



QUESTION TIME
OF THE
LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY
FOR THE
AUSTRALIAN CAPITAL TERRITORY

HANSARD

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Wednesday, 11 April 2018

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Questions without notice
Land—Dickson purchase

MR COE: My question is to the Chief Minister regarding the complicated and discredited land swap deal the government did in Dickson. Chief Minister, have you sought advice, or will you get advice, as to whether the tender and subsequent contract with the Tradies club for the Dickson car park site is legally binding, given all the evidence uncovered by the Auditor-General?

MR BARR: The government will respond to the Auditor-General's report in due course.

MR COE: On what date will the Tradies be vacating the section 72 site that they are currently renting for \$1 per year?

MR BARR: I will seek information in relation to that and get back to the member.

MR PARTON: Will the ACT government allow the CFMEU, Stockade Gym, Creative Safety Initiatives or other occupants to stay in the building beyond their current sublease?

MR BARR: That decision is yet to be determined.

ACTION bus service—pets

MS LE COUTEUR: My question is to the Minister for Transport and City Services. It relates to pets on ACTION buses, which was a policy, I understand, developed by TAMS some years ago following a government survey showing overwhelming community support. Minister, given the government's stated commitment to allowing people to get around without needing cars, why has the TAMS policy not been implemented so that people can get around with their pets?

MS FITZHARRIS: I am sorry, Madam Speaker. I found it hard to hear the majority of the question. Could you repeat it, please?

MS LE COUTEUR: The shorter question is: pets on buses; when?

MADAM SPEAKER: Under standing orders, it is a brief question. Thank you. I call the minister.

MS FITZHARRIS: Not tomorrow, I am afraid, but thank you for the question. I note that it was one of the many terrific questions asked by a number of school students at the light rail ready forum last week. I would also note that Transport Canberra and City Services is now nearly two years old. I have not heard "TAMS" for a while but was reminded that TCCS is about to celebrate its second birthday.

That is a policy we continue to work on. Obviously, it is one that requires work with Transport Canberra bus drivers in particular. But I note that we have legislation before the Assembly at the moment relating to pets on light rail.

MS LE COUTEUR: Minister, could you investigate trialling this possibly for the day of the Million Paws Walk because this is obviously a big event for pets and it is one about which I have had a number of comments from people that they really cannot get there because of transport.

MS FITZHARRIS: I will seek advice from the directorate on the question.

Domestic animal services—dogs

MS LAWDER: My question is to the Minister for Transport Canberra and City Services. On 17 March 2017 police were called to a house in Molesworth Street, Watson to attend a home invasion. Police called DAS officials to attend a dog at the premises that had attacked a person and had lost its ear in a machete attack. Minister, was the dog removed from the premises by DAS officers?

MS FITZHARRIS: I will take it on notice. My recollection of that incident is that it was removed but subsequently returned. But I will take the question on notice, and if the answer is different I will provide it to the Assembly.

MS LAWDER: Minister, was the dog treated by a veterinary surgeon for its injuries?

MS FITZHARRIS: I believe it was. Again, I will take the specifics on notice.

MISS C BURCH: Minister, when was the dog returned by DAS officers to the premises?

MS FITZHARRIS: I will take that question on notice as well.

Light rail—stage 1 construction

MR PETTERSSON: My question is also to the Minister for Transport and City Services. Can the minister please provide an update on construction of light rail stage 1?

MS FITZHARRIS: I thank Mr Pettersson for the question. I am delighted to provide an update on light rail stage 1. Light rail, as we know, is the backbone of a long-term transport vision for our city. Last week saw the project reach several important milestones, including, firstly, the launch of the light rail safety campaign; secondly, the first trees planted on the median strip of Northbourne Avenue—and I was particularly delighted to see the first trees ever planted along the median strip of Flemington Road this morning; and, thirdly, the arrival of the second light rail vehicle in Canberra. The entire fleet of 14 vehicles will be delivered over the next few months.

