



QUESTION TIME
OF THE
LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY
FOR THE
AUSTRALIAN CAPITAL TERRITORY

HANSARD

Edited proof transcript

Thursday, 12 April 2018

This is an EDITED PROOF TRANSCRIPT of question time proceedings that is subject to further checking. Members' suggested corrections for the official Weekly Hansard should be lodged with the Hansard office (facsimile 02 6205 0025) as soon as possible. Answers to questions on notice will appear in the *Weekly Hansard*.

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Ministerial arrangements

MR BARR: As members would be aware, Ms Fitzharris is away from the Assembly today. For question time, questions for the Minister for Health and Wellbeing will be directed to Minister Rattenbury, questions on Transport and City Services will be directed to Minister Gentleman and questions on Higher Education, Training and Research will be directed to me.

Questions without notice

Taxation—unit rating system

MR COE: My question is to the Treasurer. I refer to media reports today that a former Treasurer, Ted Quinlan, questioned the fairness of the new rating system for units. Mr Quinlan said that the new system created “inequity which penalises some owners within larger complexes compared to those in an establishment with a few individual units—all other things being equal”. Treasurer, why have you introduced a rates system that penalises some owners within larger complexes compared to those in an establishment with a few individual units, all other things being equal?

MR BARR: I do not believe I have.

MR COE: Treasurer, is the former Treasurer wrong, and is the former Treasurer not well equipped and not sufficiently experienced to make this sort of commentary?

MR BARR: Former treasurers are reasonably well equipped, I would have thought, to comment on a variety of issues. It does not mean that every current treasurer will agree with a former treasurer.

MR PARTON: Will you rethink the rating system that you introduced for units in 2016 now that a former Labor Treasurer has raised concerns about its fairness?

MR BARR: The government makes changes to legislation pertaining to rates and taxes and other matters each year in the budget process and sometimes more frequently. I would not necessarily rule anything in or out. I will look at the comments of former Treasurer Quinlan as I would any other comments from anyone else in the community.

Planning—entertainment precincts

MS LE COUTEUR: My question is to the Minister for Planning and Urban Renewal and it relates to the urban sounds discussion paper. Minister, at least one night club in Civic has closed recently due to concerns about a hotel being constructed nearby. In your response to a question on notice last year you said that you expected the final package of reforms for the urban sounds paper, including entertainment precincts and noise attenuation requirements, to be announced by the end of 2017. What progress has been made on finalising the paper for public release?

MR GENTLEMAN: I thank Ms Le Couteur for her question. It is a very important inquiry that we are conducting at the moment for the future of Canberra, particularly

around live music venues and urban sounds. We know that we have had, I think, some interesting challenges, particularly for new venues or new residential venues around previous entertainment precincts. I think New Acton is a really good example of that.

We are working through that process. We have not reached the conclusion of the paper yet but hopefully in the not-too-distant future I will be able to update the Assembly on the inquiry.

MS LE COUTEUR: Minister, what is the status of the development and implementation of entertainment precincts and has work commenced to integrate them into the Territory Plan?

MR GENTLEMAN: Yes. Work within the directorate has commenced. We are looking at how we can embed the opportunity for urban sounds in the Territory Plan as a forward planning process to ensure that we can have active, live entertainment across the ACT whilst of course catering for new residential opportunities too.

Taxation—unit rating system

MS LAWDER: My question is to the Treasurer. On 5 April 2018, ABC Online reported that a constituent living in a two-bedroom unit in Kingston had complained that her rates had gone up by 60 per cent in one year. Why is it fair for people living in units to have their rates increased by up to 60 per cent in one year while the CFMEU enjoys a sweetheart deal through the land swap with the ACT government?

MR BARR: An attempt to conflate those two issues is pretty pathetic.

MS LAWDER: Treasurer, why has this change of rates policy caused significant problems for low income earners such as retirees and self-funded retirees?

MR BARR: The government, of course, puts in place a range of measures to protect low income earners, including significant concessions in relation to rates.

MISS C BURCH: Treasurer, what impact has the change in rates had on the disposable income of seniors?

