



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

**HANSARD**

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6 June 2017

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**Questions without notice**  
**Trade unions—influence on government**

**MR COE:** I have a question for the Chief Minister. My question relates to the media comments last month by Labor's most successful Chief Minister. Why was Jon Stanhope's leadership strong enough to keep the CFMEU at arm's length, yet this government, under your leadership, is incapable of standing up to external influences?

**MR BARR:** It is a very predictable question from the Leader of the Opposition today. I would observe that, as Chief Minister, you are the beneficiary of a diverse range of advice from members of the community, be they predecessors in the role, those who take a keen interest in ACT politics—

**Ms Lawder:** Or aspire to.

**MR BARR:** Or some who may aspire to the role, as the Deputy Leader of the Opposition interjects—

*Mr Coe interjecting—*

**MR BARR:** You certainly do.

*Members interjecting—*

**MADAM SPEAKER:** You have one minute and 14 seconds left, Chief Minister.

**MR BARR:** Madam Speaker, they are enjoying themselves. I hesitate to interrupt the joyous repartee that is going across the chamber at this moment. But going to the substance of the question, yes, you are often given advice. I take all of that advice on board. In relation to the Leader of the Opposition's—

**Mr Coe:** Point of order.

**MADAM SPEAKER:** On a point of order, Mr Coe.

**MR COE:** The specific question was: why is the government, under your leadership, incapable of standing up to external influences? I ask that he directly address that.

**MADAM SPEAKER:** I do not think there is a point of order. Given the interjections and the track the Chief Minister is on, he can continue.

**MR BARR:** Thank you, Madam Speaker. Suffice to say that I reject the premise of the question from the Leader of the Opposition and, whilst former chief ministers' opinions are of very high value, they are but some of many opinions that are offered in the community.

**MR COE:** Chief Minister, are you one of the members who owe their position, whether as an MLA or as Chief Minister, to the CFMEU?

**MR BARR:** I think anyone who has an understanding of how the ACT political system works would recognise—

**Mr Hanson:** Jon Stanhope does.

**MR BARR:** No, maybe Jon does not in this instance, because Jon, along with others, would be aware that we have a rank and file preselection process within the ACT Labor Party and, ultimately, it is the people of Canberra, through the Hare-Clark system—

*Members interjecting—*

**MADAM SPEAKER:** Stop the clock. Resume your seat, Chief Minister. I remind members we have a fairly short question time today, so the interjections will see even less questioning if you continue with that. I will stop the clock when people continue to interject.

**MR BARR:** Thank you, Madam Speaker. The Labor Party has a rank and file preselection process. Those of us who are fortunate enough to be preselected owe our spot on the Labor Party ticket for ACT elections to the rank and file members of the Labor Party, and then—

*Opposition members interjecting—*

**MADAM SPEAKER:** Please resume your seat. Mr Coe, Mr Hanson, no more interjections.

**MR BARR:** Thank you, Madam Speaker. Ultimately it is the people of the ACT who have the opportunity to choose from a variety of candidates, in fact, in the last election, I believe, a record number of candidates. So we owe our positions in this place to the people who voted for us: the electors within each of our electorates.

**MR WALL:** Chief Minister, why have you allowed the governing party to be taken over by external influences such as the CFMEU?

**MR BARR:** Again I reject the premise of the question. The government today, in delivering our budget, is implementing the commitments we took to the people of Canberra a little over seven months ago. We remain focused on the things that matter to Canberrans: investing in the health and education—

*Mr Coe interjecting—*

**MADAM SPEAKER:** Mr Coe, please.

**MR BARR:** of our fellow Canberrans, investing in the infrastructure that a growing city needs. This is a budget and a government that is focused on delivering a better Canberra and that is exactly what we will get on with doing over this parliamentary term. Those opposite might seek to dwell a little on the past four or five election results, and contemplate whether this sort of petty politics actually gets them anywhere at all.

**Housing—homelessness**

**MS LE COUTEUR:** My question is to the minister for housing and relates to women and children experiencing homelessness. Minister, it came to my attention recently that a woman escaping violence with children had no accommodation to go to. Minister, what advice have you told service providers to give when they talk to people who are unable to be accommodated?

**MS BERRY:** Of course, the homelessness service providers that provide support for women and children who are experiencing or escaping domestic and family violence are the experts in being able to provide that advice to those individuals. If Ms Le Couteur is aware of any people sleeping in their cars or experiencing domestic and family violence and who need support, the best place for them to get that support, first of all, will be through Housing ACT, to ensure that they get accommodation; then Housing ACT can ensure that they get the appropriate support services from services like the Domestic Violence Crisis Service and the Canberra Rape Crisis Centre.