Last Friday I was very pleased to see the first five-metre tall eucalyptus mannifera planted along the median strip in Northbourne Avenue. More than 1,000 trees and one million plants are to be placed along the route, creating an entrance to our city of which we can all be proud.

Construction works have also rapidly progressed along Hibberson Street in the Gungahlin town centre and, following consultation with local businesses, works in the area have been recently intensified to minimise the ongoing impact of construction on traders, local shoppers and residents. Substantial progress has been made on the Hibberson Street terminus, with the canopy being installed just a few weeks ago and kerb and gutter works progressing well.

I am also pleased to report that 13,900 metres of track slab is now laid, which equates to over 55 per cent of the total route. The installation of steelwork columns and canopies at the Nullarbor Avenue, Manning Clarke Crescent and Mapleton Avenue light rail stops are also now complete. It is an exciting project that is coming ever closer to reality.

MR PETTERSSON: Minister, what are the upcoming major project milestones?

MS FITZHARRIS: I am pleased to advise that the next project milestones for light rail stage 1 include significant progress continuing on the stringing of overhead wires, with a focus on the northern section of the line to start with. Soon Canberrans will also start to see the vehicles out on the lines undergoing rigorous testing, and energisation of those lines will start soon.

Testing of the vehicles and electronic systems will provide Canberra Metro and the government with confidence that our light rail system will be safe and reliable. The ongoing recruitment and employment of light rail drivers will ensure that we have highly trained drivers ready to assist with the testing of the vehicles, and eventually carrying passengers between Gungahlin and Civic.

The first stop at Nullarbor Avenue is expected to be completely finished, including landscaping, in the third quarter of 2018. There are currently three other stops underway. Work at the Mitchell depot, which will house the light rail vehicles and the network control centre, is also advancing. The administrative and maintenance buildings are at the internal fit-out stage, and the track slab and rail within the stabling yard is now complete. I will look forward to announcing the completion of the depot very shortly.

MS ORR: Minister, what steps are being taken to minimise the impact of construction on the community?

MS FITZHARRIS: Locally, care is being taken to minimise the impacts of construction on local residents through scheduling out of hours works and taking steps to minimise construction and machinery noise. Both Transport Canberra and City Services and Canberra Metro have worked closely with businesses along the corridor to provide ongoing information and advice regarding construction impacts and minimise the impact of the construction.

The ACT government also provides assistance to businesses along the light rail corridor by funding the Canberra Business Chamber for the light rail business link program to mitigate any impact to businesses through ongoing communications, industry collaboration and business support programs. A great example of this work is the consultation with businesses on Hibberson Street that resulted in intensified works

on the terminus. With agreement, hours of work were extended and resources were redirected to ensure that Hibberson Street will be progressed as quickly as possible.

I am very conscious that the combination of works occurring in the town centre at the moment is intense. We have most certainly reached peak investment activity in the town centre, from construction of the new bus station and light rail terminus to the regeneration works on Hibberson Street between Gozzard Street and Gungahlin Place. Roadworks in the area are soon to begin on the Ernest Cavenagh extension as well as the installation of a number of traffic lights around the town centre, which will significantly improve pedestrian, cyclist and road flow around the town centre.

We are doing everything we can to keep people informed and get the work finalised quickly and safely. I thank everyone for their continued patience as we move closer to the finalisation of the project and the commencement of light rail services.

Greyhound racing—draft code of practice

MR PARTON: My question is to the Minister for Transport and City Services. Domestic Animal Services is currently drafting a code of practice for the keeping and breeding of racing greyhounds in the ACT. When this process was undertaken in Victoria, the government consulted with industry and other stakeholders for five solid months before presenting the code. In contrast, the Canberra Greyhound Racing Club was emailed a copy of the draft code after close of business the Thursday before Easter, with a deadline of the following Friday for feedback. Why was the local industry given just three days, effectively, to respond to such an important document? Is this standard governance practice in your portfolio?

