



QUESTION TIME
OF THE
LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY
FOR THE
AUSTRALIAN CAPITAL TERRITORY

HANSARD

Edited proof transcript

1 August 2017

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Ministerial arrangements

MR BARR (Kurrajong—Chief Minister, Treasurer, Minister for Economic Development and Minister for Tourism and Major Events) (2.30): Mr Gentleman will be absent from question time this week. I will be taking questions on Mr Gentleman's portfolios, and will do my best to assist members in that regard.

Questions without notice

Bimberi Youth Justice Centre—assault allegations

MR COE: My question is to the Minister for Disability, Children and Youth. Minister, I refer to your update on youth justice in the ACT tabled today, in which you spoke of “unsubstantiated allegations” and “recent sensationalist headlines” about Bimberi. Minister, is the *Canberra Times* report of 25 July on an alleged assault arising from a brawl between detainees on 16 July an example of “unsubstantiated allegations” and “sensationalist headlines”?

MS STEPHEN-SMITH: That particular incident did occur. It occurred in the context of a youth justice centre that is, like all youth justice centres around the country, a complex environment where the young people coming in are some of the most difficult and challenging young people in our community. Almost all of them have experienced some level of trauma and many have learnt to use violence to express their anger, their frustration and when they have concerns. From time to time incidents will occur in Bimberi. In each case they are managed. What went on in the incident is reviewed to see if procedures can be improved. My understanding is that in this particular instance the incident was also referred to ACT Policing.

MR COE: On what date was this matter referred to the AFP, and what evidence does Bimberi provide to the AFP as a matter of course?

MS STEPHEN-SMITH: I will take that question on notice.

MRS KIKKERT: Have the police concluded their investigation and, if so, what have they found?

MS STEPHEN-SMITH: I thank Mrs Kikkert for her supplementary question, and apologies to the Leader of the Opposition for not thanking him for his earlier questions. I will take that question on notice also.

Environment—waste management

MS LE COUTEUR: My question is to the Chief Minister. It relates to the proposal for a waste-to-energy plant in Fyshwick. The *Canberra Times* reports that the plant would be 50-50 joint venture with ActewAGL. Chief Minister, given that ActewAGL is 50 per cent owned by Icon Water and the government would therefore be a 25 per cent owner of the plant, what support, financial or otherwise, has the government provided or committed to provide?

MR BARR: None that I am aware of.

MS LE COUTEUR: How and when will the ACT government in its role as the 50 per cent owner of ActewAGL give approval to the project proceeding to statutory approvals?

MR BARR: As Ms Le Couteur would know, the government does not actively intervene in the decisions of the joint venture. We have representation in relation to the joint venture through board members from Icon Water. Board members from Icon Water act in accordance with the Territory-owned Corporations Act. Mr Gentleman and I are shareholders. It is important to distinguish between shareholders and board members.

MS LEE: Chief Minister, what assurances can the ACT government provide to the Canberra community about the due diligence that can be undertaken on this project to ensure that any potential impacts on health and the environment or otherwise are being addressed?

MR BARR: The project will be assessed in accordance with the ACT's very strict environmental and planning laws.

Bimberi Youth Justice Centre—assaults

MRS KIKKERT: Madam Speaker, my question is to the Minister for Disability, Children and Youth. Minister, the statement that you tabled today notes that there were eight assaults by young people on other young people in the Bimberi Youth Justice Centre in 2015-16. How many assaults by young people on other young people occurred in 2016-17?

MS STEPHEN-SMITH: I thank Mrs Kikkert for her question. As I said in my statement this morning, I have asked my directorate to prepare a standard report on KPIs for Bimberi on various indicators that can be tabled on a regular basis. I did say in my statement that as soon as those figures are available to complete that report for 2016-17 I will table that and make another statement to the Assembly.

MRS KIKKERT: Are young people in Bimberi informed that they run a very real risk of being assaulted by another young person whilst in detention?

MS STEPHEN-SMITH: I thank Mrs Kikkert for her supplementary question. Young people coming into Bimberi Youth Justice Centre, as I have said previously, are some of the most difficult and complex young people in our community. These are young people who have often learned to use violence to express themselves. From time to time, therefore, it is not entirely unexpected that they would seek to express themselves in that way within Bimberi Youth Justice Centre.

At all times the staff at Bimberi, the directorate and the government act with the safety of young people and of staff at Bimberi as our utmost consideration. I also noted in that statement that since, I think, 2009-10 there has been a reduction in the number of assaults at Bimberi of 80 per cent. I specified in my statement that that was a reduction of 80 per cent in assaults of young people on other young people. Overall the number of assaults occurring at Bimberi has reduced by 80 per cent. We are

continuing to seek to improve performance at Bimberi.

Mr Coe: Point of order.

MADAM ACTING SPEAKER: Point of order, Mr Coe.

Mr Coe: My point of order is on relevance. The specific question was whether incoming detainees are informed that there is a risk of violence in the centre. To date I do not think the minister has addressed it.

MADAM ACTING SPEAKER: Considering that a minute and 20 has gone in answering the question, I ask the minister in accordance with the standing orders to be directly relevant and come to the subject of the question.