**MS LE COUTEUR:** To your knowledge, how many people are sleeping in cars, and what data does the government collect on unmet demand for supported accommodation services and where people have been living immediately prior to seeking supported accommodation services?

**MS BERRY:** Again, if Ms Le Couteur is aware of anybody who is sleeping in cars then I strongly urge her to put them in touch with Housing ACT, so that we can make sure that they are supported. The ACT government also works very closely with and provides funding assistance to St Vincent de Paul's night patrol and street to home program, which provides support for people who are sleeping rough. I get regular updates from St Vincent de Paul on the number of people who are sleeping rough in the ACT and the kinds of support that they are getting. Currently, I believe the number is around 30 individuals who are sleeping rough, which is consistent with the number of people who have been sleeping rough in the ACT for a number of years now. But I am assured by organisations like St Vincent de Paul that they are being provided with support regularly. They regularly check in on these individuals and, if they can support these individuals into accommodation, they do that through Housing ACT or through other housing support services.

**MR PARTON:** Minister, how many people have been turned away from homelessness services in the past year, according to the most recent data?

**MS BERRY:** I caught the first part: how many people have been turned away from—

**MADAM SPEAKER:** Mr Parton, can you repeat the question please?

**MR PARTON:** How many people would have been turned away from homelessness services in the past year, according to the most recent data?

**MS BERRY:** I would have to get that information to the Assembly. What I can say is that the ACT invests a lot of money in providing support to homelessness services so

that they can support people in the ACT, particularly those who are experiencing or escaping domestic and family violence. Those people make up around 30 per cent of applications for housing in the ACT. We make sure that support for those individuals, with housing or accommodation through Housing ACT, is a priority.

That priority is acknowledged across the country and it is a priority that is acknowledged as part of a national partnership on housing. It is important to ensure and to acknowledge that this is an issue that the ACT government does not face alone. This is a cross-border issue that the whole country is working towards. The challenge that faces us is ensuring that people are supported into housing through government-provided housing or through housing from community support organisations; or that they can be housed in private rentals for themselves or then find ways for them to get into accommodation of their own.

All of those are challenges that the whole country faces. Housing and homelessness ministers are meeting very soon to continue to talk about ways that we can resolve that issue.

### **Education—public schools**

**MR PETTERSSON:** My question is to the Minister for Education and Early Childhood Development. How is the government making sure that all children in the ACT have a place in their local public school?

**MS BERRY:** I thank Mr Pettersson for his question. The ACT government delivers high quality public education for every student who seeks a place. Every child deserves a great education and the life chances that flow from it, and the government is committed to making sure that this is available to all children across the ACT.

The Education Directorate undertakes rolling five-year enrolment projections based on analysis of changing demographics, suburban renewal and greenfield development. This analysis shows that the enrolment growth in ACT public schools is among the fastest in Australia: and the community clearly supports public education if school enrolments are anything to go by. More than 46,000 students are enrolled in public schools, two-thirds of all school enrolments.

Keeping our commitment to make sure that there is a place for every child who seeks one requires the government to work and invest in that. The government is responding with a strong investment in new and expanded schools and modern teaching and learning environments and, as the government has already announced, it has provided more than \$115 million in new capital works so that we can provide better schools now and into the future.

**MR PETTERSSON:** What investment is being made in school expansions for areas with growing enrolments?

**MS BERRY:** Within this \$115 million, which the ACT government has already announced in new capital works, building on works in progress totalling more than \$118 million, there is dedicated investment to address areas of our city that we know are growing.

Public school enrolments in the north of Canberra have grown by 53 per cent over the past five years. Everybody knows that Gungahlin is a key growth region. That is why this government will expand capacity at Harrison School, Gold Creek School, Neville Bonner Primary School and Palmerston District Primary School. The government has also decided to expand the scope of the new North Gungahlin Primary School in Taylor with additional capacity, and playing fields that will be available to the wider community as families move in to this area. In total, \$24 million is invested in expanding schools in Gungahlin.

In west Belconnen, \$5.9 million is being provided to finish a major refurbishment of Belconnen High School, delivering a refurbished school with contemporary, best practice design for better learning. Members can rest assured, because public schools right across the ACT will benefit from \$85 million for new learning spaces, toilets and change rooms, garden and horticultural facilities, heating and cooling upgrades, and energy-efficient improvements.

Our work and investment will not stop. Alongside all of this, the government is funding the early planning of a new school in east Gungahlin, in preparation for new suburbs and population growth. Similarly, in the Molonglo Valley, another area of growth, the government is building on existing investments by funding the detailed planning of a future school in Denman Prospect.