MS FITZHARRIS: No, it is not standard practice. Indeed, it is far from standard practice. I was not aware of that. I will seek further advice. That does not strike me at all as being sufficient time for consultation.

MR PARTON: In seeking that advice I ask the minister to find out if there was specific directive to send this email to the Canberra greyhound club after close of business on the last working day before the four-day Easter break? I think the minister has actually answered my question—three days is certainly not long enough for a detailed response. But I ask for that on notice as well.

MS FITZHARRIS: Absolutely no direction from me, and I will speak with TCCS about that time frame.

MRS DUNNE: Minister, can you explain why the draft code of practice includes, without any supporting evidence, the requirement for race kennels to be a minimum of four metres square instead of the longstanding three metres square?

MS FITZHARRIS: I will take that question on notice.

ACT Health—proposed organisational changes

MRS DUNNE: My question is to the Minister for Health and Wellbeing. On 24 March you announced that you would be splitting ACT Health into two agencies,

one focused on policy and the other on operational issues. Why did you not make a ministerial statement this week about your restructure of a directorate that represents one-quarter of the ACT budget?

MS FITZHARRIS: I did, indeed, answer a question—I believe it was the second question in question time—on this issue and I will be making a ministerial statement in the next sitting. As indicated yesterday, I am happy to provide further information. This is, indeed, a significant moment in ACT Health. It is a very positive one and one that brings us into line with all other jurisdictions around the country.

The decision to split ACT Health into two organisations is one that has been taken in order to allow a clear focus for health services in the territory. One organisation will have a distinct role to deliver health services to our community. The other will have a clear goal of managing the health system as a whole and supporting health delivery with corporate functions.

Work is already well underway to prepare for the formation of the two organisations later this year. The interim director-general has commenced an important body of work to define the principles that will underpin the establishment of the two organisations, conduct research into options for the relationship between the governance of the two entities, seek professional advice on the options and, most importantly, engage with staff and stakeholders throughout the process to ensure that we arrive at a model that will work on the ground for both staff and ACT Health consumers.

Mr Steel: Point of order, Madam Speaker, which goes to supplementaries as well. Mrs Dunne's question asked Minister Fitzharris to announce executive policy. That is out of order under standing order 117(c). Asking for her to expressly provide a ministerial statement, which is an announcement of policy, I think goes beyond the standing orders. I ask that you rule it out of order.

MADAM SPEAKER: Mrs Dunne, I believe your question was: why was a ministerial statement not provided? I recognise the standing order, and it is inappropriate to seek an announcement of policy in question time. I think that is understood, but I am quite happy to stress the point again. So I would say there is no point of order. Did you have anything to add on that?

Mrs Dunne: I have nothing to add to that, Madam Speaker.

MADAM SPEAKER: Do you have a supplementary?

MRS DUNNE: I do, thank you, Madam Speaker. Minister, why did you not mention your plan for a restructure when you made a ministerial statement in this place in February?

MS FITZHARRIS: Because that decision had not been taken. I think Mrs Dunne will find that there is nothing inconsistent about the decision to separate ACT Health into two organisations, having regard to my ministerial statement in February. Indeed the more recent decision will further strengthen my ability to work with ACT Health to deliver those priorities.

MISS C BURCH: Minister, to which ministers will these two new agencies report?

MS FITZHARRIS: To me as Minister for Health and Wellbeing and to Minister Rattenbury as Minister for Mental Health.

Housing—affordability

MS ORR: My question is to the Minister for Housing and Suburban Development. What steps is the ACT government taking to address housing affordability in the ACT?

MS BERRY: I thank Ms Orr for the question. The challenges of addressing housing affordability and homelessness are complex. The affordable housing plan in the ACT has been operating since 2007. A good number of outcomes have been achieved around housing affordability. For example, 3,600 dwellings were purchased at affordable prices, 2,025 homes were made available under the land rent scheme, and a further 2,000 dwellings were built under the national rental affordability scheme.

