



QUESTION TIME
OF THE
LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY
FOR THE
AUSTRALIAN CAPITAL TERRITORY

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Questions without notice

Minister for Health—incoming minister briefing

MR COE: Madam Speaker, my question is to the Minister for Health. When you became Minister for Health, you would have received an incoming minister's brief advising you of important issues within your portfolio. What information did that brief contain with regard to inaccuracies in health data?

MS FITZHARRIS: I thank Mr Coe for the question. I do not recall the precise detail of what was in the incoming brief folder, but as I indicated yesterday on a number of occasions, I was aware of some of the difficulties that had been encountered in the production of the 2015-16 annual reports for Health.

MR COE: Minister, did the incoming minister's brief contain any information about inaccuracies with health data?

MS FITZHARRIS: Yes, I reiterate that it is my recollection—and I will go back and check the incoming government brief—that I was made aware, certainly if not within the written folder then in my first verbal briefing as the Minister for Health, that there were inaccuracies encountered in the production of the quarterly reports; that Health were in the process of resolving those; and that the quarterly reports for 2015-16 were then published on 9 November. I became minister, I believe, at midnight on 1 November.

MRS DUNNE: Minister, did your incoming minister's brief contain information about ACT Health failing to provide data to the AIHW and any impact that may have had on the national health funding board's payments to the ACT?

MS FITZHARRIS: No it did not, because I do not believe they were issues that Health were aware of at the time.

ACT Health—data management

MRS KIKKERT: My question is to the Minister for Health. Since 2011 there have been five Auditor-General's reports into health data. These include a report on elective surgery and medical treatment in 2011 and emergency department data in 2012. There was a review into the hepatology and gastroenterology department in 2014, a review of the integrity of data in the Health Directorate in 2015 and a review into Calvary hospital finances in 2016. Why has it taken so long for the Health Directorate to review its data management procedures given that there have been five critical Auditor-General's reports over five years?

MS FITZHARRIS: The five Auditor-General's reports that Mrs Kikkert referred to were not all solely related to data. Indeed, one of those reports—the Auditor-General's report into Calvary—was referred to the Auditor-General by the then Minister for Health. It is certainly the case that I would expect that the Auditor-General, given that the health budget is close to one-third of the overall

ACT budget and constitutes significant activity by the ACT government, would be reporting on and looking into the performance of health. That is as it should be.

Mr Coe: What about the recommendations?

MS FITZHARRIS: Certainly the recommendations have been responded to by the government of the day, by the Minister for Health, and implemented by the ACT Health Directorate. As I indicated yesterday, this is disappointing, but this is the most comprehensive system-wide review of health data that has ever been undertaken. We will inform the Auditor-General throughout the processes of this review and I will do everything in my power as minister to ensure that at the end of this review we have the systems in place to ensure the utmost accuracy of ACT health data.

MRS KIKKERT: Minister, what investigations were made into reports of problematic emergency department data conducted by both the Auditor-General and PricewaterhouseCoopers in 2012?

MS FITZHARRIS: I was not responsible at that time; indeed, it was in the Seventh Assembly, I believe. Those issues were responded to comprehensively at the time by the Auditor-General, the public accounts committee and the Minister for Health at the time.

MRS DUNNE: Minister, do the current problems relating to data relate to a lack of systems or people not adhering to the systems?

MS FITZHARRIS: Certainly I can reassure both the members of the Assembly and the ACT community that the issues do not relate to operational clinical data. Largely the issue that will be looked into is the data, once it has been collected by clinicians, the back-end processes that are responsible for the collection, the analysis and the warehousing of data for a variety of different reports, as I indicated yesterday.

Visitors

MADAM SPEAKER: Before I call the next question without notice can I just acknowledge the presence in the gallery of former member and minister, Mr Michael Moore. We wish you a welcome return to the Assembly.

Questions without notice

National Multicultural Festival—women's safety

MS LE COUTEUR: My question is to the Minister for Women and relates to women's safety assessments for major events. I see that this week the tents are going up for the Multicultural Festival. I understand that in 2011 the then minister for women, Minister Burch, committed to undertake women's safety assessments as part of the standard procedure during the festival's set-up phase. Minister, can you provide assurances that a women's safety assessment will be or has been undertaken this year prior to the commencement of the festival and subsequent de-installation of the various tents?

MS BERRY: Yes, I can assure the Assembly that an audit has been undertaken. It was undertaken yesterday by the festival team and the Office for Women. The safety audits that have been conducted since 2011 include a risk assessment around access to taxis; security personnel; escorting women to their vehicles if requested; secure parking; responsible service of alcohol, enforced with a 10 pm cut-off; visible first-aid stations; provision for wrist bands for children, which you can write on; nappy changing and breastfeeding facilities; and a children's sanctuary, which this year, I understand, is in the CMAG building. I also am informed that the National Multicultural Festival will conduct a survey which will ask a number of questions about how women felt and whether they felt safe during the festival.

MS LE COUTEUR: Was the safety assessment undertaken in partnership with women from the community, including women with a disability?