**MS CODY:** Why does the government invest so strongly in public education?

**MS BERRY:** The government believes in the transformative power of education. Success in delivering education happens when it looks past the background and circumstances of each child and focuses on meeting individual needs with no prejudice about the potential of every person.

Our public schools achieve this. They are diverse and inclusive. They embrace difference. No-one is excluded, regardless of their background, culture, gender, class, religion, sexuality, ability or wealth. Public education is free. Financial means is no barrier to accessing school education, and it will never be under this government. Because of their diversity, our public schools are vital hubs in their local community. They provide an anchor for many families as children develop and grow.

The success of our schools shows in social and emotional learning and school retention, alongside strong performance in tests. Eighty-five per cent of ACT students are completing year 12, and around 90 per cent of them go on to employment or further study. But there is no doubt that we need to keep a focus on school improvements so that all children are set up for a bright future.

As I said earlier in launching the future of education conversation in February this year, improvements in other Australian school systems have in some ways brought them into line with or ahead of ours if you assess schools based on standardised academic tests. This is particularly the case for schools in less wealthy areas.

The highest quality education systems succeed by embracing equity and universality in their approach.

The government will take a closer look at, and explore with children, parents and educators, some of the areas where our system could improve and then implement a strategy that makes sure that there is no barrier to any child achieving their best. And we will keep investing in their future.

### **Chief Minister—leadership**

**MS LAWDER:** My question is to the Chief Minister. Chief Minister, why has Jon Stanhope, ACT Labor's most successful leader, questioned your ability to lead the government's approach on poker machines?

**MR BARR:** Far be it from me to get inside the mind of the former Chief Minister in answer to a question that seeks an expression of opinion.

**MS LAWDER:** Chief Minister, what would be the basis of the claims of the former Chief Minister, Mr Stanhope, that the electoral success of numerous MLAs is attributed to the CFMEU rather than to your leadership?

**MR BARR:** Again, an interesting but obvious line of questioning from those opposite. I think the clear indication in the election results last time was that the labour movement, both its political and its industrial wings, was united behind an agenda for this city that saw further investment in health, in education, in public transportation, in community and in local government services. There was the most extensive campaign in the history of self-government behind that policy agenda. It delivered an outstanding result for all of us who believe in the role of government to invest in a better community and to invest in a growing city.

There was a very clear policy contrast between our party and the Liberal Party at the last election, and the people of Canberra voted for our party. They also voted for the Greens. The Greens were able to elect two members to this place; the Labor Party, 12. Between the Greens and the Labor Party, through a parliamentary agreement, we have formed government to represent the people of Canberra, but particularly those who voted for our policy agenda, who want to see it delivered—and that is exactly what today is all about.

**MR COE:** My question is to the Chief Minister. Why has Labor's most successful Chief Minister and Treasurer stated that Wayne Berry's judgement on gaming in the casino is better than yours?

**MR BARR:** There are a variety of opinions on the question of where the balance of poker machine licences should be over the longer term. The government's view is that the number of poker machines in the city should be reduced, and we are implementing a policy agenda that will see the number of poker machines in the city significantly reduced. I do find it ironic, given that, that the only party that is arguing for more gambling is the Liberal Party. These people opposite think that chocolate addiction is more significant than gambling addiction. In that statement you see exactly where the true values of those opposite line up.

### **Women—health services**

**MS CODY:** My question is to the Minister for Health. Minister, how is the government delivering on women's health?

**MS FITZHARRIS:** I thank Ms Cody very much for the question. As we know, the population of our city and our surrounding region is growing, and there has been a significant increase in the number of births in the ACT. As a result, Health is experiencing a higher demand for birthing services and, correspondingly, hospital and community-based services for women, babies and children.

Through this budget, the ACT government will expand the Centenary hospital for Women and Children, both physically and in terms of the services it delivers. Women and their families will experience the benefits of this expansion through additional maternity beds and staff to care for women during their pregnancy, birth and into the postnatal period.

The expansion will respond to the significant growth in demand over the next 10 years for services to women and children in Canberra and the surrounding region. In the 12 months from April 2016 to March 2017 there were 3,680 births at the Centenary hospital. The new facilities that the government has committed to delivering will be developed to reflect that projected population growth and make sure that we are in the best position to meet that need.

In addition, as part of the expansion, the Centenary hospital will provide new services. These will include a dedicated adolescent gynaecology service. This service will reduce the need for young women and girls to travel to Sydney for treatment, as assessment and treatment will be provided locally, thereby improving access for our residents.