It is timely that a new housing strategy is being developed to pursue new initiatives which will address the whole spectrum of housing, including reducing homelessness, and increasing social housing assistance and affordable rentals as well as home purchases. There have already been a number of consultations last year leading up to the summit in October. I tabled a summary paper last month. Members will know that there are some early initiatives already underway.

Affordable public and community housing targets will apply to new government land releases. They will not be limited to greenfields but be spread across the city. An affordable home purchase database will ensure that affordable home purchase options are targeted to families who need it. Expressions of interest are now open for the \$1 million innovation fund for projects including affordable rental real estate management, home sharing opportunities and design-led co-housing developments. I look forward to releasing the new housing strategy later this year.

MS ORR: How does the ACT compare to other states and territories in terms of housing affordability?

MS BERRY: The government has released more than 37,000 sites for residential development since 2006 with a further 16,250 to be released over the next four years with housing targets for affordable housing. Under the Treasurer and Chief Minister's leadership the ACT has been implementing a nation-leading reform by eliminating stamp duty. Our current housing indicators show that the ACT is experiencing less rental and mortgage stress than the national average. But Canberra's higher than average income has often hit the disadvantaged around the ACT so it is important that we maintain a strong social housing program.

The ACT has the highest proportion of social housing in Australia. As of 30 June 2017 there were 28 social housing homes for every 1,000 people, which is almost double the national average of 16. Unlike some other jurisdictions, this government is investing in public housing with 1,288 public housing properties being renewed over

four years. That is around 11 per cent of our public housing portfolio that will be replaced with new and modern homes that will best meet the needs of our tenants.

Ensuring a strong community and public housing program and supporting housing affordability by ensuring that homes and support are provided is important to our most vulnerable Canberrans and to ensuring that they are out of the private rental market.

MS CODY: Minister, what actions taken by the federal government impact housing affordability in the ACT?

MS BERRY: Access to affordable housing options is a national issue. Negotiations are still continuing for a new national housing and homelessness agreement to secure funding to support homelessness programs within the ACT and across the country. Work in other jurisdictions is also underway to progress legal reforms such as reducing or removing conveyancing duties to support people who are buying their first home.

I am disappointed that an increase in funding has not been offered, despite the fact that the federal government has sought to expand the scope of the agreement. I welcome the inclusion of affordable home purchases in the agreement but the commonwealth government provides no additional funding for states and territories to be able to achieve it. I have continually called on the federal government to make changes within their policy control to promote housing affordability.

In the ACT we have committed to finding options and pursuing initiatives at our level of government to tackle these issues and I again call on the federal government to introduce reforms around negative gearing and capital gains tax which will take some heat out of the national housing market.

ACT Health—proposed organisational changes

MISS C BURCH: My question is to the Minister for Health and Wellbeing. Minister, yesterday you advised the Assembly on the purpose of splitting ACT Health into two organisations. You said:

The change will streamline governance, management and reporting lines and provide a more effective and efficient governance model.

Minister, what are the most significant changes in the governance model that will contribute to efficiencies?

MS FITZHARRIS: As I outlined in my previous response, the precise implementation of this change is currently underway. Those issues will be worked through over the next six months, in consultation with stakeholders, staff and the community. I have every confidence in the team leading this change.

MISS C BURCH: Minister, what is your estimate of the annual financial savings from the more efficient governance model?

MS FITZHARRIS: It is interesting that the Liberals are asking about savings in

health. Usually we know what that means, coming from the Liberals. It is usually about cuts in health. We have seen cuts in health from Liberal governments right across this country.

I am confident that the hardworking, skilled staff of ACT Health will continue to deliver the health services our community needs as it grows and as it ages. I look forward to the work over the coming months to design, in consultation, a structure—

Mr Parton: Point of order.