MS BERRY: I will have to take that question on notice about who was actually involved during this year's audit. I understand that the Office for Women have been conducting this audit since 2011 at every festival. I will take on notice whether women with a disability were involved in it. I know that last year at the Multicultural Festival there were a number of conversations with the Office for Women and the Minister for Multicultural Affairs around access for women with disabilities, particularly on mobility issues. I understand that a number of these were addressed. It is very challenging for people to get around in that sort of crowded environment, but we do take it very seriously. I understand that Ms Christina Ryan was involved in those conversations as well.

MS CODY: Minister, what other work is being undertaken to support women in the ACT?

MS BERRY: I thank Ms Cody for the question. Last year I launched the ACT women's plan 2016-26, and I am ready to launch the first action plan in the next month. A considerable amount of work has gone into the development of this first action plan. One of the things we are doing to address the action plan under the women's plan is the promotion of the use of these safety audit tools at all events in the ACT. In addition, there will be actions in the first focus area on communities where women and girls are empowered and feel safe.

Other activities the ACT government is doing to support women, in particular, is around equality in sport. More broadly, we are supporting women to have equal access to participate in sport. We are funding growth in our elite women's teams. We are providing incentive funding for sports to lead the way on gender equity. We have a new online sports community for women and girls. And we are providing funding for female-friendly sports infrastructure.

LGBTIQ community—government support

MR STEEL: My question is to the Chief Minister. Chief Minister, can you please update the Assembly on the work the ACT government has done recently to deliver on its commitments to support the LGBTIQ community?

MR BARR: I thank Mr Steel for the question. It is very clear that the

ACT government leads the nation—in fact, in many instances it leads the world—in being one of the most inclusive communities through the delivery of many clear, comprehensive and progressive policies for this city. We have established an office of LGBTIQ affairs within my directorate, with the responsibility to coordinate and support the government's projects and policies and to promote Canberra as Australia's friendliest city for LGBTIQ people.

The government brought forward and the Assembly passed amendments yesterday to the Civil Unions Act to improve the recognition of overseas same-sex relationships as civil unions in the territory. Corresponding with this first sitting week of the Assembly and the renewed national debate about marriage equality, rainbow flags are flying throughout the city to celebrate equality and to celebrate our commitment to one Canberra. The government continues to strongly support marriage equality legislation, true marriage equality legislation, being progressed through the Australian parliament.

Earlier this year we made a submission to the Senate Select Committee on the Exposure Draft of the Marriage Amendment (Same-Sex Marriage) Bill. We have concerns about this bill because of its overly broad exemptions to establish sex and gender discrimination protections. We asked the committee to consider marriage equality law reform as an inclusive process that will maintain existing discrimination protections in legislation. The ACT government will continue to support our local community whilst we lead the fight for true marriage equality in this country.

MR STEEL: Chief Minister, can you elaborate on the significance of the flags being flown above our city this week?

MR BARR: During this first sitting week the government is taking the opportunity to emphatically emphasise our commitment to making Canberra an even more inclusive and welcoming city. We do this because it is symbolically important. We do this because it is a clear and fundamental statement of our values; values we have taken to every election in which I have stood for the Australian Labor Party in this city, values that are shared by every progressive member on this side of the chamber. A city that celebrates its diversity, that respects and protects human rights and that allows every citizen to reach their full potential is a strong city. It is a city worth living in and it is a city that people want to live in.

That is what this city is and that is what this city will increasingly represent in this nation and in the world. We will lead that. We will lead it against conservative opponents, some of whom sit in this chamber. We will proudly, every single day, as progressive representatives in this Assembly stand up for what we believe in. We will make those values clear and support all Canberrans, particularly LGBTI Canberrans, who have over the years and years of this city's history been discriminated against and excluded, in our laws, in our public places and in our lives. That has dramatically ended with law reform in this place, but this campaign continues until we win. Let us be clear: it continues until we win. I thank everyone with a good heart who supports love and who supports inclusion and who supports a better society and invite them to join us in this campaign because we will continue to fight it until we win.

MS CODY: Chief Minister, what are the concerns that the ACT government has with

the current iteration of the draft bill for marriage equality currently being considered by the commonwealth parliament?

MR BARR: I thank Ms Cody for the question. We did make a submission to the commonwealth government's select committee on the exposure draft for the bill. The committee report, I understand, is due to be released today. We have opposed elements of the commonwealth government's exposure draft bill because of the overly broad exemptions to establish sex and gender discrimination protections. It is troubling to think that these well-established protections could be undermined as blatantly as is proposed in that bill.

In the government's submission, co-signed by me, the Attorney-General and the minister for justice, we ask that the committee consider marriage equality law reform, as the ACT government has, as an inclusive process that will maintain existing protections against discrimination in legislation. Taking this approach to law reform would afford LGBTI people the same legal rights and protections that anyone in our country can expect.