It was a pleasure recently to visit the Centenary hospital, just last week, where I met new babies Safira and Eden, and be reminded firsthand of the wonderful maternity and health facilities that Canberrans already have access to, in response to their health and wellbeing needs; and how they will benefit from the expansion of services and the ACT government's commitment to making sure Canberrans have access to better health care where and when they need it.

**MS CODY:** What additional support will be provided to children and young people through the expansion of paediatric and adolescent services at the Centenary hospital?

**MS FITZHARRIS:** I would note that Ms Cody might take advantage of some health services herself; she is sounding pretty crook so I really appreciate the questions.

We are, of course, committed to improving the types of services available to women, children and families, and will improve access to the Centenary hospital. It will be expanded to become a centre of excellence in our region for women's, youth and children's health care.

The ACT government is committed to improving the types of services available to women, children, young people and their families. This commitment includes the development of a dedicated 12-bed paediatric high dependency unit within the

Centenary hospital. We will introduce new services, including a new paediatric intensive care treatment space and new paediatric intensive care beds. This will assist in meeting the existing high acute needs of severely unwell children and adolescents and again reduce the need to transfer patients to New South Wales facilities.

It is recognised that there can be a detrimental impact on the patient and family when critically ill children and young people are transferred to alternative hospitals, so I am really pleased that the introduction of this service will enable patients to be treated where their family and support networks are readily available and minimise the disruption during what is a very difficult time when young people become severely unwell.

In addition, the expansion will involve refurbishments of the current operational service delivery areas to create two child and adolescent sleep labs. This new service will support ACT Health to meet the needs of children and adolescents with sleep disorders, allowing them to stay in the ACT rather than having to travel to New South Wales.

Another very important part of this expansion will deliver an adolescent mental health unit to provide specialist acute mental health care to young people and their families in a dedicated inpatient treatment space. This initiative will demonstrate the government's commitment to expanding inpatient mental health services for young people in addition to the significant services outlined by Minister Rattenbury yesterday.

**MS ORR:** Minister, how successful has the existing women's and children's hospital been in providing essential services to women and children in our region?

**MS FITZHARRIS:** Since it opened five years ago the Centenary Hospital for Women and Children has successfully brought together a range of comprehensive and diverse services, including maternity services, the birth centre, neonatal intensive care, gynaecology and foetal medicine, paediatrics and specialised outpatient services, all within one state-of-the-art building.

It provides an integrated multidisciplinary service with ACT Health community staff and with general practitioners, providing a seamless service. The Centenary hospital provides high-quality comprehensive and holistic care, innovation in practice and research, quality training to clinicians and effective advocacy for children, women and families of the ACT and surrounding region.

The 2017 budget invests in expanding the hospital to provide even better health services for women and young people, to better align with the growing demands of our community and its demand for maternity services. The hospital will expand physically and also, as previously mentioned, in its capacity to deliver new and expanded services.

The expansion will be almost \$70 million of investment over four years to provide for design and construction of these new facilities. The work in the coming financial year will also inform the development of the new and expanded services. This initiative demonstrates the government's commitment to provide the best possible facilities, to

grow those facilities and to help meet the specialist healthcare and wellbeing needs of women, children and families in our city and region. So, as our city continues to grow, the funding provided through the budget will expand the Centenary hospital's high-level, state-of-the-art services beyond its current capacity, to provide a centre of excellence for women's and children's health care in the region.

### **Government—clubs policy**

**MR PARTON:** My question is to the Chief Minister. During a debate on poker machines and clubs you stated:

We will work with the industry and particularly with the new body that is being established out of the wreckage and the joke that is ClubsACT. We will work with the new body to implement our policies.

Chief Minister, why are you excluding ClubsACT, the body representing the vast majority of clubs in the territory, from engaging with the government?

**MR BARR:** Yes, I did indicate the government's intention to work with the new Canberra community clubs body in relation to the implementation of the various reforms that we took to the 2016 election. I also impart that we will be seeking to implement those policies as soon as possible. Members will be aware that a number of those election commitments are contained within the budget papers that we are about to formally release.

The government will engage with clubs in the new group and clubs who sit outside either group, and we can engage, given the small number of clubs, with other clubs in the city. It is not beyond the realm of possibility that, given that the clubs that are represented by ClubsACT number a handful, the government can engage with them. But, as a peak body, ClubsACT has no credibility.

**MR PARTON:** Chief Minister, will clubs then be forced to join Canberra Community Clubs to ensure that they can participate in a dialogue with the government under the umbrella of a peak body?