MADAM SPEAKER: Resume your seat. Point of order.

Mr Parton: I have a point of order on relevance. The question was very clearly “What is your estimate of the annual financial savings from this model?”

MADAM SPEAKER: The minister has more than a minute on the question. She is on the policy topic of the question.

MS FITZHARRIS: I have finished.

MRS DUNNE: Minister, if you do not know what the changes are or how much the savings will be, how do you know that this splitting of the directorate will be more efficient?

MS FITZHARRIS: Because that is one of the principles, along with many others, that I have requested, to drive this.

ACT Health—former director-general

MR WALL: My question is to the Minister for Health and Wellbeing. The former Director-General for Health had two years remaining on her contract. Why is the former director-general not responsible for implementing the restructure of the Health Directorate?

MS FITZHARRIS: Through discussions with the former director-general she advised that she would seek new opportunities in her professional career with this decision.

MR WALL: Minister, what level of involvement, if any, did the former Director-General of Health have in developing the restructure?

MS FITZHARRIS: I had discussed it with the former director-general, who had sought and commissioned some work on that.

MRS DUNNE: Was the proposal to restructure ACT Health developed within your office?

MS FITZHARRIS: It certainly involved my office, but not just my office.

Government—heritage grants

MS CODY: My question is to the Minister for the Environment and Heritage. Minister, can you please inform the Assembly about the 2018-19 ACT heritage grants program.

MR GENTLEMAN: I thank Ms Cody and acknowledge her interest in heritage across the ACT. I am pleased to inform the Assembly that applications are now open for the 2018-19 ACT heritage grants program. This round will provide \$345,000 to identify and carry out projects that promote and conserve our local heritage.

Mr Hanson interjecting—

MR GENTLEMAN: Canberra has inherited rich cultural and natural heritage assets that reflect our history and community values.

Mr Hanson interjecting—

MR GENTLEMAN: The ACT government recognises the significance of conserving our heritage while also building a vibrant and sustainable city for the future.

Mr Hanson interjecting—

Ms Cody: Point of order, Madam Speaker.

MADAM SPEAKER: Minister, can you resume your seat.

Ms Cody: It is very hard to hear Mr Gentleman's response with Mr Hanson interjecting all the time. Surely 117 states—

MADAM SPEAKER: Thank you. I think it is just a general point about interjections and distractions in the chamber. Mr Hanson, I ask you to stop. Mr Gentleman, you have the floor again.

MR GENTLEMAN: As I was saying, the heritage grants program is an annual funding program administered by the ACT government to assist the community in working to conserve and promote the heritage of the ACT. Applications for the 2017-18 grant round are now open to individuals, community groups and incorporated non-profit or private organisations, and I strongly encourage those passionate about heritage and with an idea in mind to apply for the funding.

Heritage grants are a community partnership, essential in supporting a wide range of projects that promote our heritage places and objects. It is vital that we work together to recognise, protect, conserve and celebrate unique heritage for the ACT. Grant application packs are available from the Environment, Planning and Sustainable Development Directorate website or can be requested by phone. Applications close on Friday, 11 May this year, with successful grant recipients to be announced in September.

People are often surprised to learn that the ACT is rich in natural and cultural heritage. There is a perception that, as a relatively young city, we cannot have many

heritage places or objects. This is far from the case.

MS CODY: Minister, can you provide more detail to the Assembly on the priority areas for the heritage grants program this year?

MR GENTLEMAN: I can, yes. Priority will be given to projects that focus on places or objects listed on or nominated to the heritage register. The priority areas for the 2017-18 grants program are projects that prepare to celebrate the 50th anniversary of the moon landing. For the 2018-19 program round only, applications are invited that celebrate and promote this important event and the role that the ACT played in the international space program.