MR BARR: That is a very broad category. Those on low incomes, as I have indicated, are significantly protected by a range of concessions.

Emergency services—staff wellbeing

MR PETTERSSON: My question is to the Minister for Police and Emergency Services. How is the government protecting and supporting our emergency services workers?

MR GENTLEMAN: I thank Mr Pettersson for his question and his interest in our emergency services. Canberra is a growing city. This government is getting on with the job of planning and delivering the services our city needs both now and into the future. As growth occurs, we know that we need to support our emergency services personnel. These are the people who keep us all safe.

With this in mind, the government made an election commitment that would help improve the safety of emergency services personnel who are working on or near the road. The roadside often makes up the workplace for ESA personnel. Like any other worker, they should be safe while at work. Working on the roadside can leave emergency services workers at high risk of being struck by passing vehicles and debris. Speed is a critical factor in helping minimise the risk.

To help improve safety and to help make sure our emergency services personnel feel safe in their working environment, this government made a commitment to introduce new laws that would limit the speed of cars when passing emergency vehicles stopped by the roadside or moving slowly on the road. I am pleased to advise that we have acted on our election pledge. The new rules will apply from this weekend.

In closing, the government is helping create jobs and opportunity, helping shape the city as we grow, and we are doing it while keeping Canberra and its emergency services personnel safe.

MR PETTERSSON: Minister, can you please advise the Assembly about the details of the enhanced protections for emergency services personnel?

MR GENTLEMAN: I can. As I mentioned in my earlier answer, new laws will apply from this weekend or, more precisely, from Saturday the 14th, that will limit the speed that cars can travel at when passing an emergency services vehicle on the road that has flashing red or blue lights. It is important to note that the new laws apply only when an emergency services vehicle is either stopped on the roadside or travelling slowly and only if it has its red or blue lights on.

If anyone driving a car sees a red or blue flashing light and an emergency services vehicle, for example a fire truck, an ambulance or a police car, stopped by the roadside or travelling slowly on the road, they must firstly approach the emergency services vehicle at a speed that can allow the driver to stop their car if necessary, give way to a stopped or slowed down emergency services vehicle and, when passing the vehicle, they must travel at 40 kilometres an hour or less and do this until they are satisfied that they are sufficiently past the stopped or slowed down emergency vehicle. The new speed limits will not apply if the emergency services vehicle is stopped or parked on a road divided by a median strip and is on the other side.

Through this change we hope to drive a culture change in our territory and, as the CPO said, help create a better working environment for our emergency services workers.

MS CHEYNE: Minister, what other steps are being taken to care for the health and wellbeing of emergency services workers?

MR GENTLEMAN: I thank Ms Cheyne for her interest in our emergency services personnel. Changing the speed limit for cars passing stopped or slow-travelling emergency services vehicles was just one measure our government committed to prior to the last election to improve the safety, health and wellbeing of emergency service workers. The ESA has also engaged a manager for welfare programs. This new

manager will be responsible for peer support programs in the ESA. I am also advised that work is underway by the ESA to develop a training package for this program.

Another important aspect regarding the health and wellbeing of emergency personnel is ensuring that they are recognised for their good work. On Tuesday night I was pleased to attend the ACT Fire & Rescue awards ceremony. The awards saw 44 members of ACT Fire & Rescue recognised for service. One member, Jeff Southwell, was recognised for 40 years of service, and Jason Jones was awarded the chief officer's meritorious services medal for his outstanding contribution to the service. Southie is well-known, of course, for his football coaching prowess. I was also very pleased to present Chris Lind, an old work colleague of mine, with his award.

It was a fantastic evening and showed that we have a great fire and rescue service. Congratulations to each of the 44 members who received an award and to all members of ACT Fire & Rescue who, like our emergency services personnel, work hard and do a fantastic job in keeping our community safe as we grow our city.

Taxation—unit rating system

MR MILLIGAN: My question is to the Chief Minister and Treasurer. On 7 April 2018, the *Canberra Times* reported that ratepayers were raising concerns about ongoing changes to the rating system for apartments. A 91-year-old war widow has advised she has been forced to cut back on heating, cooling and food to afford her rates. She said, "I did not expect that at the end of my life, living in this city would be so difficult." Treasurer, why are your rates policies making it increasingly more difficult for seniors to live in this city?