MS STEPHEN-SMITH: As I announced this morning, we have just released a charter of rights for young people at Bimberi that outlines what they can expect—both their rights and their responsibilities—in coming into Bimberi Youth Justice Centre. Of course one of their rights is to stay safe in the centre, and one of their responsibilities is to ensure that other children and young people are safe in Bimberi Youth Justice Centre, as well as, of course, the right of staff to be safe in that environment.

MR WALL: Minister, of the eight young people who were assaulted by other Bimberi detainees in 2015-16, for how many of them was this their first experience of being the victim of an assault whilst in custody?

MS STEPHEN-SMITH: I thank Mr Wall for his supplementary question and I will take it on notice.

Government—economic management

MR PETTERSSON: My question is to the Chief Minister. Chief Minister, the most recent Deloitte Access business outlook report described the ACT economy as being in “a sweet spot”. What actions has the ACT government taken that have led to these findings?

MR BARR: Deloitte has rightly drawn attention to the strength of the ACT economy. Our very strong construction activity across residential, commercial and engineering construction has been highlighted in their report. Their analysis points to double-digit growth in housing construction over the past year, \$1.5 billion worth of commercial construction projects underway, and an exceptionally strong civil works pipeline for the coming few years as the light rail project continues to progress.

They have also pointed to the strength of our labour force, with job vacancies up more than 16 per cent over the past year, which is well above the national result. I am pleased to advise the Assembly that average unemployment through the year to June is significantly lower than it was at the same time last year. It is also worth noting that when it comes to finding a new job, Canberra now has the shortest median duration of job search of any Australian capital city apart from Darwin.

State final demand is up five per cent through the year, which is the second highest growth rate of any Australian jurisdiction. We are continuing to see strong growth in demand across all the sectors that drive the territory economy: private consumption, private investment, commonwealth spending and ACT government activity.

The fiscal strategy that the government has adopted in past budgets, and again in 2017, has played an important role in helping the territory's economy to reach this "sweet spot". Our own investments in infrastructure, in economic diversification and in backing local jobs kept Canberra out of recession during the Abbott years and have created a strong foundation for the nation-leading growth that we are seeing at this point.

MR PETTERSSON: Chief Minister, how are retail trade and small business confidence tracking, and what does this say about the broader ACT economy?

MR BARR: Confidence amongst the territory's 26,000 businesses is currently the highest in the country and, in fact, is at a seven-year high. Confident businesses are ones that invest and employ more, so this points to a very positive future for our city's economy.

Part of this confidence no doubt comes from the fact that retail trade continues to grow well above the national average, increasing by 5.7 per cent over the past year. Given the levels of wage growth, that is a remarkable outcome for this territory. Canberrans are feeling optimistic enough about their own prospects and family budgets to maintain a very high level of discretionary spending. We are seeing this particularly in areas like household goods and expenditure in cafes, restaurants and other areas of hospitality.

Consumer spending and business confidence are two very good indicators of how well people feel the economy is working for them, and a sustained period of strong retail trade and consistently high business confidence since the last territory election indicates that Canberrans agree with Deloitte's assessment that we are, indeed, in a sweet spot.

We will, of course, continue to monitor all economic indicators closely, including wage growth, because we know that secure jobs and wages make the biggest difference to Canberrans sharing the gains of economic growth.

MS CODY: Chief Minister, What are the strongest performing sectors of the ACT economy, and how is this contributing to the growth of local jobs?

MR BARR: I thank Ms Cody for the supplementary. We are seeing very strong growth across a diverse range of sectors. The property sector grew by seven per cent last year. Construction expanded by five per cent. Together these sectors employ almost 19,000 Canberrans. Strong growth will help safeguard these jobs and create new ones in these industries.

Importantly too we have seen exceptionally strong growth in our export oriented sectors, tourism and higher education being two very good examples. Domestic overnight expenditure is up more than 16 per cent on last year. Spending by

international tourists is up 28 per cent. The tourism and recreation sector, as a component within the broader sector, employs nearly 7,000 Canberrans, up from 3,000 only three years ago.

Our higher education and research sector has been the standout, though, now accounting for a third of our city's service exports and supporting around 16,000 local jobs. Our plan, which we are delivering through the 2017 budget and with the policies we are adopting, is to continue to diversify the territory's economy and to invest in areas where we have strong growth potential. I highlighted on budget day, and I highlight again today, that the higher education sector has the strongest capacity for rapid growth into the future.

My government will do everything it possibly can to support the expansion of our city's universities. We are seeing that at ANU, we are seeing it at UC, we are seeing it through the work we are undertaking at the Canberra Institute of Technology and we will continue to support the rapid growth of higher education in this city so that Canberra can rightly be Australia's education capital.

Bimberi Youth Justice Centre—safety

MRS JONES: My question is to the Minister for Disability, Children and Youth. Minister, the *Canberra Times* reported last month that the investigation into the 6 May 2016 incident at Bimberi was ongoing. Has the review been completed? If it has, why has it not been released?

MS STEPHEN-SMITH: I thank Mrs Jones for her question. I think there are two issues here. There is an investigation into conduct around that incident. My understanding is that that investigation if not finalised is close to finalisation at this point. That is not the kind of investigation that I would normally expect would be publicly released.