Conservation works and projects that enable the continued use of and access to places entered on the ACT heritage register are also a priority. This can include repairs to significant fabric, stabilisation of a building or improvements to public access, safety and visibility. Funding is available for the reinstatement of original features such as exterior render, front facades or windows visible from the street. The amount applied for should be matched by the applicant. Funding is not available for new buildings, additions or routine maintenance such as painting, pest control or electrical works.

Conservation management plans also can be funded for places or objects that do not have an existing plan that is approved by the ACT Heritage Council and is not more than five years old. Conservation management plans guide conservation works and management actions.

There is also the opportunity to look at community projects that increase the utilisation, awareness and engagement in heritage places through education—of all ages—oral histories, tourism, interpretation and events, and Aboriginal projects initiated by or involving the local Aboriginal community in local heritage activities. Also covered are projects that provide partnership opportunities between community organisations and ACT government agencies.

MS CHEYNE: Minister, can you provide some examples of previous projects supported by an ACT government heritage grant and outline how the projects contributed to the promotion and protection of heritage in the territory?

MR GENTLEMAN: I thank Ms Cheyne for her informative question. I will give some examples from the 2017-18 programs. The National Trust of Australia was awarded a grant for their Urban Polaris project. That was a seven-hour navigating and cycling event where teams of two had to find their way around a series of control points spread throughout Canberra. The National Trust has adapted the concept by incorporating Canberra's rich heritage, both built and natural, and other points of interest as checkpoint sites. The Giralang Primary School P&C were awarded a grant for an event to celebrate the heritage values of the school on its 40th birthday. The Southern ACT Catchment Group were awarded a grant for the protection and restoration of the nominated canoe scar trees in the Lanyon Homestead precinct. The Uniting Church were awarded a grant for the restoration of the Reid Uniting Church roof.

Referring to some examples from the 2016-17 programs, there was the Australian

National University's project to re-establish the heritage orchard and landscape at Mount Stromlo Observatory, and the Southern ACT Catchment Group's project to highlight the significance and use of the heritage-listed Theodore Aboriginal grinding groove site. The Molonglo Catchment Group's project was a partnership with the Friends of Black Mountain to further enhance the visitor experience of the woodland walk on Black Mountain reserve. Greening Australia capital region group used a grant to identify, record, register and protect local culturally significant trees in the Canberra region.

ACT Health—proposed organisational changes

MRS KIKKERT: My question is to the Minister for Mental Health. When was the proposal to restructure the Health Directorate first discussed with you?

MR RATTENBURY: I will need to look at my diary and provide that answer to Mrs Kikkert at a later time.

MRS KIKKERT: Minister, what role did you have in developing this restructure plan?

MR RATTENBURY: I had discussions with the minister for health, as you would anticipate. We discussed the pros and cons of it, the timing and the various implantation questions that need to be resolved in moving through this important policy decision.

MRS DUNNE: Minister, when were you first advised of the decision to part ways with the Director-General of the Health Directorate, and what involvement did you have in this process?

MR RATTENBURY: I discussed that matter with the Minister for Health as per my earlier answer. I would have to consult by diary on that matter as well.

ACT Health—data review

MS LEE: My question is to the Minister for Health and Wellbeing. Minister, is the system-wide review into health data finished and, if not, why not?

MS FITZHARRIS: Yes, it is.

MS LEE: Minister, why have you not tabled the review

MS FITZHARRIS: I have informed the Assembly on many occasions of the status of the review. The review has only recently been completed. I am considering it at the moment.

MRS DUNNE: Minister, was the data review submitted to you as the minister for health or was it submitted to cabinet?

MS FITZHARRIS: I have received the data review and will be discussing it with my colleagues.

Drugs—pill testing

MR HANSON: My question is to the Attorney General and relates to an article on 31 March, 2018 entitled “ACT government, Groovin the Moo promoter in stalemate over pill testing”. Attorney, the article reports that a letter from the Groovin the Moo promoter states that their support for a pill testing trial was contingent on a list of requirements being met. The article states:

It’s understood some of the demands can’t be met under current ACT laws.

