunities for listening to a wider, broad church in the community about the outcomes for a particular master plan, in this case Curtin, of course.

That is why it takes that length of time. Of course, it is a draft process, and we re-engage when other opportunities come up through the master planning process. I will not outline when this master plan will be completed. I hope that it is in the not-too-distant future, and that we will be able to announce it shortly.

**MS LAWDER:** Minister, how, if at all, will the draft Curtin group master plan inform the DA assessment process given that it is not finalised?

**MR GENTLEMAN:** It will be finalised, as master plans are finalised. They do inform then the territory planning and decision-making process of the independent authority. So I am sure that it will not be too long until the consultation rounds are completed with all of the stakeholders and the master plan is finalised.

**Ms Lawder:** Point of order.

**MADAM SPEAKER:** Point of order.

**Ms Lawder:** The question was about how it would influence the DA, given that it is not finalised, not whether the master plan would be finalised at all. So it is as to relevance to the original question.

**MADAM SPEAKER:** The minister made response to master planning informing a DA process. Did you have anything to add, minister?

**MR GENTLEMAN:** Of course, what the authority does is look at the current rules and the territory plan in relation to current development applications, and master plans then inform that decision-making exercise once they are completed and form a part of our territory planning process.

**MRS JONES:** Minister, does that then confirm that the draft master plan will indeed not inform this DA, and did the public who have been involved in the master planning process waste their time?

**MR GENTLEMAN:** The public certainly did not waste their time. All of the information gathered from our community consultation goes into that master planning process. The directorate and the authority engage with the community all through that process on quite a number of different opportunities.

**Mrs Jones:** Point of order.

**MADAM SPEAKER:** Point of order.

**Mrs Jones:** It would be a shame to finish the answer without the entirety of it. It is on relevance. I asked if I can confirm therefore that the current incomplete master plan will therefore have no bearing on the DA which has been submitted.

**Mr Barr:** Madam Speaker, on the point of order more broadly, Mrs Jones rose to her feet 17 seconds after the minister began his answer. The minister has two minutes to complete an answer. I think it is unreasonable—

*Opposition members interjecting—*

**MADAM SPEAKER:** More broadly, whether it is this question time or others, if there are two minutes, oftentimes a point of order is taken within the first 15 or 30 seconds. I will ask—I should have stopped the clock—the minister now to come to the relevance in his concluding comments on this question.

**MR GENTLEMAN:** Certainly, Madam Speaker. What informs the decision-making process for the independent authority is, in this case, the development application process that is occurring with 44 Curtin Place. The community has put quite a number of engagements into the authority. They will judge all of those against the current set of criteria. That is not withstanding the master planning process. During the master planning process, the community made comment very similarly on the master plan for Curtin at the same time as it did on the development application.

**Mrs Jones:** Point of order. Can the clock be stopped?

**MADAM SPEAKER:** Minister, can you resume your seat for a moment.

**Mrs Jones:** Can the clock please be stopped.

**MADAM SPEAKER:** Your point of order is, Mrs Jones?

**Mrs Jones:** My point of order is that a very simple question was asked: does the incomplete DA have any bearing on the—

**MADAM SPEAKER:** I cannot determine how the minister answers the question.

**Mrs Jones:** No, but we got to the last seven seconds and we still did not have a yes or a no.

**MADAM SPEAKER:** Mrs Jones, there is no point of order. Please resume your seat. The minister has concluded his answer.

### **Arts—funding**

**MS CHEYNE:** Can the Minister for Arts and Community Events report on how the government is delivering on our commitment to the arts in the midyear review arts package?

**MR RAMSAY:** I thank Ms Cheyne for her question. I note her particularly strong interest in the arts in the ACT and notably her excellent work with the Belconnen Arts Centre in our electorate of Ginninderra. I am pleased to advise that the midyear budget review delivers some very good news for the Canberra arts and festivals scene in line with our goal for bigger and better events in Canberra. We are funding the Art, Not Apart festival in 2017.

We are committed to ongoing funding of this unique event which showcases local artists and helps to promote Canberra as an innovative arts and events destination. Now in its fourth year Art, Not Apart is a festival like no other. It pushes the boundaries of what is traditionally seen as art and it explores new connections between art forms and between artists and audiences.

We will also be supporting the inaugural Floriade Fringe to add to the already famous Floriade experience by creating a companion fringe festival which will offer an innovative, provocative and eclectic festival program. We are funding new signage for the Gorman House arts centre and the Ainslie Arts Centre to assist users of and visitors to the centres to find their way around these well-utilised and recently renovated facilities.