**MR BARR:** No. The government, as I said, can engage with clubs on an individual basis and clubs on a collective basis. But there is no doubt that the peak body known as ClubsACT has significant policy differences with the government. So engaging in the implementation of our policy agenda with an organisation that (a) has no credibility and (b) is opposed to the government's agenda is not going to be productive. However, we will engage with all in the clubs sector. As I say, it will be very straightforward for the government to do so in a direct manner.

**MS LEE:** Chief Minister, how will you effectively engage with the clubs that come under the umbrella of ClubsACT if, as you claim, ClubsACT no longer has credibility as a peak body?

**MR BARR:** I would refer the member to my previous two answers, but I would observe that there is not a lot to engage on. We are going to implement our policies. The policies that we took to the election are not up for debate. We took them to the

election and we received a mandate to implement those policies. Even the shadow gaming minister acknowledged that it was a big issue in the campaign. People had a very clear choice. ClubsACT sided very firmly with your side of politics against the government's agenda—

**Mr Wall:** That is their democratic right.

**MR BARR:** which is their democratic right. But the democratic process has now occurred and the government has a mandate to implement the policies we took to the election. Those policies—

*Opposition members interjecting—*

**MADAM SPEAKER:** No interjections, please. Mr Wall and others!

**MR BARR:** Those policies are not up for negotiation. They are not up for negotiation. They will be implemented.

*It being 3 pm, proceedings were interrupted pursuant to the order of the Assembly.*

## **Appropriation Bill 2017-2018**

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

Budget 2017-2018—

Financial Management Act, pursuant to section 10—

Budget Speech (Budget Paper 1).

Budget in Brief (Budget Paper 2).

Budget Outlook (Budget Paper 3).

Budget Statements—

A—ACT Executive, Auditor-General, Electoral Commissioner, Office of the Legislative Assembly.

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

C—Health Directorate, ACT Hospital Network.

D—Justice and Community Safety Directorate, Legal Aid Commission (ACT), Public Trustee and Guardian.

E—Environment, Planning and Sustainable Development Directorate.

F—Education Directorate.

G—Community Services Directorate, ACT Housing.

H—Transport Canberra and City Services Directorate, ACT Public Cemeteries Authority, ACTION.

Financial Management Act, pursuant to subsection 62(1)—Statements of Intent 2017-2018—

ACT Building and Construction Industry Training Fund Authority, dated 26, 29 and 30 May 2017.

ACT Long Service Leave Authority.

Title read by Clerk.

**MR BARR** (Kurrajong—Chief Minister, Treasurer, Minister for Economic Development and Minister for Tourism and Major Events) (3.01): I move:

That this bill be agreed to in principle.

### **Delivering for a better Canberra**

The Government went to the last election with a positive plan for renewal across our city and suburbs.

This Budget starts delivering that plan.

We are making Canberra's schools better by delivering classroom and facilities upgrades across the Territory. We are expanding four Gungahlin schools and getting work underway on a new school in the growth area of the Molonglo Valley.

We are renewing our city's health services by delivering and planning for new nurse-led Walk in Centres at Gungahlin, Weston Creek and the Inner North; the significant new Surgical Procedures, Interventional Radiology and Emergency Centre, or "SPIRE", in Woden; and a future northside hospital. We are also upgrading cancer and aged care facilities at the Canberra Hospital in Woden.

We are overhauling our transport system to keep Canberra moving by expanding the light rail network, with new investment to design the route for Stage 2 to Woden, better linking that town centre with the Parliamentary Triangle and our city's heart. And at the same time as the City Renewal Authority delivers the CBD that Australia's capital city deserves, we are investing right across the Territory to revitalise our town centres and clean up our suburbs. This includes delivering the next stage of the West Basin boardwalk, expanding the Belconnen Arts Centre precinct, as we promised before the election, and investing more to clean up graffiti, reduce litter, and keep our sports fields and ovals green.

By delivering the renewal that we promised, the Government is working every day to keep making our city better for all Canberrans.

Canberra has made huge strides in the past two decades, from the growth of Gungahlin and the maturing of the Tuggeranong Valley, to the creation and renewal of New Acton, the Kingston Foreshore and Braddon. In economic terms, we have grown from a one company town to a confident and diversified city economy.

But there is plenty more that we can do to make the city we love even better. We will keep building on Canberra's potential.

### **Economic and fiscal outlook**

When I stood here last year to deliver the Budget speech, I noted that the Territory had weathered some tough times in recent years—mostly because of decisions taken by the Federal Government.