Attorney, what are the demands of the promoters and what are the laws that mean they cannot be met?

MS FITZHARRIS: I might take that question. It is the case that pill testing can take place in the ACT under existing laws. It would be fair to say that Groovin the Moo had requests which no government, under any law in Australia, could agree to and that was to effectively give them immunity from any action undertaken.

MR HANSON: Minister, will the government table all correspondence relating to pill testing at Groovin the Moo between the government, the promoters or other stakeholders?

MS FITZHARRIS: I will take the question on notice. In relation to my correspondence I would be pleased to table that. I think Mr Hanson asked for correspondence from them. I will need to take further advice on whether I am able to do that.

MRS DUNNE: Minister, will you also table any advice that you have received on any aspects of the pill testing in the Assembly by the end of this week?

MS FITZHARRIS: Certainly I will take the question on notice and take that under consideration. I am not in the chamber tomorrow so I would be reluctant to agree to that in my absence. But I will take it on notice and look to provide some correspondence by the next sitting.

Aboriginals and Torres Strait Islanders—Ngunnawal Bush Healing Farm

MR MILLIGAN: My question is to the Minister for Health and Wellbeing. Minister, in addition to the \$11.7 million spent on the Ngunnawal Bush Healing Farm, taxpayers are now footing the bill for ongoing operational costs to run a centre that you report has hosted only 10 clients since opening in August 2017. We know that ACT taxpayers are shelling out nearly \$8,000 a week for 24/7 security. Minister, what are the other operational costs of running the Ngunnawal Bush Healing Farm?

MS FITZHARRIS: I do not have those to hand, so I will take the question on notice.

MR MILLIGAN: Minister, are there performance criteria or benchmarks that the Ngunnawal Bush Healing Farm must meet in order to continue operating at this level?

MS FITZHARRIS: Could Mr Milligan clarify his question as to what “level” he means?

MADAM SPEAKER: Mr Milligan, do you want to repeat the question and provide clarity?

MR MILLIGAN: Yes, Madam Speaker. Minister, are there performance criteria or benchmarks that the Ngunnawal Bush Healing Farm must meet in order to continue this level of funding?

MS FITZHARRIS: There are two components: ACT Health direct expenditure on staff and the contracted service providers and partners, which are, as we know, CIT; SMART Recovery; the healthy country program, which is part of parks and conservation; the mindfulness program; and Nutrition Australia. Those would all have standard benchmarks, as do all ACT government contracts.

MRS DUNNE: Minister, are there any benchmarks for the performance of the Ngunnawal Bush Healing Farm? If so, what are they? Will the bush healing farm ever realise its potential and operate as a residential drug and alcohol treatment centre?

MS FITZHARRIS: I think there were three questions within that supplementary. The final one was: will it ever realise its potential? Yes, it will, and I have stated that on many occasions. Certainly, as I said in my previous answer, there are benchmarks and performance criteria in the contracts.

Of course, the overall intent of the Ngunnawal Bush Healing Farm is to break the cycle of addiction and also to take a holistic approach to working with the local Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community to reconnect them to country, to reconnect them with community and to break that cycle of addiction in particular.

Tourism—economic impact

MR STEEL: My question is to the Minister for Tourism and Major Events. Minister, can you please update the Assembly on the latest tourism data for the ACT?

MR BARR: I thank Mr Steel for the question. Tourism’s contribution is now valued at \$2.3 billion annually. The sector’s contribution to our gross state product grew at 9.5 per cent. One in seven jobs created in the ACT last year was in the tourism sector. That has taken total employment to 16,800. That is 1,100 more than 12 months earlier. I note that tourism and the hospitality sectors are big employers of young people in Canberra.

MR STEEL: Minister, how does the contribution of tourism support the broader territory economy?