We have also announced an additional \$230,000 for the 2017 arts project round, which brings the number of projects by individual artists, groups and organisations able to be funded in 2017 to 28. All successful applicants have been notified. They include all arts disciplines, and they will contribute to the vitality and the diversity of the Canberra arts scene.

**MS CHEYNE:** Can the minister advise how the government will build on these commitments in 2017-18 and beyond?

**MR RAMSAY:** In accordance with our election commitments and the parliamentary agreement, we will be delivering the largest single increase in arts funding since self-government. That will reflect the value that art and artists provide to our local community. We will be providing ongoing funding for Art, Not Apart, and three years funding to Kulture Break, as well as additional ongoing funding for the arts grants program.

We are providing ongoing funding to the DESIGN Canberra festival, which is now in its fourth year. This fantastic festival, which I was pleased to attend last year, capitalises on Canberra's growing reputation as a livable, creative city, to bring together local, national and international design and craft communities and to celebrate design and craft.

We will begin work scoping a new Canberra arts biennial, a Canberra innovation festival and pop-up community arts festivals. We will be funding, to the tune of \$17 million, the completion of stage 2 of the Belconnen Arts Centre, as well as significant upgrades to a number of other arts facilities, including the Tuggeranong Arts Centre, the Watson Arts Centre and Strathnairn. And we will be supporting the ANU School of Music's world-class advanced music program.

This is in addition to our existing funding of key arts and program-funded organisations, such as the book of the year, arts residencies and national initiatives including Arts Law and Asia Link, and the \$8 million we provide annually for the running of the Canberra Theatre Centre, the Canberra Museum and Gallery, the Nolan Collection, and three historic places.

This is all very clear evidence of the ACT government's commitment to Canberra having a diverse, productive and well-supported arts community.

**MR STEEL:** Can the minister advise what additional measures the government is taking to support both the Canberra arts community and the wider community in terms of access to the arts?

**MR RAMSAY:** I thank Mr Steel for his supplementary. In the past few months I have met with a number of significant local artists and art professionals and I have visited a number of Canberra's excellent arts facilities. The message that I am hearing from those many conversations is that artists are seeking to have a deeper engagement with government across an array of issues, and I am keen to work with the arts community to create an ongoing dialogue, listening to both sides, that will help the Canberra arts scene to continue to thrive and to innovate.

To assist with these discussions over the coming months, I am going to be looking at options to formalise an engagement process with the arts community which will support effective and robust debate and advice on the future of arts and culture in Canberra. I am also looking to continue consultation with the arts community on a new arts funding plan to more closely align our funding approach with the ACT arts policy later this year.

Another element to this engagement is to ensure that the arts in Canberra are inclusive for all Canberrans. We need to build a clear understanding of how public investment in the arts reflects community identity and fosters inclusion, for the arts have a social value as well as a cultural and economic value.

Participation and accessibility are critical components of making our arts and community events a success. So I bring a strong focus on inclusivity and accessibility, embracing Canberra's diversity of cultures, heritage, sexualities, age, income, gender, ability and location.

Upgrades to a range of community arts facilities will support community access to the arts and to arts development and I will ensure that Canberra has an events calendar that maximises social, cultural and economic benefits for the Canberra region.

### **Schools—maintenance**

**MR WALL:** My question is to the minister for education and training. Minister, to what extent are you aware of the ongoing dispute between contract cleaners at ACT government schools, such as Phillips Cleaning Service and Rose Cleaning Service, with your former union, United Voice, and what actions have you or your directorate taken in resolving this dispute?

**MS BERRY:** Yes, I am aware of the issues that have been raised by United Voice regarding cleaners in ACT government schools. Since becoming minister for education, I have instructed the directorate to refresh the panel and we are having a really good look at the contract to ensure that vulnerable workers like contract cleaners are protected and that industrial relations and other issues that could make the contract even stronger are included in those contract arrangements. All of that will conclude by the end of June this year.

**MR WALL:** Minister, can you assure the Assembly that Rose Cleaning Service and Phillips Cleaning Service will continue to be paid directly for work undertaken to date for the cleaning of ACT government schools?

**MS BERRY:** If the two contractors are providing work and are operating within the law, of course they will be paid.

**MR COE:** Minister, what influence has United Voice had on the selection of panel members for school cleaning?

**MS BERRY:** They would have no influence on the panel.

### **Asbestos—Ainslie shops**

**MR DOSZPOT:** My question is to the Minister for Planning and Land Management. Minister, are media reports correct that an asbestos-contaminated site at the Ainslie shops will be cleaned and will be available to be re-used, unlike the 1,023 Fluffy-contaminated homes around Canberra that are being demolished?