I know that there has been a review of the circumstances that occurred there and a number of lessons have been learnt. As I said in my statement in May, training has been rolled out in response to feedback from staff in response to that 6 May incident. If there is specifically a review that led to that, I will investigate whether that is available.

MRS JONES: Minister, why would the details uncovered in the investigation not be released?

MS STEPHEN-SMITH: I thank Mrs Jones for her supplementary question. The investigation into that matter relates to a number of staff and there will have been allegations raised through the course of that investigation that may or may not prove to have evidence to support them. As a matter of procedural fairness for staff involved in these kinds of investigations, it would not normally be expected that such investigations would be made public. I will investigate what can be made public in relation to that, but these are the kinds of internal investigations that would not normally be made public for reasons of privacy and procedural fairness to staff.

MRS KIKKERT: Minister, why has it taken more than 12 months to respond to

matters that go to the heart of the safety of staff and residents of Bimberi?

MS STEPHEN-SMITH: I thank Mrs Kikkert for her supplementary question. As I said, there is a significant procedural fairness issue that goes to these kinds of staffing matters. Sometimes these processes within the context of public service investigations do take some time, to ensure that there is procedural fairness for everybody involved.

Bimberi Youth Justice Centre—staffing

MR MILLIGAN: My question is to the Minister for Disability, Children and Youth. Are all positions at the Bimberi Youth Justice Centre currently filled? If not, how many positions are currently vacant and what areas have the most problems with staffing?

MS STEPHEN-SMITH: I thank Mr Milligan for his question. I would like to assure the Assembly that Bimberi Youth Justice Centre is appropriately staffed, but I will take on notice the detail of the question around the numbers of staff.

MR MILLIGAN: When do you expect that all positions at Bimberi will be filled, once you find out what is available?

MS STEPHEN-SMITH: I would note that I have not confirmed whether there are vacancies at Bimberi. However, I would note that in a lot of public service areas there is an ongoing recruitment process. So I will take that question on notice.

MRS KIKKERT: Minister, what impact have the ongoing problems at Bimberi had on the recruitment of staff?

MS STEPHEN-SMITH: Thank you Mrs Kikkert for your supplementary question. The directorate has recently been conducting a recruitment round for new youth workers at Bimberi Youth Justice Centre. My understanding is that we have a tranche of workers who have either just started or are due to start. But I will take the question on notice in terms of that timing.

Health—nurse-led walk-in centres

MS CODY: My question is to the Minister for Health and Wellbeing. Minister, can you explain to the Assembly why the government has committed to provide more walk-in centres?

MS FITZHARRIS: I thank Ms Cody very much for her question. I am delighted to explain to the Assembly exactly why the government has committed to provide more walk-in centres for the Canberra community. They provide easy access to affordable health services in our community. That is exactly why we have begun planning and funding the expansion of the nurse walk-in centres as part of the 2017-18 budget, just as we said we would do at the 2016 election.

We will deliver three new walk-in centres to add to those that already exist in Tuggeranong and Belconnen. We will begin with Gungahlin then the Weston Creek region and then plan for aligning the work we already have underway on the city

health centre with an inner north walk-in centre. With strong population growth right across our city, and especially in each of these regions, there is a need to increase access to timely health care in these areas.

The establishment of these new walk-in centres will provide people with increased options for accessing health care for less serious conditions closer to their homes. It will complement existing health services and especially provide access to out-of-hours and weekend primary health care.

Labor governments are renowned for their commitment to affordable health care for all, and I am pleased to remind members that health care provided at our walk-in centres is, indeed, provided at no cost. Expanding the network of walk-in centres across Canberra further supports affordable health care and ensures there are no financial barriers to accessing this type of care.

I take this opportunity to remind members of the Liberals' track record on health care: slashing hundreds of millions of dollars from state and territory health budgets in the now infamous Hockey budget; establishing a failed GP copayment providing little relief to GPs on the MBS freeze; of course last year's disastrous pretend hospitals floated throughout the election campaign; and not to mention what is clear, that is, the Liberals' contempt for affordable accessible care through walk-in centres—

Opposition members interjecting—

MADAM SPEAKER: Order!

Mr Hanson: Question 10: first interjection.

MS FITZHARRIS: with you, Madam Acting Speaker, confirming just last week your view that they are simply just too expensive. And that was it.

MADAM ACTING SPEAKER: Just before I call Ms Cody, as a point of clarification, we are up to question 7, Mr Hanson.

Opposition members interjecting—

MADAM ACTING SPEAKER: Ms Cody, who I would like to hear.

Mr Hanson interjecting—

MADAM ACTING SPEAKER: Order, Mr Hanson!

MS CODY: Minister, how does providing more walk-in centres contribute to community health care?

MS FITZHARRIS: Walk-in centres provide fast, free, one-off care for minor injury and illness on a no-appointment basis 365 days a year, from 7.30 every morning to 10 pm every night. Walk-in centres are designed to fill a gap in the current Canberra health services market, particularly after hours. They do complement existing services.