MR BARR: Economic diversification is key to our city’s long-term prosperity and tourism is an area where we have a significant comparative advantage. The industry is a leading driver of retaining young and talented people in our city. Our city’s ongoing success will be built on young Canberrans finding creative new ways to establish enterprises right here in Canberra, many of them involving sharing our city with the

world.

MR PETTERSSON: Chief Minister, what will the government be focusing on with respect to future tourism growth?

MR BARR: Increasing transport connectivity for our city is the most important thing that we can do to support further tourism growth. Our goal is to make it cheaper and easier to travel directly to Canberra both internationally and domestically.

Recycling—container deposit scheme

MS CHEYNE: My question is to the Minister for Transport and City Services. Minister, can you please provide an update on the rollout of the ACT's container deposit scheme?

MS FITZHARRIS: I thank Ms Cheyne very much for the question. I was very pleased to join with a number of partners earlier this week to announce the commencement of the ACT container deposit scheme. The establishment of the scheme is the delivery of another election commitment; this one, yet again, firmly opposed by the opposition.

I think it is important that the Canberra community understand that the Canberra Liberals voted against this scheme. This scheme will reduce litter in our local parks and waterways, as well as providing more support for social enterprises and community groups. Almost every jurisdiction in the country either has a container deposit scheme or is in the process of establishing a container deposit scheme. The Canberra Liberals' view is that just because everybody else is doing it around the country it therefore must be a bad idea. We disagree.

Under our scheme the Canberra community will be able to return eligible, empty beverage containers to designated collection points and receive a 10c refund for each container. Agreements between the scheme coordinator, Exchange for Change ACT, the network operator, Return-It, and the ACT government were signed on 29 March. The signing of these agreements commenced a 12-week mobilisation phase, ahead of the official scheme commencement on 30 June.

There will be express collection points run by social enterprise groups such as LEAD, the Salvos and National Disability Services, which in turn creates increased revenue streams through the employment and engagement of those most in need of finding work in our community. As I indicated earlier in the week, within the coming weeks collection point agreements will be finalised with social enterprise partners, and the Canberra community will be informed of the collection point locations.

MS CHEYNE: Minister, how is the ACT scheme different from the New South Wales scheme?

MS FITZHARRIS: I am pleased to advise the Assembly that while there are many legislative similarities with the New South Wales scheme, which was important not only for regional harmonisation but also future national harmonisation, with almost every jurisdiction in the country either having or soon to have a container deposit

scheme, ours will be different. The government has taken into account feedback from the community and will deliver a scheme which best matches the needs of our city.

Building on the lessons learned from New South Wales, the ACT scheme has been designed to communicate effectively and efficiently with beverage suppliers, ultimately rewarding consumers who participate in the scheme, benefiting the environment, and supporting social enterprise and inclusion.

The ACT model includes collection point sites managed by social enterprise organisations. Some of these organisations will also manage bulk return depot sites, similar to the South Australian face-to-face established operating system.

To reduce litter and encourage scheme participation from the start of the ACT scheme, unlike in New South Wales, our collection points will accept crushed containers and any container which carries the refund marking of South Australia and the Northern Territory schemes. This will allow for a greater redemption rate of container acceptability.

MR STEEL: Minister, how will the container deposit scheme help social enterprises and charities?

MS FITZHARRIS: The scheme's collection points will be predominantly run by social enterprises and manually operated, meaning that there will be someone at the collection point to take containers from consumers and to assist with container returns as required. Express collection points will be run by social enterprise groups, which in turn will create increased revenue streams through the employment and engagement of those most in need.

Members of the community will also be able to choose to donate their refunds directly to charity and other community organisations that have signed up to feature as a registered organisation within the scheme. The option to donate refunds to listed organisations will be made available at all collection points.

Over time the scheme will encourage better resource recovery infrastructure, increase local economic activity and provide greater employment opportunities. The ACT container deposit scheme speaks to the Canberra community as a whole and complements a broader waste action plan, which promotes a cleaner environment and future sustainability.

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