**MR GENTLEMAN:** I thank Mr Doszpot for his question. It is a very important topic for us to discuss as a community—the support for those people living through the asbestos task force changes. The government, the Assembly and the community have made a very important decision in relation to how we deal with asbestos contamination across the territory. I would not see that there is any opportunity in the long term to be able to stay in a house or a commercial property that has loose-fill asbestos in the ceiling. As we have said in relation to residential occupancies across the territory, the only long-term solution is to demolish those properties.

**Mr Coe:** A point of order, Madam Speaker.

**MADAM SPEAKER:** You did not get to a minute, Mr Coe, but a point of order.

**Mr Coe:** Almost half the answer, Madam Speaker. The specific question was: are the media reports true regarding the Ainslie shops being cleaned as opposed to demolished? We would appreciate an answer in response to that.

**MADAM SPEAKER:** The minister for planning, on relevance.

**MR GENTLEMAN:** Yes, I am getting to the nub of the question, but I wanted to give it some context, because it is important that the community understands the work that is ongoing with the asbestos task force, and the work that is ongoing with WorkSafe ACT. The media reports are not correct. The way of dealing with asbestos in the long term, the only safe way of dealing with loose-fill asbestos, is by demolition. But there may be some management options in the meantime, and this is what the task force and WorkSafe ACT are looking at.

**MR DOSZPOT:** Minister, what is the basis of the media reports?

**MR GENTLEMAN:** It is an interesting question. I think journalists like to sell newspapers. Of course what occurs is that they need to create an exciting story to sell those newspapers. Unfortunately it does affect our community. So it is really important, I think, that we have the truth out there that this government is very supportive of those that have been affected by loose-fill asbestos. We are going through the eradication program with the residential. WorkSafe ACT is inspecting the Ainslie shops at the moment to look at what can occur there.

As I said at the beginning of the answer, we know that the only long-term solution is demolition and we need to work through that process, look at the amount of contamination within this shopping centre, and WorkSafe ACT are doing that now.

**MS LEE:** Minister, if it is true that you are having ongoing discussions with the owner of the Ainslie shops, are you giving that same option to the 1,023 owners of Fluffy-contaminated homes to give their input into the long-term solution you are proposing?

**MR GENTLEMAN:** I do not believe that the premise of the question comes back to my answer. We are not having discussions with the owners of the shops in relation to the long-term use of Ainslie shops that are contaminated by loose-fill asbestos. WorkSafe ACT and asbestos inspectors are looking at the moment to identify how much loose-fill asbestos is in that space and will then identify a plan and work with the owners for the eradication of loose-fill asbestos.

### **Alexander Maconochie Centre—staff safety**

**MRS JONES:** My question is to the Minister for Corrections. Minister, I refer to the article in the *Canberra Times* on 24 January 2017 titled “Union ‘deeply concerned’” regarding an incident at the Alexander Maconochie Centre where three guards were assaulted. Minister, under what circumstances can it occur that three guards are assaulted, and how is it possible that the prisoner or the inmate was so easily able to assault security staff?

**MR RATTENBURY:** This follows on from the question Mr Gentleman was just asked in that I am not sure about the veracity of that newspaper report. I can confirm that there was an incident in the AMC on the date that Mrs Jones is referring to. I do not think it is accurate to characterise it as “three officers were assaulted”. Nonetheless, there was injury sustained, particularly by one officer, who required transportation to hospital, and there was a need to use force to restrain a detainee. That is the situation that occurred. I do not think the newspaper report was completely accurate.

These things do happen from time to time. Our staff are highly trained in how to deal with what can be very difficult situations. The acting head of Corrective Services followed up with the union after that newspaper article and there has been a discussion to follow through on the concerns that the union held.

**MRS JONES:** Minister, what immediate mitigation strategies have been put in place to prevent this from happening again, or is it simply something that you believe will always happen?

**MR RATTENBURY:** There is already a range of strategies in place to seek to avoid these sorts of incidents happening. Right through the corrections system, steps are put in place to avoid staff, particularly, being assaulted, to ensure as much as possible that other detainees are not assaulted and that staff have a range of training options to minimise the risk to themselves of being injured and to maximise their capability to ensure good order inside the AMC.