The services provided by walk-in centres are often distinct from those provided by other services, including GPs who are able to provide ongoing treatment and advice for more complex issues. Walk-in centre patients can see a specialist nurse for advice, assessment and treatment for minor illnesses and injuries such as cuts and bruises, minor infections, strains, sprains, skin complaints and coughs and colds.

Where required, walk-in centre nurses provide referrals and updates back to a patient's GP or specialist so that they can receive ongoing care. Walk-in centres also provide an alternative to Canberra's busy emergency departments, particularly after hours and on the weekends, helping to relieve pressure on our very busy emergency departments.

Walk-in centres also provide the community with health promotion information and resources that can enable them to better manage their own healthcare needs. Walk-in centres complement the existing range of healthcare services by providing a no-cost service in a market that has the lowest bulk-billing rates in Australia. They are critical to supporting the health needs of our community.

MR STEEL: Minister, what feedback has been received from the community and relevant stakeholders about walk-in centres?

MS FITZHARRIS: The walk-in centres continue to generate very high levels of feedback from Canberrans, with that feedback being overwhelmingly positive. The themes include professional and impressive service, best quality service, excellent advice and information, and many thanks to commend the government innovation of establishing walk-in centres.

Some of the suggestions received by ACT Health have been to improve street signage, changes to registration processes and suggestions to reduce waiting times between patients. However, I am pleased to advise members that, as many may know, the average wait time that a patient will experience in a walk-in centre is less than 15 minutes. Complaints received ranged from being unable to receive a vaccination and suggestions for improving the availability of equipment.

ACT Health has recently received feedback also from a number of GPs. In that vein, an information session organised by the Capital Health Network will be established for those GPs currently operating in or near the Gungahlin town centre to discuss the Gungahlin walk-in centre that was funded in this year's budget. That meeting will take place on 31 August. I have had a number of discussions, including with the AMA and the royal college of GPs, and with some GPs one on one, including at a recent meeting during family doctor week, to discuss with them the opportunities to further integrate our health services, and the opportunities that the expansion of the walk-in centre network provides for that.

Health—alcohol, tobacco and other drugs strategy

MR WALL: My question is to the Minister for Health. The Government's peak tobacco, alcohol and other drugs strategy was meant to be completed by the end of 2015. It has still not been completed as of 1 August—today. Why has the review of the tobacco, alcohol and other drugs strategy not been completed more than two years

after it was due?

MS FITZHARRIS: I thank Mr Wall for his question. He may have been listening when I was on ABC radio yesterday with Mr Coe discussing this very matter. It is the case that significant community-based consultation was undertaken throughout 2015 on the draft new version of the alcohol and drugs strategy. That was then provided to me in the first few months of my term as the assistant health minister. I asked for some further work to be done and also for consideration to be given to the current alcohol and drug services we provide directly through ACT Health. As a result, that work was continuing during the ACT election campaign.

We then of course were re-elected and established the parliamentary agreement, which contained a very important new initiative: to establish a drug and alcohol court. As I said yesterday, it is very important that the government's initiative to establish a drug and alcohol court is considered in conjunction with the drug and alcohol strategy. It also needs to reflect the recently approved national drug strategy, which was endorsed by ministers around the country only in June this year and released publicly just a few weeks ago.

There is considerable work underway. There are many people within ACT Health and many community-based organisations that continue to deliver alcohol and drug services. I note that in last year's budget the then Minister for Health announced significant investment in our drug services in the community. All of that work continues. I am continuing to talk to stakeholders both within ACT Health and within the community sector about progressing the drug and alcohol strategy.

MR WALL: Minister, why have you or your directorate not completed this strategy, given the rapidly growing problem with addiction to substances such as methamphetamine not just in the ACT but also across Australia?

MS FITZHARRIS: I refer to my previous answer to answer Mr Wall's subsequent question.

MRS JONES: Minister, why has the committee that is meant to oversee the policy not met this year?

MS FITZHARRIS: I thank Mrs Jones for the supplementary question. A range of stakeholders involved in drug and alcohol service delivery continue to meet in a number of different ways. I am unclear why they have not met this year. So I will take that question specifically on notice.

Canberra Hospital—kitchen equipment

MR DOSZPOT: My question is to the Minister for Health and Wellbeing. Minister, on 6 July 2017, ABC radio news broadcast a story claiming that the Health Services Union had called on the Canberra Hospital to install equipment in its kitchen that was delivered almost five years ago. This equipment would create efficiencies in food storage. In the report, the Health Services Union noted that a number of staff have been on casual or temporary contracts during that five-year period while they waited for the equipment to be installed and that this is causing uncertainty. Minister, why

has new equipment lain idle for five years after it has been delivered?

MS FITZHARRIS: I thank Mr Doszpot for the question. I will take the question on notice and provide further advice to the Assembly.

MR DOSZPOT: Minister, why have you allowed employment uncertainty for hospital staff to continue for five years because you have failed to install new equipment?

MS FITZHARRIS: I will take that question on notice as well. I also do not think some of the assumptions made in Mr Doszpot's question are correct but I will provide further information to the Assembly.

MRS JONES: Minister, is any other equipment lying idle and uninstalled at the hospital, and is any other equipment in such a state causing uncertainty for staff?