MR BARR: Of course, the financial circumstances of seniors will vary significantly, from those who have significant assets and income to those who do not. The government puts in place a range of measures to support those on low incomes and who have little or no assets.

MR MILLIGAN: Treasurer, why are Canberrans increasingly losing confidence in the fairness of your changes to the rates system?

MR BARR: I do not believe that is the case.

MS LEE: Treasurer, how many Canberrans are cutting back on heating, cooling, food and medicine because of your rates policies?

MR BARR: That is a question that would be very difficult to answer but the government can certainly do what we have done today—pass the second appropriation bill—to provide more support for those on the lowest incomes through an increase in concessions.

ACT Policing—resourcing

MISS C BURCH: My question is to the Minister for Police and Emergency Services. Minister, on 10 April 2018, ABC News Online reported that armed robberies, home

burglaries and car theft have “skyrocketed”. In this report, Australian Federal Police Association President, Angela Smith, is quoted as saying, “I’ve got so many members who are out on stress leave who are suffering from severe PTSD and depression because they feel like they go to so many jobs that are intense, they are violent, there’s not enough backup, there aren’t enough people to help them.” Minister, is your government’s lack of support for ACT Policing harming the health of officers?

MR GENTLEMAN: I thank Ms Burch for her question. We are supporting police even further every year. We are providing more resources for the ACT police to do their job on the road. Indeed, the AFP have a detailed wellness program within their service to provide an on-the-ground service for their employees. Each year we have been investing in new resources for the ACT police, including protection resources in last year’s budget. And in last year’s budget we invested \$8.8 million in extra resources for the ACT to ensure that they can recruit and provide support for their members on the road.

MISS C BURCH: Minister, why then isn’t there enough backup for front-line police officers?

MR GENTLEMAN: I do not agree with the premise of the question. I believe that there is support for our online police officers. As I have said, not only were we recruiting last year but we are doing more recruiting this year, to ensure that we have enough numbers on the road. Of course, there is a great deal of support, in both technical capability and service capability, outside our sworn officers as well.

MR WALL: Minister, do you stand by the comments made by the AFPA president and the comments from frontline staff that there simply are not enough resources?

MR GENTLEMAN: I stand by the comments of the Chief Police Officer in the ACT, who says that she is putting full support behind her officers. I think that that is appropriate. I support the Chief Police Officer in the work that she is doing. In fact, she said that the ACT is still one of the safest jurisdictions in which to live. So while obviously there are some concerns among the service regarding the trends—

Opposition members interjecting—

MADAM SPEAKER: Members, no conversation across the chamber thank you. Mr Gentleman, do you have more to offer?

MR GENTLEMAN: As I said, we continue to invest in our police services across the ACT. As we know, Canberrans recognise that they are in the safest city in Australia. That came forward in the ROGS data last year. This is what officers on the ground are telling me as well. I meet with them regularly not only at station but also at public events. They have my full support.

Justice—resourcing

MR HANSON: My question is to the Attorney-General and relates to the recent appointment of an additional magistrate. Attorney, you are quoted as saying that the new magistrate would increase access to justice and timeliness in the courts system.

However, the ACT's Chief Magistrate said that this will not be enough to improve access to justice and will only maintain the status quo because it will merely replace the work of two special magistrates. She said that at least nine magistrates were needed to see even a slight increase in efficiency. Why did you say that there would be an increase in access to justice and timeliness in the courts system when the Chief Magistrate has stated categorically that there will not be?

MR RAMSAY: I thank the shadow attorney-general for his question and for his interest in timely access to justice, which clearly is something that is a high priority for this government. As the shadow attorney-general has referred to, I have announced that the government will be providing significant resources in the upcoming budget for an eighth full-time resident magistrate. That is \$3.1 million over the next four years. In addition, there will be \$1.3 million to Legal Aid and \$987,000 to the Director of Public Prosecutions. In addition to that the government has also reappointed the two special magistrates to continue sitting.