An example like this is one that there will also be significant reflection on, to look at whether improvements can be made, and that is part of an ongoing process of improvement in this sort of environment. But we also need to be realistic: this is a difficult environment and at times some detainees will seek to resolve matters through the use of violence. We need to ensure that our staff are best equipped and trained to minimise the risk of injury, to themselves in particular.

**MR WALL:** Can the minister advise the Assembly on the progress of implementing all the recommendations made to and agreed by the government since the establishment of the AMC given the long litany of issues that continue to occur there?

**MR RATTENBURY:** If I recall correctly, in the sitting week before Christmas this exact question was raised. A motion was passed and the government has undertaken to report back to the Assembly on the exact question Mr Wall has just asked me. That reporting date is in a couple of months' time; I cannot recall the date of the top of my head. I will provide that information when it has been assembled.

### **ACTION bus service—services**

**MR STEEL:** My question is to the Minister for Transport and City Services. Can the minister update the Assembly on measures the government is taking to deliver on our commitments to better bus services for the people of Canberra?

**MS FITZHARRIS:** I thank Mr Steel for his question and his ongoing interest not only in better bus services but an integrated transport system for all of Canberra. I am pleased to update the Assembly on the significant progress the Barr Labor government has already made in delivering on our commitments to better bus services for all Canberrans. Unlike those opposite, we took an integrated public transport plan to the last election, including a fully costed bus plan. The re-elected Barr Labor government is continuing to deliver on this plan for our growing city.

In December the first of 20 new Transport Canberra blue buses arrived as part of our fleet replacement program, and all the remaining buses will be delivered to ACTION by the end of June this year. These new buses have a number of great features which I am sure all passengers will appreciate such as bike racks, full interior and exterior LED lighting, fewer internal steps increasing passenger safety, and renewed air conditioning ducted for better heating and cooling. The new buses also improve disability access for passengers, and by the end of 2017 Transport Canberra's bus fleet will have over 80 per cent of all its delivered buses disability compliant.

In our government's first 100 days, as well as continuing to deliver on bus replacement strategy, we have already delivered on our election commitment to provide free off-peak travel for seniors and concession MyWay card holders. This new initiative which commenced on 14 January, one month ago, has been well received by the community. So far there have been 83,314 trips taken during the off-peak period that qualified for this free travel, which is eight per cent of all travel during that period.

While it is still early days, we have seen positive signs for increased patronage. We will monitor this patronage but it is a great start and, as promised, it is delivering better access to public transport for Canberrans who need it most, making it easier for them to move around our city.

**MR STEEL:** Minister, how popular is the new Weston line, route 182, the all-day service linking Woden, Cooleman Court and Civic via the Cotter Road?

*Members interjecting—*

**MS FITZHARRIS:** I understand the opposition are thinking about what might have been if they had actually taken a policy platform to last year's election that the community could have supported. I thank Mr Steel for his supplementary, knowing how quickly his electorate is growing. As members will be aware, and for those new members who are not, this new service was funded in last year's budget, not only extending services through the Weston line but also enabling the extension of current services for Wright and Coombs in the growing Molonglo valley region. The Weston line commenced on 29 August last year and provides an all-day service linking Woden, Cooleman Court and Civic via the Cotter Road, which is undergoing duplication as we speak.

I am pleased to report that since the end of August last year the Weston line has carried 26,286 passengers, with an average of 1,123 passengers per week. This service will be upgraded to a new orange rapid from Woden to the city via Weston Creek in 2018.

Labor introduced the rapid bus network, and we will grow the rapid bus network. As we outlined in our costed bus plan that we took to the electorate last year, the rapid bus network will grow from two services to nine over the next four years, in addition to stage 1 of our city-wide light rail network. The first additions to the rapid bus network will be delivered this year with the extension of the blue rapid to Lanyon, completing the link from Kippax to the Lanyon valley, a new green rapid from Woden to the city via Manuka and Barton, and the black rapid from Belconnen direct to Gungahlin. More rapid bus services will follow as we reallocate the 1.2 million bus kilometres that will be freed up by the first stage of the light rail network.

**MS ORR:** Minister, what are the latest patronage figures for the free city loop bus?

**MS FITZHARRIS:** I thank Ms Orr for her question and her ongoing interest in bus services and her wonderful blog—which I am not sure if she is continuing—on her bus travels from Gungahlin to the city every day. I am very happy to update the Assembly on the free city bus loop service.

As some members would remember the Transport Canberra free city loop service commenced on 4 July last year, providing a service of around 10 minutes between 7 am and 7 pm Monday to Friday in a loop across our city. I am very pleased to advise that the free city loop has been a great success and this month has carried over 52,000 passengers in total, with an average of 1,722 passengers per week.