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

Education—future strategy

MR STEEL: My question is to the Minister for Education and Early Childhood Development. Minister, can you update members on the status of work towards a future of education strategy?

MS BERRY: I thank the member for his question. After kicking off the process with my ministerial statement in February there has been a whole lot of activity in schools and across the community on this big conversation that the government is keen to have. I have brought together a team of community leaders to partner with the government, as critical friends and experts, to keep the conversation on track and to make sure that a broad conversation happens that is accessible for anyone who has an interest, from academics all the way across our community to the youngest of our students. As the process continues and a strategy is formed experts such as these will provide advice based on the themes and the issues raised.

Work has begun on the conversation, with the Education Directorate working closely with stakeholders including community sector organisations, parent and community bodies, non-government schools, professional organisations, unions and others. The conversation with this group focused on seeking their views as well as supporting them to have a conversation with their stakeholders. Materials to facilitate the conversation have been distributed widely and the project team has been working hard to support it wherever it is needed. To date the directorate has received over 60 written submissions, with more anticipated as the conversation continues and more discussion papers are released.

The directorate has made visits to over 60 schools to help the local communities plan activities and capture feedback. Student representatives from all public schools have been asked to engage, and I had a chance to be a part of their discussion at the student congress a few months ago. I have also visited individual schools to participate in classroom conversations that are taking place across all colleges in the ACT. Schools are using a variety of engagement methods including video booths, graffiti walls,

surveys and a request for student wishes for the future.

MR STEEL: Minister, how is the first discussion paper supporting the conversation?

MS BERRY: I thank the member for the supplementary question. At the beginning of July I released the first discussion paper as part of the future of education work, which will help to continue to guide the conversation and some of the key issues that need to be considered. The paper continues the government's focus on equity in education that I outlined in my ministerial statement.

In passing, it might be useful to remind members about what a focus on equity means. Education is transformative; it changes lives. A child's potential to harness the change that education brings is not defined by their gender, religion, sexuality, class, culture or wealth. Gifts and talents flow to children with no discrimination and when education is made available to all, according to their individual needs, life opportunities are unlimited.

The first discussion paper considers this issue by identifying the journey of children through their education. It asks our community to consider: are we ensuring that all children are ready to start school? Are children enabled and supported to learn each day? Are children gaining a year's learning from a year's schooling? Does the education provided set children up for work and for life?

I am looking forward to hearing about the insights that our community brings forward on these questions. There have already been some very clear themes emerging that will play an important part in laying out the strategy, and I am keen to build on these and confirm that the government understands the conversation so far.

MS CHEYNE: Minister, what are some of the emerging themes being raised by the community?

MS BERRY: I thank the member for the supplementary question. Through the conversations so far some consistent and very important themes are being raised by students, parents, carers, teachers and the wider community. Broadly categorised, there has been interest in some of the more practical issues of how schools are structured and operate. This has emerged in feedback from all groups, except young people themselves, about the level of variation between schools across a range of issues. There is a clear desire and need for the community to turn its mind to the respective roles and responsibilities of individual school principals and teams as well as the education support office and related to this is the issue of how student transitions between stages of schooling are managed.

The government is also being told about the extent to which schools are seen as centres of the community and how important it is that the whole community works together to support the needs of children. So while we cannot expect teachers and schools to meet every need on their own, by building strong partnerships across sectors, students will be better supported.

By far the most frequently raised theme is that students need to be supported with learning for the future with key competencies in areas such as resilience,

communication, critical analysis and thinking, and cultural awareness and understanding. Students have brought an alternative facet to this theme, raising the importance of their need to be equipped for life after school, which some college students I have spoken to have described as being taught how “to adult”. This extends beyond being provided real life skills to being better equipped for alternative pathways to work or to further study aside from university.

Health—election commitments

MS LEE: My question is to the Minister for Health. In the past week we have learnt that a review of methadone guidelines is five years overdue. The commitment on publicly funded bariatric surgery is three years overdue. The review of alcohol and other drug services is two years overdue. Minister, how many other commitments in the Health portfolio has the government promised but as yet failed to deliver?

MS FITZHARRIS: I thank Ms Lee for the question. I reject some of the assumptions she has made in her question. I certainly explained in public and recently in the last question I received in the chamber about the specific delay to some of those. Each of those has been explained.

In terms of commitments that this government has made to health, I note that in the most recent budget we have started funding many of the major commitments that we took to the Canberra community last year that they re-elected this government for. So the commitments that we took to last year’s election are being funded and are being delivered. Of course, all of the three examples that you gave: the opioid replacement therapy guidelines, the alcohol and drug strategy and the bariatric surgery will be implemented.

MS LEE: Minister, how many other reviews and studies in the health portfolio are years overdue?

MS FITZHARRIS: The question is an interesting one. Certainly, I have had discussions with Health over the past few days and there are a number of strategies that were developed by Health. The fact that they had a lifespan does not mean that they are now out of date. Many health policies remain static. There is a lot of change at the national level in terms of health policies and guidelines. I have asked, in conjunction with Minister Rattenbury, as the Minister for Mental Health, for ACT Health to provide to us a fuller explanation of the range of policies that ACT Health is responsible for. I note that by the end of this year there are a number of accreditation-related policies that ACT Health is required to complete in order to receive accreditation at Canberra Hospital. I am advised that those will all be completed within the correct time frame, which is by the end of this calendar year.