With regard to respecting an individual's rights to practise religion, we noted that wedding ceremonies can often be based on religious belief and practice but that marriage itself is a civil institution. The desire to love someone and to commit to sharing lives together is universal, and everyone has their own ideas on what this commitment means. Marriage takes different forms in different cultures, but love is a universal emotion. The feelings of love and commitment between couples of the same sex are no different from those between couples of the opposite sex. Same sex couples simply want to have their right to have their love recognised by the same civil institution. This is such a fundamental principle that people of good heart must always support, and this is something that we must stand up for in this country. It is one of this country's greatest shames in 2017.

Canberra Hospital—data integrity

MRS JONES: In the 2012 performance audit by the Auditor-General she found that:

Under affirmation, an executive at the Canberra Hospital has admitted to making improper changes to hospital records. While this is the case, Audit considers that it is probable that improper changes to records have been made by other persons.

How thoroughly investigated were the findings of the Auditor-General that other people were involved in making improper changes to Canberra Hospital's records?

MS FITZHARRIS: I was not the minister; I was not in the Assembly at the time. It is certainly my understanding that they were thoroughly investigated. I reiterate what I reiterated on a number of occasions yesterday—and I am happy to do so on a number of occasions today—there is no suggestion of anybody fabricating or manipulating data in this instance. Those issues were thoroughly investigated, including by the Auditor-General, in 2012—five years ago.

The review announced yesterday is a comprehensive review into data systems and processes, and I reiterate: there is absolutely no evidence whatsoever that there has

been manipulation of data.

MRS JONES: Are any of the data sets that we are currently concerned with, which you have been discussing, the same data sets that were falsified in 2012?

MS FITZHARRIS: I cannot give a specific answer to that question, but again there is no suggestion of falsified data.

Mrs Jones: Will you take it on notice?

MS FITZHARRIS: I will take that on notice.

MRS DUNNE: Are there concerns about the integrity of the data which was corrected following the Auditor-General's report in 2012?

MS FITZHARRIS: Not to my knowledge specifically, but again I will take that question on notice.

ACT Health—reporting accuracy

MR HANSON: My question is to the Minister for Health. On 14 February, you said in this place:

... 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.

When you were briefed about the issues regarding the quarterly performance reports, who briefed you and what information were you given?

MS FITZHARRIS: I was briefed on an occasion in 2016 as Assistant Minister for Health. I was present at a briefing to the then Minister for Health, Mr Corbell, and we were briefed by both ACT government health officials and, I believe, on one occasion, those staff members of PricewaterhouseCoopers who were undertaking the review.

MR HANSON: Minister, what actions did you take personally to satisfy yourself, when you became minister, that there were no ongoing problems with the accuracy and integrity of ACT health data?

MS FITZHARRIS: As I indicated in my earlier answer, certainly it was one of the key elements to discuss in my incoming government verbal briefing. I wanted to ensure that the 2015-16 quarterly performance reports were made available as soon as possible, with assurances of course that the data was accurate. That was then done on 9 November.

MRS DUNNE: Minister, what action have you taken to satisfy yourself that you have not misled the Assembly either today or on 14 February?

MS FITZHARRIS: Many actions, including intensive discussions with my

directorate, which resulted in the review announced yesterday. I maintain that there is very strong interest in making sure that this review is conducted thoroughly over the course of the next 12 months, including providing the quarterly reporting that I committed to yesterday.

ACT Health—mental health data

MRS DUNNE: My question is to the Minister for Mental Health. Minister, Minister Fitzharris's statement in the Assembly refers to data not being available for publication in chapter 13 of the Productivity Commission's report on government services relating to mental health services. A reading of chapter 13 shows that the datasets missing were from 2014-15. Minister, why was the Health Directorate unable to provide statistics relating to mental health services for 2014-15?

MR RATTENBURY: The Minister for Health, who has taken the lead on this matter, has outlined the reasons for the problems. She has also indicated the steps that have been taken. I am aware of these matters. I am also being briefed by Health and I am working with the minister to get to the bottom of this. It is a regrettable situation and it is very disappointing because having accurate data is an important foundation for us going forward.

MRS DUNNE: Minister, is the data in the 2014-15 annual report relating to mental health services correct?

MR RATTENBURY: I will take that on notice and check for you, Mrs Dunne.

MRS JONES: Minister, what data sets related to mental health have problems with their accuracy?

MR RATTENBURY: I will provide Mrs Jones with a detailed response on notice.

Family and domestic violence—government initiatives

MS CODY: My question is to the Minister for the Prevention of Domestic and Family Violence. Minister, the ACT government has committed to a whole-of-government response to violence against women and children, and to making our community safer for everyone. Can you please update the Assembly on the latest outcomes with regard to this priority?

MS BERRY: I thank Ms Cody for the question. Tackling domestic and family violence is a key priority for the ACT government. This is why the government created a dedicated funding source through the safer families levy, and it is why a new portfolio was created that was solely focused on the prevention of domestic and family violence in our community.

The 2016-17 ACT government budget delivered the landmark safer families package, which is investing \$21.42 million in driving the next phase of reform in a whole-of-government community backed response to violence against women and children. The government cannot do it alone. From the beginning, for real change to take place across our community, everybody needs to be part of this movement and

part of the solution.