Perhaps not all members of the Assembly were here when the service commenced, so many of you may not know that the Canberra Liberals planned to scrap this successful free service if they had won last year's election. This is probably not surprising because, more significantly, they also promised to scrap the light rail line, meaning a light rail network and integrated transport network for our city.

I was surprised to see recently on *WIN News* the new opposition leader and his team, along with former opposition leader Senator Seselja, out promoting the Red Explorer Bus. I have no doubt that this privately operated tourist service should be supported as it provides a great service to all Canberra's main tourist attractions. But the opposition must think we have short memories because as recently as July last year Mr Coe released a bus plan that would have put the Red Explorer Bus service out of service.

At the time the operator was quoted as saying, "There is no doubt that my business will have no future if this service goes ahead." Luckily for Mr Williams, his service is going ahead because the Canberra Liberals failed again to win the support of the Canberra community. (*Time expired.*)

### **Gungahlin—sporting facilities**

**MR MILLIGAN:** My question is to the Minister for Sport and Recreation. The minister, in response to a question without notice late last year, stated that the feasibility study was being conducted for the Gungahlin indoor recreation centre. Minister, can you tell the Assembly when the study will be completed? Why has this matter not been acted on sooner, given that the ACT indoor sports facility study report recommended immediate action?

**MS BERRY:** The first part of the question was regarding a feasibility study for Gungahlin, Woden and west Belconnen. That will commence soon. Once I have the dates and the process for that feasibility study, I will let the Assembly know and am happy to involve Mr Milligan in that process.

The second part regarded the indoor facility study. That work has also been acted on. This led to the report and the work around opening up our schools as community and sporting hubs. We have had school facility upgrades to help indoor sport users to access school halls and facilities to carry out their sporting activities. That work has occurred at Alfred Deakin High School, Lake Tuggeranong College, Lyneham High School and Wanniasa high school.

**MR MILLIGAN:** Given the community support for an indoor sport centre and the growing ongoing need, will you consider expediting this process?

**MS BERRY:** It is happening very soon. It is not going to happen next year; it is going to happen this year. Within the next couple of months it will begin. I cannot do it any faster than that.

**MR COE:** Minister, will the study be done in house or will you get consultants to do it? If so, what is the allocation of funds for this work?

**MS BERRY:** A decision has not been made on who is going to be conducting the study. I will have to check on the actual funds and come back to the Assembly with that.

### **Greyhound racing—government policy**

**MR PARTON:** My question is to the Minister for Regulatory Services. Minister, on 15 December, in response to a number of questions regarding the greyhound racing industry, you said:

We have not said that we will be banning the industry. We will be working towards a transition process and towards the ending of the industry.

Can you please explain the difference between banning the industry and ending the industry?

**MR RAMSAY:** I thank Mr Parton for his question, and note the shadow minister's strong personal interest in racing. Yes, I have had a number of matters—

*Members interjecting—*

**MR RAMSAY:** As I indicated in December, as I indicated publicly beforehand and since, the government is continuing to follow through on its electoral commitments to cease funding at the end of the current MOU and to move towards the end of the industry. We are in a range of conversations with people involved in the industry and involved in animal welfare, and there are a number of transition package matters being worked through at the moment. As those things come to fruition, we will be speaking more with people in the industry about how it is that we can move to the end of the industry.

**MR PARTON:** Minister, can you clarify whether it will be illegal to hold greyhound races in the ACT after your proposed “transition” period?

**MR RAMSAY:** The issue is that, as we end the industry, we are working with the industry as to what the various transition matters are. We have announced, and we are working within that, what it will mean. What it will mean is that we will get to that transition time and we will come to a conclusion at that point. The exact form of that—

*Opposition members interjecting—*

**MR RAMSAY:** We are moving to the end of the industry.

**MR DOSZPOT:** Minister, if it is not illegal to hold greyhound races, can you explain how the government intends to forcibly end an industry?

**MR RAMSAY:** The question started with an “if”. I am not accepting the “if”. There are a number of options, and we will work through towards the transition of the industry without jumping into hypotheticals.

### **Disability services—national disability insurance scheme**

**MS ORR:** My question is to the Minister for Disability, Children and Youth. Minister, can you update the Assembly on the transition of the ACT government’s specialist disability and therapy services as part of the rollout of the national disability insurance scheme?