But I also sounded a note of optimism—that we had started turning a corner with jobs growth picking up and a strengthening of our local economy. A year on, these green shoots have spread, making the Territory's economy consistently among Australia's strongest.

Economic growth for 2016-17 is expected to hit three and a quarter per cent—fully one percentage point higher than was projected a year ago. This is a much stronger result than has been seen across the Australian economy, where growth is expected to be a sluggish one and three quarter per cent in 2016-17.

The Territory's unemployment rate is the second lowest in the country at 3.6 per cent, and has now been below four per cent for over 12 months. That is because in the last year our economy added over 3,200 new jobs, while our participation rate remains among the highest in the country.

One of the Government's proudest achievements is that we have got unemployment down and we have kept it there.

Between self-government and Labor coming to office in 2001, the Territory's unemployment rate averaged 6.4 per cent. During our time in office, it has been significantly lower, averaging 3.7 per cent.

Before 2001, unemployment rates of six, seven or even eight per cent were not uncommon in this city. By comparison, the unemployment rate has been above five per cent for just one month in this government's entire term in office.

Importantly, unemployment has fallen, even as Canberra's population has grown significantly: an extra 5,778 people now call Canberra home compared with a year ago.

By 2020, our population is expected to be growing by well over 6,000 people a year, and our total population will approach 430,000 people. That is why it is important that we invest now in the additional infrastructure that this city will need.

We are well on track to build the new homes that will accommodate this growth: over the course of 2016, dwelling commencements rose over 100 per cent—the strongest

supply increase in the nation.

A growing population is also helping boost retail trade for Canberra's small businesses and local industries. At 3.1 per cent, our growth in retail trade over the last 12 months is again among the strongest in the country, and has now been a rolling positive across a 33-month period.

The diversification of Canberra's economy continues to gather pace, which is fortunate considering the Commonwealth Government has maintained its wage freeze on the Australian Public Service in the latest federal Budget.

The ACT's service exports have grown by more than 65 per cent since 2010-11, to now reach \$1.7 billion a year. Our education sector has been the standout success, bringing in \$508 million last year or just under a third of our total service exports. Our local industries are thriving, which means more good jobs for Canberrans—the higher education sector alone now supports about 16,000 jobs across the ACT.

This Government has never lost sight of the importance of creating and maintaining good jobs for Canberrans, and this will continue to be at the centre of everything we do in the years to come.

A strong balance sheet goes hand-in-hand with a strong economy to keep our city growing. That is why this Budget continues our clear and steady path back to balance from the depths of the combined Commonwealth and Mr Fluffy effect on the Territory budget of some years ago.

I acknowledge it has been a long climb—a deficit of \$479 million in 2014-15 has shrunk to just \$73.9 million in 2016-17, which represents a further improvement on the \$119 million projected deficit at the time of the 2016-17 Budget Review.

As we have been forecasting since 2015, the Territory is on track to return to balance in 2018-19. Stronger surpluses in the years beyond allow us to make further investments in our city.

I have said this before but it bears repeating this afternoon: we do not believe in delivering surpluses for their own sake. Instead, we are strengthening the Territory's finances so that we can meet the community's needs today while investing more for tomorrow.

That is our fiscal plan: making the right investments to renew our city, while sticking to this clear path of budget balance. That is how the Government will deliver a stronger budget and an even better Canberra.

### **Getting the basics right**

Adding another eight suburbs worth of people to our city—the equivalent of Weston Creek—over the next four years means there is a lot of work to do.

That is why we went to the last election with clear plans to invest in the services that make this city such a great place to live: our great local schools; our modern and

accessible hospitals and healthcare system; and a transport system that gets you where you need to go quickly and conveniently.

We understand the importance of renewing and boosting these essential services and doing that now so that we are ready as more people call Canberra home.

Under the ACT Government's plan, we can keep on getting better as our city grows.

There should be absolutely no trade-off between being an engaging, diverse and growing city, while retaining what makes our city so special and one where high-quality services are available close to home, when you need them. That is what we are delivering in this Budget.

### **Better schools for our kids**

Madam Speaker, a great education depends on two things: excellent teachers who can bring learning to life, and well-equipped schools and classrooms where this learning can happen.

With this Budget, the Government is investing in both, to deliver better schools for our kids.

As we promised in the election, we are funding 25 scholarships a year to help Territory teachers gain post-graduate qualifications in science, technology, engineering or maths (STEM), as well as those who want to gain qualifications in another language. We know STEM learning is increasingly important for preparing our kids for the jobs that await them after they leave school, so we will ensure that ACT schools have more skilled teachers who can confidently and engagingly deliver these subjects.