We are most confident that the combination of all of the resources we are providing will increase the access to timely justice. We have heard the Chief Magistrate's comments. We will continue to work with the Chief Magistrate, as we do with the Chief Justice and as we do across the justice sector, to increase the access to justice for all people here.

MR HANSON: Attorney-General, will you commit to properly funding the courts system to provide an increase in efficiency as has been called for by the Chief Magistrate?

MR RAMSAY: As I think I just said in my previous answer, we will continue to work with the Chief Magistrate to ensure that there is adequate support for the justice system here. We note that there have been significant resources provided and we have appointed two additional special magistrates as well. We are most confident that this will have a positive impact on access to justice here in the ACT.

MS LEE: Attorney-General, did you actually check with the Chief Magistrate about whether the extra magistrate would improve efficiency before you went out and claimed that it would?

MR RAMSAY: Yes.

Alexander Maconochie Centre—motorcycle gang activities

MR WALL: My question is to the Minister for Corrections. I refer to the 2 April 2018 report in the *Canberra Times* regarding the meeting between a senior manager at the AMC and the ex-boss of the ACT Rebels, an outlaw motorcycle gang. The article reports that the justice directorate conducted an internal investigation and concluded that no further action was required. Minister, do you agree with the directorate's decision that a senior prison officer having close personal ties with a well-known outlaw bikie gang figure in fact required no further action?

MR RATTENBURY: I note the level of editorialising in Mr Wall's question in the sense that he seems to have an intimate knowledge of the circumstances of the

situation. I did find the report in the paper somewhat colourful, including the fact that they used paragraph four to describe the meal in the photo, the half-eaten meal as the *Canberra Times* tellingly revealed.

On the substance of the matter, it is important to note that the gentleman named in the article, Mr Stefancic, has not been a client of ACT Corrective Services. He has not been in the custody of ACT Corrective Services at any time. The employee in the photograph is not an intelligence officer, as was asserted in some of conversation. Where allegations of potential criminal conduct are identified, these matters are referred to ACT Policing for investigation, as would be expected.

Personal relationships are not generally a matter for the directorate other than where a conflict of interest, be that perceived or actual, is identified. Of course the perception is very important to get to the bottom of if that is the case. These conflicts of interest are managed within the existing employment framework and policies including the Public Sector Management Act and the directorate's conflict of interest (close personal relationships) policy.

MR WALL: Minister, when did you become aware of the meeting between the corrections employee and the well-known bikie figure? Was the employee cleared to meet with that individual or was there previous documentation of a potential conflict of interest because of that relationship?

MR RATTENBURY: I have been aware of this matter for some time. It has been raised with me in a number of different ways. When I was first made aware of it, I undertook a number of steps to ensure that the matter was looked into and that the sorts of procedures I have just described for investigating the potential for a conflict of interest were followed.

MRS DUNNE: Minister, will you undertake to report back to the Assembly about the incident and the activities of bikie gangs in the AMC? And is there an investigation underway into the meeting reported by the *Canberra Times*?

MR RATTENBURY: Madam Speaker, it is a difficult question to answer. What Mrs Dunne actually wants me to report back on is people's TV viewing habits or what else they are doing at the AMC. I do not think that is a—

Mrs Dunne interjecting—

MR RATTENBURY: I do not believe that it is a sufficiently clear question in order for me to be able to respond. I can assure Mrs Dunne and all the members of the opposition, as I outlined in the budget debate this morning, that we have just committed significant new resources to intelligence at the AMC to combat the exact sorts of concerns that Mrs Dunne and others are questioning. It would be, in most cases, I think, unhelpful to reveal the full work that that intelligence team is doing, because it would obviously have the potential to disclose sources, and I do not think that is helpful. In terms of the specific matter, as was reported in the *Canberra Times*, that matter has been investigated and there have been found to be no issues raised by that investigation.

Access Canberra—service enhancements

MS CHEYNE: My question is to the Minister for Regulatory Services. Minister, how is Access Canberra helping to better serve a growing community more efficiently, including through increasing its online offerings?