MR DOSZPOT: Minister, what level of confidence can the Canberra community have in your ability to deliver commitments in a timely manner, given the long delays we have seen in the health portfolio?

MS FITZHARRIS: The community can have a great level of confidence in the ability of this government to deliver health services to the Canberra community. The community clearly had confidence in this government’s ability to deliver health

services, given the result of last year's election and given the number of people who access our services every day, 365 days a year, 24 hours a day. We have, in the past 12 months alone, opened a paediatric emergency department stream at Canberra Hospital. We have significantly upgraded the Canberra Hospital emergency department, which I note is one of the 10 busiest emergency departments in the whole country. Despite this, we are seeing—

Mr Doszpot: The longest waiting times?

MS FITZHARRIS: No. We are seeing our waiting times coming down. We have seen an expansion in the services available at Canberra Hospital, including the very important paediatric emergency department stream. We have seen over 40,000 people having access to nurse walk-in centres—which the Canberra Liberals would like to shut down—over the past three to four years. We will continue to expand the network of walk-in centres across the city. We funded in this year's budget, for example, more nurses, beginning the expansion of the very successful hospital in the home program. Anybody in this place who knows anyone who has accessed the hospital in the home program will know that it is a fundamentally important health service to enable people to get back on their feet and get back to their daily lives. We have provided bulk-billing grants to a number of bulk-billing services on the south side of Canberra. And we will continue to deliver the high-quality healthcare services that Canberrans expect of a Labor government and know they will not get from a Canberra Liberals government.

Crime—motorcycle gangs

MR HANSON: My question is to the Attorney-General and relates to outlaw motorcycle gang activity in Canberra. The President of the Australian Federal Police Association stated on Radio 2CC on 11 July with regards to anti-consorting laws that, "It is the last part of the suite of resources we need to battle outlaw motorcycle gangs. I've been going on like a broken record. We're an island in NSW. We've become a safe place to operate." He concluded by saying, "For goodness sake, bring these laws in." Attorney-General, why are you leaving police without the last part of the resources they need to battle outlaw motorcycle gangs?

MR RAMSAY: I thank Mr Hanson for his question. I note that we have been working and we continue to work closely with ACT Policing and the community in relation to safety. Public safety is, of course, a strong commitment and a high priority of this government. Canberra remains a very safe city to live in. We know that we are not immune to the presence and activities of OMGs, and we are working closely not only through existing laws but also on the development of laws.

Currently we have an approach that has been focusing on strengthening traditional law enforcement responses. That includes the application of bail and sentencing laws and matters such as association and place restrictions on people to prevent further offences.

Mr Hanson: Madam Acting Speaker, on a point of order of relevance, the question related to anti-consorting laws and why these were not being brought in by the government, not on other laws that have been brought in by the government.

MADAM ACTING SPEAKER: I uphold the point of order. Although the minister is, I think, coming close to dealing with the issues, I remind the minister that the standing orders say he should be concise and directly relevant to the subject matter of the question. The subject matter of the question was anti-consorting laws. The question specifically was: why have you not implemented anti-consorting laws.

MR RAMSAY: I would say that the consideration of what laws should be introduced is directly impacted by the laws that already exist and the laws that are being considered at the moment.

I note that there has been consideration by Mr Hanson of laws that are based heavily on the New South Wales laws. I note and draw to the attention of the Assembly the review that has been taken by New South Wales into the laws which form the particular model for Mr Hanson. The New South Wales Ombudsman had this to say about the very similar legislation:

We have concluded that the act does not provide police with a viable mechanism to tackle criminal organisations, and is unlikely to ever be able to be used effectively.

The Ombudsman made one recommendation about the laws which form the model of Mr Hanson's draft legislation. That recommendation is that they be repealed.

MR HANSON: Attorney-General, why do we continue to be an island that has become a safe place for outlaw motorcycle gangs to operate in and an unsafe place for Canberrans to live in?

MR RAMSAY: I reject both premises of his question.

MS CODY: Minister, what evidence is there in other jurisdictions about the effectiveness of these kinds of laws?

MR RAMSAY: I thank Ms Cody for her supplementary. As I say, it has been looked at. There has been a review in relation to the New South Wales laws and, as I have noted, the way that they have been reviewed at the moment suggests that they are not effective, that they do not provide police with a viable mechanism and that they are unlikely to be able to be used effectively.

In addition, the report outlines how six of eight states and territories have enacted similar legislation in response to high-profile crime incidents. Again, let me quote from the report:

Despite high expectations, in practice no police force in Australia has been able to successfully utilise the legislation.

This government will introduce laws that are based on evidence and effectiveness and we will continue to work with the priority of making Canberra city even safer, and safer again, without spending time on matters that have been demonstrated to be ineffective.

Aboriginals and Torres Strait Islanders—political engagement

MS CHEYNE: My question is to the Minister for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Affairs. Minister, what is the ACT government doing to ensure that the voices of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people living in the ACT reach decision-makers in government?