At the same time, our funding of 66 school assistants across Canberra is taking pressure off teachers, freeing them up to spend more time on lesson planning, and directly addressing the individual learning needs of our students.

The impact of good teachers is strengthened by great classrooms and school facilities. That is why we are engaging in a large program of refurbishment of our schools right across Canberra.

Through capital investments and grants driven by school needs, we will extend existing classrooms, build new ones, refurbish toilets and change room areas, install heating and cooling, and improve school grounds. We recognise that, with the average age of a Territory school being 42 years, we need to keep investing to improve our learning spaces so that our kids get the most out of their time at school.

But, as we all know, a good learning environment is about more than just classrooms and facilities. Students cannot learn effectively if they are struggling with their mental health or they are being bullied at school. That is why we will continue to ensure that Canberra schools are Safe Schools by continuing to fund this important program after the Commonwealth gutted it and walked away from these students.

We are also hiring an additional five school psychologists to better support student wellbeing and to provide early intervention mental health services for young Canberrans.

Better teachers, better classrooms and better support for students who are struggling: this is a Budget that will deliver.

### **Better care when you need it**

Health is also a significant priority for the Labor Party and for the Government, and Canberrans deserve to be confident that good quality healthcare will be available when they need it, whether that is for a routine check-up, a sudden broken bone, the much-anticipated birth of a child or a chronic illness.

That is why the Government went to the last election with a 10-Year Health Plan to renew our local hospitals and health facilities so that they can deliver care in ways that are easily accessible for everyone.

This Budget kicks off that plan with new health investments right across the community, in primary and specialist care, delivering better care where and when our residents need it.

The new SPIRE Centre will bring more and better tertiary health services to Canberra Hospital. SPIRE will boost the number of operating theatres from 13 to 20, providing more capacity and allowing for the concurrent management of emergency and elective surgeries, avoiding delays and rescheduling.

This Budget funds the first stage of planning, and provides for the design and construction commencement so that we can treat patients there early in the next decade.

This Budget also starts delivering on our commitment to expand the Centenary Hospital for Women and Children. The expansion will include a new child and adolescent mental health unit, an adolescent gynaecology service, a new paediatric high-dependency unit and paediatric intensive care beds. The first phase of funding includes feasibility and planning work to inform construction commencement in the 2018-19 fiscal year.

Of course, the primary goal is to keep Canberrans healthy through better preventative, primary and community care. That is why we are boosting access to bulk billing GPs in Canberra's south, funding two new mobile dental vans, increasing the capacity of Hospital in the Home, and providing more free vaccinations and health checks in our schools.

Our 10-Year Health Plan will ensure that local health care delivery not only keeps up as our city grows, but keeps getting even better.

### **Building a better city**

Madam Speaker, if you commute to work from the south into the city, if you take

Gundaroo Drive, or if you are part of the Molonglo Valley's growing community, you already know that there is a need for new and better transport infrastructure.

We are not waiting for Sydney-style traffic jams to bank up; we are starting work today to build the transport infrastructure, the rail and the roads, that will keep Canberra moving.

The construction of Canberra's light rail network is the most significant infrastructure and transport project this city has ever embarked upon. With construction of Stage 1 from Gungahlin to the city now well on track for completion in late 2018 we are moving ahead with Stage 2 to Woden, just as we promised we would.

This Budget delivers the funding needed to carry out the detailed scoping and route planning for the city to Woden corridor. Almost 210,000 Canberrans will work, live or study within one kilometre of this corridor by 2041. Planning for this growth now is critical to reduce congestion and to give southside commuters a quick, practical and low polluting alternative to driving their cars.

Light rail is at the heart of the Government's plans to build a better city, but these plans include much more.

Our roads package upgrades, builds and plans for eight important roads, including Stage 2 of the Gundaroo Drive duplication, the Canberra Brickworks access road, the Molonglo East-West arterial roads, and the Federal Highway and Old Well Station Road intersection upgrades.

The creation of the City Renewal Authority gives our community the opportunity to reshape the city CBD and the lake precinct for the better. This includes the completion of Stage 2 of the West Basin Boardwalk and more infrastructure to make this land a better place for Canberrans, the activation of Haig Park, and more links between our CBD business precincts.

And the upgrades that we committed to for local centres—the Tuggeranong town centre, Kambah village and Gungahlin—make sure that better community and shopping facilities are available close to home wherever you are across our city.

### **Better services in your community**

Canberrans are proud of how our city looks and feels. We have a distinctive natural environment and we have long invested more in public spaces and places than many other cities do.