There is no doubt that we have already achieved a great deal. I am happy to be able this week to announce a new grants program, the safer families grants program, which provides practical and flexible assistance to help women and children leaving violence to set up a new home. The program will provide families with a grant of up to \$2,000 to assist with the costs of moving, buying furniture and whitegoods, setting up utilities and services and paying advance rent, along with fast-tracked access to the existing Housing ACT rental bonds loan scheme, which provides an interest-free loan of up to 90 per cent of the rental bond.

The ACT government will pilot this program for the next 12 months in partnership with the Domestic Violence Crisis Service, who will act as the initial central referring agency, and will work with the support of local businesses. I look forward to hearing more about this grant and how it is working to support women and children and others in our community.

MS CODY: Minister, how else is the ACT government supporting Canberra families to live safely and free from violence in their homes?

MS BERRY: The government's response to family violence released in June 2016 includes 38 separate commitments to address domestic and family violence. Already through this additional investment we have established for the first time a Coordinator-General for Family Safety to drive cultural change and lead reform in partnership with government agencies, non-government services and the Canberra community.

We have changed key legislative frameworks to improve the response to domestic and family violence, including a new Family Violence Act 2016, which expands the definition of family violence to expressly include a broader range of behaviours, including emotional, psychological and economic abuse and improves the protection order system. There have been amendments to the Residential Tenancies Act 1997 to make it easier for a tenant impacted by domestic violence to change their living arrangements if they need to. There have also been amendments to the Discrimination Act 1991 to ensure that a person's status as a victim of family violence is protected.

The government has increased funding for critical community services such as the Domestic Violence Crisis Service, the Canberra Rape Crisis Service, the Beryl Women's Refuge and the Doris Women's Refuge. The government has funded the new room 4 change program, an innovative residential behaviour change program for men who use or are at risk of using violence. Government directorates have also been provided targeted funding to implement reforms that support a holistic approach to reducing family violence.

MRS JONES: Minister, can you outline to the Assembly the total spend and breakdown of the expenditure from the \$30 levy that was imposed last year to tackle this issue?

MS BERRY: The \$21.4 million that will be collected from the levy will be detailed in the budget when it is available. So you will be able to see all the different line items.

I can provide you with the exact spends on them at another time.

ACT Health—annual report corrigenda

MS LEE: My question is to the Chief Minister, notifiable instrument No 207 of 2015 regarding the preparation of annual reports for the 2015-16 financial year states that if a government directorate or agency needs to correct an annual report it needs to table a corrected version or a corrigendum in the Assembly. The agency also needs to advise the workforce capability and governance division in writing. Has any ACT government directorate or agency advised that they intend to table a corrected version of its 2015-16 annual report or a corrigendum?

MR BARR: Not that I am aware of, but I will check the record and find out for Ms Lee.

MS LEE: Has any ACT government directorate or agency advised your directorate of any problems with its management of data and reporting of its performance information in relation to the 2015-16 annual reports or other reports to the Assembly?

MR BARR: I will need to check the record with the relevant directorates.

MRS DUNNE: Chief Minister, is any ACT government directorate or agency holding discussions with federal government agencies about its reporting of its data?

MR BARR: That is, again, an interesting question. I will need to take some advice on that. I imagine that most areas of government are involved in discussions with their commonwealth counterparts around data. I will take the question on notice in the context of all of the previous questions that Mrs Dunne and her colleagues have asked rather than, I think, the broader frame in which it could be interpreted.

Transport—light rail

MR PETTERSSON: My question is to the Minister for Transport and City Services. Can the minister update the Assembly on the latest developments in implementing the light rail network for Canberra?

MS FITZHARRIS: I thank Mr Pettersson for the question. I certainly can update the Assembly on the latest developments to implement a light rail network for Canberra. I am pleased to inform the Assembly that our government is continuing to deliver on its commitment to build a city-wide light rail network for Canberra. Light rail stage 1 is well underway from Civic to Gungahlin, as any of you who have travelled along that corridor can see. Light rail will transform our growing city, taking thousands of cars off the road by providing a genuine alternative to driving, generating jobs, attracting investment and revitalising the main gateway to the nation's capital city. The project will change how we use public transport, which is essential given that there will be almost half a million people living in Canberra by 2031.

As part of a fully integrated public transport system, customers will have one ticket, one fare and be able to transfer between light rail and buses, as well as a growing

cycling and walking network. Canberra has voted twice for light rail, for a city-wide light rail network that we will deliver, that only a Labor government will deliver.

Construction is already underway and progressing well. Last Tuesday the Chief Minister and I had the pleasure of inspecting the rail that has been delivered to two sites along the route, at the EPIC and Gungahlin town centre compounds. About 52 kilometres of track is required for the project, and we expect to start installing that at the depot in Mitchell in around June this year.

This year will be a very big year for construction of the light rail project. We will see significant progress, with completion of utility relocation and protection works, commencement of major civil construction activity, including the laying of concrete track form, bridgeworks on Flemington road, tree planting and landscaping, and roadworks down the corridor. Work at the light rail depot will reach an important milestone later this year, with the expected arrival of the first light rail vehicles. Landscaping works are also planned to commence across the project during late spring and early summer. We would like to thank all residents and road users for their patience while these works continue.