MS STEPHEN-SMITH: I thank Ms Cheyne for her question. In 2008, as members are aware, the ACT government established in legislation the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Elected Body. Members of the elected body represent the interests and aspirations of local Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples and community. The ACT is the only Australian jurisdiction to have an elected representative body like the elected body embedded in the governing process through legislation.

Since 2008 the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Elected Body has been a strong voice for the community as it advocates for the rights, goals and aspirations of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Canberrans. The elected body also ensures greater interaction between the ACT government and the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community more broadly. The elected body continues to play a major role in government decision-making and in the development of government policies affecting the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community.

As members would be aware, a new elected body has just been elected, and the government looks forward to working with them as we continue to implement the ACT Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander agreement 2015-18, with its focus on stronger families and connected communities. During the next few months we will start a conversation with the elected body and the wider Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community to develop a new agreement on the expiry of the current one. The conversation comes at an important time, as the federal government seeks to refresh the closing the gap framework, and the nation and our community debate constitutional recognition and a national representative voice.

In June this year I attended the Aboriginal affairs ministers roundtable, where we discussed and shared ideas and aspirations in the portfolio. I was able to discuss with my colleagues the work of the elected body, how they are assisting the ACT government in the development of our service provision, providing advice to me as minister and their monitoring role through the hearings process.

MS CHEYNE: Minister, what are the results of the most recent Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Elected Body election?

MS STEPHEN-SMITH: I thank Ms Cheyne for her supplementary question. Polling for the 2017 ACT Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Elected Body took place during NAIDOC Week from 1 July to 8 July 2017. For this election we doubled the number of polling places to provide for increased voter participation. Four hundred and thirty two formal votes were cast for the election, which was a 15 per cent increase on the number of votes cast at the 2014 election, not as big an increase as I would have hoped, but an increase nevertheless.

The election results were declared by the Acting Electoral Commissioner on Thursday,

20 July 2017. The new members of the fourth Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Elected Body are Carolyn Hughes, Katrina Fanning, Jo Chivers, Ross Fowler, Maurice Walker, Fred Monaghan and Jacob Keed.

These members were elected from 25 candidates who stood at the election. This was by far the largest number of candidates in the four elections held since 2008. This new Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Elected Body brings a mix of experience and new energy to representing the ACT's Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community for the next three years.

I look forward to catching up with the new elected body at their induction next week, working with them over the term and continuing to consult and engage with Canberra's Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community about the issues that matter to them.

Part of the elected body's role is to maximise the opportunity for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people living in the ACT to voice their concerns to decision-makers as well as to maximise participation in developing and implementing government policies.

The amendment act we passed recently established a requirement for the new elected body, within six months of the election, to develop a consultation plan to outline how it will work to maximise the participation of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people living in the ACT. I look forward to the development of that plan and to working with them through that engagement.

MS ORR: Minister, how will the ACT government engage and consult with Canberra's broader Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community?

MS STEPHEN-SMITH: I thank Ms Orr for her supplementary question. As I mentioned in my previous answer, recently this Assembly passed the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Elected Body Amendment Bill 2017, which expanded the role of the elected body and strengthened its functions to consult and provide advice on systemic or whole-of-government issues. As part of this, it enshrined the elected body's ability to hold public hearings to evaluate government service provision. But it also sought to maximise the role of the elected body in engaging the broader Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community to give them an opportunity to voice their concerns to decision-makers.

The role of the elected body does not therefore restrict the ACT government's ability to consult with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people in the ACT more broadly on any issue that affects them. It enhances it. Such consultation must also be part of our normal day-to-day business of government. This government understands that it is critical to consult with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Canberrans who are immediately affected by our policies and programs, and we do this on a regular basis.

The elected body, the United Ngunnawal Elders Council, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander controlled organisations and businesses, and individuals in the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community all have a part to play in informing government.

I was fortunate recently to attend a number of NAIDOC Week events where, of course, polling was taking place. It was also an opportunity to spend time listening to members of the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community. What I am hearing from them is about the importance of engaging in those informal conversations, as well as in conversations with the community through formal bodies like the elected body, who really want to understand what is going on in the community. I will continue to do that, as will other members of the government.

Government—heritage policy

MS LAWDER: My question is to the Chief Minister, acting for the Minister for the Environment and Heritage. Chief Minister, I refer to tomorrow's auction of a range of historical artefacts owned by the Australian Railway Historical Society. How is the government managing its own heritage rail assets, including the steam locomotive 1210, given that the historical society is not operating?

MR BARR: I will confess that I do not have the answer to that immediately available. I will have to take that on notice.

MS LAWDER: Chief Minister, will the government be participating in or attending tomorrow's auction?

MR BARR: Very unlikely that we would.

MR COE: Chief Minister, what is the point, given that all the carriages are being sold tomorrow, of having a train with no carriages in government possession?

MR BARR: It would depend, of course, on the purpose for which the government maintained possession or part thereof. If the intent is for an operational capacity then clearly an engine can operate without carriages. The exact detail in relation to these assets is not something that, I confess, I carry around in my head as a matter of day-to-day business—

Mr Coe: That little folder there, from heritage.

MR BARR: No, I don't have a folder from heritage in front of me.