Just as we promised last October, this Budget continues that investment by delivering better services in the community.

That is why we are going to increase the frequency of mowing and weeding around our city's major arterial roads and throughout our suburbs.

Better sportsground irrigation will ensure these facilities support our active population, and we are stepping up our graffiti cleaning efforts and the removal of unused assets

like old toilet blocks and signage.

For the first time, the ACT will have a container deposit scheme to reduce litter and encourage more Canberrans to do their bit on recycling. We are also designing a kerbside bulky waste collection for all Canberra households which aims to reduce illegal dumping and stop furniture and whitegoods being left in front yards or on verges for months on end. And we are continuing the rollout of the green bins program to more suburbs, following the current pilot project underway in Weston Creek and Kambah. To date, over 7,000 households have chosen to get a green bin. We will continue rolling out this program to all suburbs over this parliamentary term.

Canberrans have been calling for better municipal services, and this Budget shows that the government is listening and delivering on those requests.

Our Government is committed to achieving zero net emissions by 2050. As the risks of climate change become increasingly clear, it is important that our community works together to reduce our carbon production and to ensure that Canberra becomes more sustainable as we grow.

That is why this Budget will deliver a new Zero Emissions Grants Program to support community initiatives that contribute to achieving the ACT's zero net emissions target. We will also deliver more resources to implement the ACT Climate Change Adaptation Strategy and continue our popular Actsmart programs that help Canberrans make their homes and offices more environmentally sustainable.

### **More and better jobs**

For six years I have been fortunate enough to serve as the Territory's Treasurer, and I have made growing and diversifying our economy a top priority because I believe this city can—and it should—invest in its own economic development.

From expanding Study Canberra to attract more international students and supporting the development of innovative new industries like autonomous vehicles to attracting major sporting events and more blockbuster events, this Budget keeps pushing ahead with our economic diversification goals to create more and better jobs.

Our significant investments in transport, in infrastructure, in education and in health will also create and support thousands more jobs over the next four years, including in construction, in nursing and across our schools.

### **Better support when it matters**

I have said before in this place that every member of this Government is working to make Canberra Australia's most inclusive city.

To gay, lesbian, bisexual, trans and intersex kids at our schools who are discovering who they are, to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people in our community, to refugees finding a haven from trouble overseas, to families and individuals living in our public housing throughout Canberra and to those people looking for a way back

from the justice system, we say: you are part of our community; you belong here.

But we do not just say it. We are backing our values with new investment to deliver better support when it matters.

We are delivering new resources to identify at-risk Canberra kids and to protect them from violent or unsafe home environments. Too many of Canberra's children and young people are struggling just to stay safe.

This builds on our commitment to keep families safe and it builds on our major investment in tackling family violence that we outlined in last year's Budget. We are also strengthening that work with the delivery of Canberra's first Family Safety Hub, providing wraparound services that can reach more Canberrans experiencing family violence.

We are providing more resources for government and community sector organisations to better support and include people with disability. We recognise that the inclusion of people with disability in the Canberra community goes well beyond specialised disability support.

We are also delivering more culturally specific initiatives to improve outcomes for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Canberrans, including a new health centre in the inner south to be delivered in partnership with the Winnunga Nimmityjah Aboriginal Health Service; continued support for the *Growing Healthy Families Program*, which provides health, early childhood development and parenting services; and seed funding to support new and emerging Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander controlled organisations, boosting this community's representation and public voice.

And we are supporting new migrants and asylum seekers with more help to find a job, as well as an expanded English language program. It is not enough just to welcome new arrivals; we also need to make sure that they can thrive socially and economically once they are here.

I am personally proud that we are delivering an Office of LGBTIQ Affairs. Gay, lesbian, transgender and intersex Canberrans face continued discrimination and challenges that are unique to this community, and this Government is determined to tackle those challenges wherever we can. We aspire to be the most friendly city for LGBTIQ people in this country, and I know that the vast majority of Canberrans support our efforts in this regard.

## **Conclusion**

Madam Speaker, with this Budget the Government is laying down an ambitious agenda for renewing Canberra and for that renewal to take place at pace over the next four years. We are doing it by delivering on the clear and positive commitments that we made to the Canberra community at the last election.

By working together, we can achieve this ambitious program to renew our schools, our hospitals, our healthcare system and our transport network, to create new jobs, to renew our city and to provide better community services.

An even better Canberra is within our reach. I know this because I have seen how far we have already come.

We know Canberra has much more potential to be realised and we are determined to make that happen.

I commend the Budget to the Assembly.

Debate (on motion by **Mr Coe**) adjourned to the next sitting.