MR PETTERSSON: Minister, what steps are being taken to ensure early planning for stage 2 of light rail is undertaken?

MS FITZHARRIS: I thank Mr Pettersson for the supplementary question. As has been noted, we have hit the ground running during the first 100 days of the Barr Labor government. As well as continuing to deliver on stage 1 of the light rail network, we are delivering on what we were elected to do by starting work on stage 2 of the city-defining light rail network.

We have begun preliminary project definition work for stage 2 of light rail from Civic to Woden, which will see a contract signed in this term of government for construction. Stage 2 will deliver in conjunction with stage 1 a 23-kilometre north-south spine of light rail as the start of the city-wide network. This is a significant city-shaping project that delivers economic, social, transport and environmental benefits for our city. It is absolutely clear that light rail is part of our city's future.

Last week in the budget review the Treasurer announced a \$7 million investment in the next stage of Canberra's light rail network. This funding will kickstart the design work associated with stage 2. Following the community's clear endorsement of our plan to deliver a city-wide light rail network tenders opened on 25 November to get stage 2 planning underway. These tenders closed on 30 January and we received a strong response from the market. We expect to have all the technical and professional advisers on board in March.

We are committed to signing contracts for light rail stage 2, the extension to Woden, during this term. As a first step, transport Canberra and its advisers will consider project details, such as the exact light rail alignment, number of stops and locations, connectivity with other forms of transport, procurement processes and the delivery model to be adopted.

Transport Canberra is now establishing governance and project management processes, commencing discussion with Canberra Metro on light rail stage 1 and working across government with the NCA to identify potential risks, constraints and opportunities of this city-shaping project. Most importantly, we look forward to continued conversations with the Canberra community about stage 2 of light rail.

MS CHEYNE: Minister, what impact is the delivery of the light rail network having on local jobs in the Canberra economy?

MS FITZHARRIS: The impact of the light rail network on local jobs is tremendous. Not only will light rail deliver a modern, integrated transport system that can meet the needs of our growing city; it will also deliver a major boost to our economy, signs of which we are seeing strongly already. It will provide opportunities for local industry and generate thousands of local jobs. During the construction phase of stage 1 alone, it is estimated that Canberra's light rail will generate over 3½ thousand direct and indirect jobs. The project will also increase demand for various skills and qualifications, supporting more job opportunities in Canberra, including training and development activities.

Canberra Metro has a contractual obligation for local industry participation and has recently finalised its local industry participation plan. This addresses the ways in which Canberra Metro will identify, create, communicate and provide opportunities to local industry in Canberra and throughout the region. Canberra Metro has committed to 70 per cent of jobs to be sourced locally during the construction phase, and it is already exceeding this, with more than 80 per cent of Canberra Metro's employees being sourced locally.

I am also pleased to let the Assembly know that there are 12 graduates currently working on the project, with an increase to occur this academic year. Engineering students from ADFA at the University of New South Wales Canberra will commence work placements with Canberra Metro as part of a significant and very exciting MOU between the ACT government and the Department of Defence.

Following the ACT government's initial industry briefing at the commencement of the procurement phase, Canberra Metro has been engaging with local businesses within the ACT region to build a strong network of subcontractors and suppliers. We have also partnered with the Canberra Business Chamber on a light rail business link program. This collaboration maximises the benefits of the light rail project for our city, the economy and the Canberra community. Over 100 local suppliers and businesses have attended events. To date, 21 Canberra Metro work packages have been awarded, with 13 going to local businesses.

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people—out of home care

MR MILLIGAN: My question is to the Minister for Disability, Children and Youth. Minister, the 2017 ROGS report on children in child protection services shows that overrepresentation of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander youth in child protection in the ACT is not just high but is actually increasing. Over the past 10 years the percentage of Indigenous Australian youth who have experienced at least one out of home care placement during the reporting period increased nearly 93 per cent whilst

the increase for non-Indigenous children and youth over the same period was less than three per cent. Minister, why are so many Indigenous children requiring out of home placement?

MS STEPHEN-SMITH: I thank Mr Milligan for his question. This is absolutely a critical issue in our community. It is true that not only has the number of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander young people and children in out of home care increased over the years but, indeed, sadly the proportion of our children and young people in out of home care who are Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander has also increased.

As many members of this Assembly would be aware, from 1 January last year the government started implementing the step up for our kids strategy for out of home care. It is a five-year strategy. We are one year into it. It addresses the overrepresentation of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children and young people as a high priority for this strategy.

The service is to deliver a continuum of care, focusing on, as far as possible, keeping young people and children with their families. That is a particular focus for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander families, restoring them to families if children have to be removed for their own safety. There is a placement principle for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander young people which is followed in the ACT. If children and young people do have to be removed from their birth family, the first option is to try to find a kinship placement. If that is not possible, it is to find them a placement in the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community. The next option is to go into foster care in a non-Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander family.