**MS STEPHEN-SMITH:** I thank Ms Orr for her question. Of course the ACT Labor government, like Labor governments and oppositions around the country, remains fully committed to the NDIS and would never consider holding the NDIS hostage for other policy goals.

I am pleased to advise the Assembly that the transition of ACT government disability services to the national disability insurance scheme has in fact been completed ahead of the planned schedule. In April 2014 in preparation for the NDIS the government made a decision to exit therapy services by December 2016 and to exit the provision of specialist disability accommodation services by the end of June 2017. As it stands, all Therapy ACT clients actually transitioned to the NDIS by the end of September last year, three months ahead of schedule, and individuals with an NDIS plan are now able to choose their therapist, giving them greater choice and control of the services that they are receiving.

The last Disability ACT group homes transitioned to a non-government provider on 5 January this year, almost six months ahead of schedule. Residents, families and guardians were able to choose a non-government provider to support the needs of each group home. As a result of the government’s decision to exit group homes we have seen a number of new providers enter the ACT market. The previous 53 ACT government group homes are now being supported by 14 non-government providers.

Of course the transition of group homes has also meant that the staff who supported ACT government clients also have made transitions. Many have remained in the sector, with some of these staff remaining in the same group home supporting the same residents they have cared for for many years. I would like to take this opportunity once again to thank the staff of Therapy ACT and Disability ACT who have managed this transition so smoothly.

**MS ORR:** Minister, how is the government maintaining oversight of disability services as the NDIS is rolled out?

**MS STEPHEN-SMITH:** I would particularly like to thank Ms Orr for this question. This question of quality and safeguards was one of the first matters I raised with the directorate on becoming minister. In talking about disability services and choice and control, we are talking about services that are purchased by many highly capable people with a disability who are quite able to make their own decisions about service providers. But we are also talking about vulnerable people who have never been empowered before to make such choices and for whom the transition to choice and control may be confronting.

I am pleased, although not surprised, to say the ACT government prepared well for the NDIS rollout by amending the Disability Services Act 1991 to ensure quality and oversight were maintained during the trial period. These amendments commenced on 1 July 2014. Among other things, the Human Services Registrar was established to implement quality and safeguarding arrangements, and that will continue until the national quality and safeguarding framework has been fully implemented.

The Human Services Registrar assesses providers' compliance with the Disability Services Act requirements for both new providers seeking to register with the National Disability Insurance Agency in the ACT and currently funded providers who are seeking to expand their service delivery.

The Human Services Registrar assesses compliance with the standards and makes a recommendation to the NDIA, but does not make the final decision. There are issues around this that I have raised with the federal minister regarding some glitches in the system, and I am pleased to say those are being worked out.

The national quality and safeguarding framework which was announced by COAG in January 2017 is expected to be fully operational by 2018. Its intention is to underpin the NDIS with a nationally consistent quality and safeguards framework. The ACT has been actively involved in its development.

**MR PETTERSSON:** Minister, how will the government ensure that the NDIS continues to provide better services and support for people with disability?

**MS STEPHEN-SMITH:** I thank Mr Pettersson for his question. Each person's NDIS journey is of course different and Community Services Directorate staff continue to provide advice and support in responding to individual client matters. One of the other ways we are working to improve services is to support service providers and families to reduce and eliminate restrictive practices, that is, behaviour management tools that deprive people of their liberty in some way. There is a consultation currently underway on this, seeking the views of all stakeholders, including people with disabilities, their families and carers, to establish how we go about overseeing the use of restrictive practices in the future and supporting their elimination over time.

At a broader level, state, territory and commonwealth disability ministers receive a report from the NDIA on performance each quarter. Through the Disability Reform Council I am able to raise policy matters with the NDIA and my state and territory colleagues to ensure that we address the concerns as they arise.

Last year, ministers also agreed to bring forward a planned review of the NDIS by the Productivity Commission. This review has now commenced and will provide a report in September. Its focus is on the sustainability of scheme costs, impact on mainstream services and whether efficiencies have been achieved. The ACT government will make a substantial submission to reflect the experiences and feedback of Canberrans with a disability, their families, carers and disability service providers.

I am determined to ensure that we understand the experience of Canberrans accessing the NDIS and use that information to inform our submission to the Productivity Commission. I will be working with the new disability reference group on this, but I encourage all members who receive feedback from constituents to let me know what you are hearing, so that we can put that information to good use.

The NDIS is making a real difference to the lives of many people with a disability and it is incumbent upon us all to support its implementation with honest feedback while understanding that it is a massive reform.

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