Mr Coe: Why not?

MR BARR: I don't need it. I will take the question on notice.

Mr Coe: What if you do need it?

MR BARR: I will take the question on notice.

Planning—Tharwa

MR PARTON: My question is to the Chief Minister representing the Minister for Planning and Land Management. Chief Minister, in Val Jeffrey's maiden speech last year he noted that since self-government not one kilometre of rural gravel roads had

been sealed; the Tharwa bridge had been ignored until having to be closed for seven years for rebuilding; Smiths Road bridge had been set up to wash away; the Angle and Point Hut crossings had never been raised; the 50-year old water supply had been left to fail; and the school had been closed. Chief Minister, when will your government finish the Tharwa master plan?

MR BARR: In the fullness of time.

MR PARTON: Chief Minister, what is the government doing to finally fix the old water supply in Tharwa?

MR BARR: The government has in place a range of measures to address those issues.

MS LAWDER: Chief Minister, when will this government start taking our rural communities, and in particular Tharwa, seriously?

MR BARR: I reject the premise of the question.

Government—support for veterans

MS ORR: My question is to the Minister Veterans and Seniors. Can the minister outline what plans the government has to better understand the issues faced by veterans in the ACT so we can more ably support them?

MR RAMSAY: I thank Ms Orr for her question. I have always said that I believe that good policy starts with good listening, and one part of good listening is ensuring that you have surrounded yourself with people who are experts in the field and willing to engage broadly on the issues. It is for this reason that I am happy to be currently selecting the next veterans advisory council. The council will have an expanded membership and broadened terms of reference which will allow it to provide advice on a greater number of issues.

As part of the new terms of reference the newly appointed VAC will be required to undertake at least one round of community consultation a year on a specific issue to perform a deep dive into how the issue affects veterans in the ACT and what steps the ACT government might take to address it.

I will initially be tasking the council to provide me with advice on a number of issues early in their term, including how it is that we can help those who are separating ADF members transition to civilian employment in the ACT, how we can best ensure that the mental health of veterans in Canberra can be supported and how we can ensure that we provide the appropriate level of recognition to those who have served. I will also be asking their advice on the best ways we can support the community sector and ex-service organisations on their support of veterans in the ACT.

I have been ably supported by the current council and I look forward to them continuing in this role for the remaining few months of their tenure. I thank them for their service, their insights and the continuing valued work they do to improve the life of veterans here in Canberra.

MS ORR: Can the minister advise what he is doing to help organisations that aid veterans in the ACT?

MR RAMSAY: I thank Ms Orr for her supplementary question. The government is in the final stages of putting together this year's community participation grants program for veterans and seniors. I expect that it will be advertised through the Community Services Directorate by the end of the month.

We will be seeking applications from organisations that can utilise project funding to support veterans in the ACT. This year we will be particularly focusing on programs that ensure that veterans remain actively engaged in our society. Whether it is through sport, the arts, skills development and training or other programs promoting social connectedness, we are seeking to help those organisations that aim to ensure that our veterans are integral and active participants in the ACT community.

We will be seeking applications for programs specifically targeted at supporting families of veterans. I am also currently investigating creating separate grants rounds from next year to allow the government to separately target seniors' and veterans' initiatives. Obviously, while some of our veterans may be seniors, this is not always the case. I look forward to receiving applications that seek to help our younger and recently separated veterans.

I believe that we are a strong society when everyone belongs, when everyone is valued and when everyone has the opportunity to participate. Through these grants the government intends to help those organisations to ensure that our veterans are exactly that. This government will work to ensure that the remarkable skills and abilities of our veterans are, and remain, an integral thread in the woven fabric of Canberra.

MR PETTERSSON: Minister, how is the government working to help ensure that those seeking to separate from the Defence Force are able to find employment in the ACT?

MR RAMSAY: I thank Mr Pettersson for his supplementary. While the veterans portfolio is a relatively new one in the ACT, the government certainly has big plans for how we can support those in the ADF who may wish to transition back into civilian life.

I have had initial conversations with the Head of Service on ways that we can identify how many veterans we currently have working in ACT government and what their experience was in making this transition from military life to life in the ACT public service. As we gather this data, I will then be looking for ways to make it easier for those who wish to do this, whether it is through information sessions, resources to identify what military skills might translate well into jobs in the ACTPS, or possibly even targeted recruitment. We will also consider whether further specific support can be provided to help support veterans once they have started the transition.

The Defence Industry Advisory Board is also investigating whether the government can facilitate a pathway from the ADF into the cybersecurity areas of the civilian defence industry here in Canberra. Whether it is upskilling, retraining or even just lighting the path, the government is developing this concept to provide a

case-managed service to help link our highly skilled defence members with a definite area of skills shortage in the capital. This will not only help veterans manage this transition but also help continue the work that the government is doing to continue to diversify and strengthen the ACT economy.

The ACT has some of the best living standards in the world and the Australian Defence Force has one of the most highly skilled workforces in the country. The ACT government intends to do what it can to honour the commitment our Defence Force members have already made by ensuring that, when the time comes when members may wish to separate, we have the systems in place to help both members and their families transition into civilian life in this great city. (*Time expired.*)

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