Mrs Jones: On a point of order.

MADAM SPEAKER: Please resume your seat Ms Stephen-Smith.

Mrs Jones: The question was why so many Indigenous people are requiring out of home care, not how they are managed in out of home care. What has happened that has increased the numbers, was the question.

MADAM SPEAKER: I think the minister is responding in the general terms of out of home care and the overrepresentation of Indigenous children. Minister.

MS STEPHEN-SMITH: It is a very complex issue. The drivers of children and young people coming into out of home care for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders are similar to those of other families. (*Time expired.*)

MR MILLIGAN: Specifically, once again, can you identify why so many Indigenous children are requiring out of home care?

MS STEPHEN-SMITH: As I was saying, some of the drivers are similar to those for non-Indigenous families: family violence, drug and alcohol use and mental illness among the community. Obviously we are seeing that a higher proportion of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander families are vulnerable across a range of factors. That is why early intervention and prevention are a primary focus of the step up for our kids strategy.

As I was saying, from 1 January, as part of the step up for our kids strategy, Uniting began delivering the children and family ACT program to families who have children at risk of entering care or who have entered care. The needs of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander families are a key focus of Uniting's service and are supported and informed by the Aboriginal development service, Jaanimili. Jaanimili supports the way services are delivered to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander families by providing cultural guidance, expertise and support.

Just to go back to my earlier point, when Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children and young people have to be removed from family and are not able to be in an Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander care situation, there is a cultural plan developed so that they maintain connection to culture. We recognise that is an extremely important part of growing up as an Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander child or young person.

Jaanimili is working in partnership with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander agencies and community groups, particularly Gugan Gulwan and Winnunga Aboriginal-controlled community organisations, to ensure there is an essential link with service delivery; and the child development service within the Community Services Directorate is also supporting families with early intervention support where disability might be a factor in the family as well.

MRS KIKKERT: Minister, why is there such a spike in Indigenous kids as opposed to non-Indigenous kids in out of home placements, and what are your plans to reverse the trend in the need for out of home placements?

MS STEPHEN-SMITH: I did ask for the figures, when Kevin Rudd was talking about the increase from 2007 to 2015 the other day. There has been a small proportional increase in the number of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children and young people coming into care in the ACT. It has increased from about 22 per cent coming into out of home care to about 26 per cent. That is an unacceptable increase, and that is why we are working so hard through early intervention and prevention services, and through restoration services.

The consortium that is delivering out of home care, ACT Together, led by Barnardos, is also strongly focused, when children do come into the out-of-home care system, on working with families to restore those children, where possible, or to find culturally appropriate placements for those children, and ensuring, as I said, that cultural plans are in place and that the children have good access to cultural support.

Mr Coe: A point of order. Madam Speaker, on relevance. The specific supplementary question was about the reason for this spike, in effect, not how the children are being managed after they have come into care. In particular, what is the reason why they are coming into care?

MADAM SPEAKER: Perhaps the minister can get to that in her remaining time.

MS STEPHEN-SMITH: As I said earlier, there is a range of reasons why children come into care. I do not think you can say there is one specific reason why any child,

or any group of children and young people, is coming into care. That applies to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander young people as well. We are working through a range of strategies through the child and family centres and through Koori preschools at early intervention and prevention. That is the key to preventing Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children and young people from coming into care; to strengthen families. We are working with the elected body, through the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander agreement, as well to do that.

Greyhound racing—government policy

MR PARTON: My question is to the Minister for Regulatory Services in relation to racing and gaming, and in particular, greyhounds. Minister, I am aware of a letter sent to your office yesterday advising of the industry's firm resolve to continue racing and operating from 1 July 2017 regardless of the state of government funding. I have a very simple yes-no question: Minister, will you tell the Assembly whether or not it will be legal to conduct greyhound racing in the ACT after 1 July? Yes or no?

MR RAMSAY: Yes.

MR PARTON: Minister, will you be pursuing the transition packages, given that the greyhound racing industry has stated that they will be continuing to operate after July 1?

MR RAMSAY: Yes, I am aware of the letter that has come in. It remains the government's position that the continued operation of greyhound racing in the ACT is out of step with community values. That is a position that was clear when it was taken to the election.

Opposition members interjecting—

MR RAMSAY: It was endorsed by the people of Canberra.

Opposition members interjecting—

MR RAMSAY: We are continuing to—

Ms Berry: Point of order.

MADAM SPEAKER: Resume your seat, please, minister. There is a point of order.

Ms Berry: Seriously, Madam Speaker, those continuous interjections from the other side are making it difficult for the minister to respond. I am interested to hear what the response is to the question that was asked.

MADAM SPEAKER: There is a point of order. Can you reduce the noise on this side so the minister can be heard? Minister.

MR RAMSAY: We are continuing to provide an open invitation to the club to participate actively in the development of the fair transition package, which will include elements such as re-skilling for ACT dog owners, breeders and trainers and a

welfare plan for ACT greyhounds, including training and rehousing.

I continue to encourage the club to engage positively with my directorate, as they have been advised and as they have been invited to do a number of times through their lobbyist, so that they can have a full say in the building of a transition package that is right for their futures.

MR MILLIGAN: Minister, can you guarantee certainty for the future that is deserved by the 400 Canberrans who are either involved in the industry or whose livelihoods depend on its survival?

MR RAMSAY: The consultation and coordination of the transition package will occur led by the relevant government directorate. There will be an independent consultant, yet to be identified. That will occur between the greyhound industry and animal welfare and dog rescue organisations to develop the particulars of the transition package. This would include, potentially, a support package for industry participants, dog owners, breeders and trainers through reskilling as well as welfare plans for greyhounds, including training and rehoming of racing greyhounds. We look forward to being able to continue to work with industry for the best possible package for everyone involved.

ACT emergency services—response times

MS CHEYNE: My question is to the Minister for Police and Emergency Services. Minister, can you update the Assembly on recent results in the report on government services relating to the performance of ACT's emergency services and police.

MR GENTLEMAN: I thank Ms Cheyne for her question. As members will be aware, the report on government services is published by the Productivity Commission, and it examines the performance of governments across Australia in government service areas. I am very pleased to inform the Assembly that in the latest report, covering the period from 1 July 2015 to 30 June 2016, the ACT recorded extremely positive results across our emergency services and police roles.

In emergency services, our response times continue to lead the nation. I am very pleased to inform the Assembly that the ACT recorded the best response times in the country for ambulance and firefighting personnel despite demand for these essential services continuing to increase. In policing, Canberrans continue to report feeling safe in their community and having a high degree of satisfaction with the quality of our police services. This includes very positive community perceptions of safety both at home and in public places, with all categories scoring above the Australian average. I would like to take this opportunity to applaud the diligent efforts of Canberra's paramedics, firefighters and police in delivering such a great result for the ACT community highlighted in this report.

It is important to note that these efforts are not made, of course, in isolation. This government acknowledges and very much appreciates the sacrifices made by our first responders and their families to serve our community. I congratulate every member of the ACT Ambulance Service, ACT Fire & Rescue and ACT Policing for their continued dedication to keeping the community safe. The results are a credit to the

professionalism of the women and men in these services. The ACT government is committed to supporting our emergency services and police now and into the future.

MS CHEYNE: Minister, can you please provide further information to the Assembly on our ambulance and Fire & Rescue response times?

MR GENTLEMAN: As part of the ACT Emergency Services Agency, the Ambulance Service and Fire & Rescue service perform a vital role in responding to emergencies and providing a high level of care to people in the community. The ACT recorded the best response times in the country for ambulance and firefighting personnel, despite, as I said, demand for these essential services continuing to increase.

The ACT Ambulance Service has recorded the best response times in the country for the fifth year in a row. The ACTAS state-wide and capital city response times are in the 90th percentile and are the best in the country at 13.7 minutes. I note these results have been achieved while also maintaining an impressive 98 per cent result in the annual ambulance patient satisfaction survey.

The success of our emergency services continues with ACT Fire & Rescue service. I am pleased to report that the ACT Fire & Rescue service had the best major city and state-wide structure fire response times in the country at 10.2 minutes and measured in the 90th percentile.

The government is proud of the work of the men and women of our emergency services and thanks all the staff for their professionalism in working tirelessly to deliver services around the clock. The government is committed to making our community safer. This was confirmed by the funding increases in the last budget for emergency services. The government is committed to protecting the people who protect us by giving our emergency services personnel the resources they need to do their job and look after the people we care about.

MRS JONES: Minister, according to the same report, why have ambulance response times increased by one minute since the previous report?

MR GENTLEMAN: I thank Mrs Jones for her question. It is in relation to the growth of services across the territory. We are looking at resourcing ACTAS as best we can to adjust to that growth right across the territory.

Public housing—asbestos

MR DOSZPOT: My question is to the Minister for Housing and Suburban Development. Minister, is there any evidence or concern about loose-fill asbestos being present in any multi-unit public housing stock?

MS BERRY: None that I am aware of.

MR DOSZPOT: Minister, were any houses that are currently in public housing stock remediated for loose-fill asbestos in the 1990s? If you do not know, will you take the question on notice?

MS BERRY: There were initially five houses that were identified to have loose-fill asbestos in them. I understand that four of those have already been demolished or are about to be demolished, and that one will be demolished soon.

MR PARTON: Minister, will all current public housing properties, including multi-unit stock, that once contained loose-fill asbestos be demolished?

MS BERRY: I refer Mr Parton to my previous answer. There are no multi-unit blocks, as far as I am aware, that have loose-fill asbestos in them that are owned by Housing ACT. Of the five houses that were identified, four have been or will be demolished and the fifth one will be demolished soon.

Asbestos—worker safety

MR WALL: My question is to the Minister for Workplace Safety and Industrial Relations regarding the demolition of loose-fill asbestos contaminated houses. Minister, has air quality monitoring been conducted on all demolition sites?

MS STEPHEN-SMITH: My understanding is that it has been, but I will take that question on notice.

MR WALL: Minister, does the staged approach to the demolition mean that air quality monitoring can be and should be undertaken on all sites?

MS STEPHEN-SMITH: Once again I am not an expert on the demolition of houses and air quality monitoring, so I will get some advice and take that on notice.

MS LEE: Perhaps the minister will take this on notice as well. In 2016, what was the proportion of demolition sites that had air quality monitoring?

MS STEPHEN-SMITH: Once again, I will have to take that on notice, thank you.

Children and young people—programs

MS ORR: My question is to the Minister for Disability, Children and Youth. Minister, can you please update the Assembly on the kids and families holiday program run by the Gungahlin, Tuggeranong and west Belconnen child and family centres?

MS STEPHEN-SMITH: I thank Ms Orr for her question and for her ongoing interest in activities for Canberra's families, particularly for families who may be vulnerable.

This year was the first time that the child and family centres network had conducted a school holiday program, in my understanding, and it was a very popular program. As well as connecting with staff and meeting other families, the kids and families program offered a terrific range of activities, all for free. These included working with clay, gardening, painting, Aboriginal storytelling and yoga, to name just a few.

The program also ran events to bring people together. I was lucky enough to attend the growing healthy families barbecue for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander

families in Tuggeranong and a taste of culture workshop at the west Belconnen centre, which showcased the local culture and heritage of the ACT's Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community. There was also a Tuggeranong park teddy bear's picnic, which I understand was very popular, while Gungahlin families had the opportunity to visit their local library, followed by a healthy morning tea—a Meegan Fitzharris approved morning tea!

The program was of particular benefit to families who already engage with a wide range of services offered by the centres, such as parenting support and multicultural playgroups. But the welcoming environment also meant that new families came into the centres for the first time and were able to find out more about the support available for families with young children through the centres.

The kids and families holiday program attracted an impressive total of 624 children across the three child and family centres. I commend the child and family centre staff on the delivery of this great program of activities, and indeed on the work they do throughout the year.

MS ORR: Minister, how many clients, families and children accessed services and programs through the child and family centres last year?

MS STEPHEN-SMITH: I thank Ms Orr for her supplementary question. I am pleased to report that a total of 1,830 families accessed services at the child and family centres in 2015-16. There was an interesting difference in the data, however, between 2014-15 and 2015-16. While the number of families accessing the child and family centres went down slightly, the number using services more frequently increased.

What this appears to tell us is that centres are working with some families over a longer period of time and are providing those families with a more intensive, more tailored service offer. This level of service provision is making a real difference in the lives of Canberra's families and their children. Indeed, as I mentioned earlier, the child and family centres are increasingly being integrated into a holistic prevention and early intervention approach to supporting vulnerable families or those at risk.

The child and family centres consistently deliver exceptional results when it comes to client satisfaction. In 2015-16, the centres achieved a satisfaction rate of 97 per cent. I am pleased to inform the Assembly that term 1 programs are now well underway at the three child and family centres in Gungahlin, Tuggeranong and west Belconnen.

Group programs include “Learn, giggle and grow” for parents and children up to five years; “Cool little kids,” which provides strategies for parents to help young children with anxiety, which is a growing concern; the Atfaal family playgroup at Gungahlin for Muslim families; the South Sudanese group at west Belconnen; and the deadly bubs playgroup in Gungahlin.

As always, of course, families are welcome to drop in to any of the centres for general parenting advice and support or to visit the collocated maternal and child health nurses who are collocated in these centres that are providing a very popular service.

MR STEEL: Minister, what other services are available in the ACT for families to ensure that children reach their full potential?

MS STEPHEN-SMITH: I thank Mr Steel for his supplementary question and of course acknowledge his interest in the wellbeing of Canberra's children, particularly around early years education and care.

Madam Speaker, 4 January this year marked the one-year anniversary of the Child Development Service at Holder, which was established after the commencement of the national disability insurance scheme. The service maintains the government's commitment to the mainstream developmental assessment of children and is a collaborative service incorporating the Community Services, Health and Education directorates. It is a new and best practice service with streamlined access to allied health and medical assessment for children resident in the ACT and at risk of developmental delay. The service provides assessment, referral, information and linkages for children with complex developmental needs, from birth to eight years, as well as autism assessment for children aged up to 12 years.

I was extremely pleased recently to attend the first birthday celebration of the service at the Holder centre and to meet the amazing, multi-disciplinary team. At that morning tea I heard from the staff themselves about the work they are doing at Gungan Gulwan, Winnunga, Koori preschools, Canberra Cares and the child and family centres. This outreach service is enabling our allied health services to reach across into our community and the staff are working hard to build trust and stronger linkages, particularly with Aboriginal-controlled organisations.

We know that intervening early in Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander families when they are vulnerable and particularly addressing the intergenerational effects of trauma are extremely important in reducing the overrepresentation of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children and young people coming into our system, as I talked about earlier.

On the Child Development Service, the service provided assessment, referral and information to approximately 2,000 children and families in 2016. It is a fantastic testament to this service for Canberra families.

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