MR RAMSAY: I thank Ms Cheyne for her question and her dedication to good services for our local Canberrans. I am pleased to say that Access Canberra is continuing to modernise its service to allow Canberrans to interact in the easiest possible way. That is why they now have over 300 services available online. This includes everything from vehicle registration renewals to event planning and the very popular drivers licence renewals. In fact, since it launched, Access Canberra has received over 13,000 drivers licence renewal applications online, which is saving Canberrans a significant amount of time.

Access Canberra will keep rolling out services in online forms into the future. I look forward to announcing another major service that it provides going online in the coming weeks. It is all about making it easier for people to interact with us at a time that is most convenient for them. This then allows our contact centres and service centres more free time to deal with those who have complex inquiries and applications or those people who need a little extra support.

The Access Canberra's motto is "Easier, simpler, here to help." That is exactly what increasing our online offerings is about. We want to reduce barriers for our routine transactions and have less administrative work for our hard-working public servants to ensure that we can divert our resources to the more complex or high-risk work.

MS CHEYNE: Can the minister update the Assembly on how Access Canberra is helping to better serve the growing community more efficiently through upgrades to the fix my street website specifically?

MR RAMSAY: I thank Ms Cheyne for the supplementary question. The fix my street website is just another way that this government is making it more efficient to deal with government. It is well loved. It is well used by the community. The statistics speak for themselves. Since the launch of the new version of the site, there have been around 234 unique views of a suburb per day. That is around 234 people who are receiving information on the services available in their area each and every day. We also receive, on average, around 93 submissions through the fix my street site each day.

This government is working to ensure the citizens of Canberra have the information that they need at hand. We are also working on ways to help them interact with government in the most efficient way possible. Having a service like fix my street allows members of the public to easily report what it is that they see and hear as they lives their lives in the community without having to wait on the phone. The geolocation in the site helps to pinpoint where the issue is and deploy the government's resources efficiently. Fix my street is just another way that this government is making it easier for the community to interact with it.

MR STEEL: Minister, can you update the Assembly on how Access Canberra is

helping to better serve a growing community more efficiently through new options to deal with its contact centre?

MR RAMSAY: I thank Mr Steel for the supplementary question. Access Canberra is increasing the ways that it allows the community to interact with its contact centre to get the help they need. They have expanded the chat function on the website, for those who would rather type than talk. They have expanded from just providing general information to helping individuals with their specific inquiries through the chat service. They have also recently started a trial of a call-back service, so that people do not have to wait on the phone. This allows people who have non-urgent inquiries to leave their details with Access Canberra so that they can call them back, to allow people to get on with the rest of their day.

All of this is in addition to the online complaints reporting that was improved last year, so that people can lodge their regulatory complaints online rather than having to wait on the phone. This is all so that we can free up our talented and highly skilled Access Canberra operators to be able to speak to those who have particularly curly questions or those who prefer not to transact online. It is all about ensuring that we make things easier and simpler, and are still here to help.

ACT Health—office for mental health

MRS DUNNE: My question is to the Minister for Mental Health regarding the proposed restructure of ACT Health. Where will the office for mental health fit into the proposed restructure of ACT Health?

MR RATTENBURY: A final decision has not been made on that yet.

MRS DUNNE: Minister, will that uncertainty result in a delay in the commencement of the operation of the office for mental health?

MR RATTENBURY: Work on the office for mental health is proceeding apace. As I think I have updated the Assembly on, and forgive me if I have not, we have recently completed two rounds of public consultation and received extremely valuable feedback from members of the community. There are competing views, as you might anticipate. Some actually suggested that we take longer to establish it, because they wanted more time for discussion. Others have urged us to get on with it as fast as possible. We are trying to meet those various views. Obviously, they are not entirely compatible. The key principles of the office of mental health have been broadly agreed by the community, and I look forward to providing further updates to the Assembly shortly.

MS LAWDER: Minister, how will having staff dealing with mental health in several agencies streamline the delivery of mental health care?

MR RATTENBURY: One of the things I am keen to achieve through the office for mental health is the recognition that it is not just the health department that deals with issues of mental health. Right across the ACT government there are areas where mental health is very relevant. The Education Directorate, Community Services, and, as discussed earlier today, each of our emergency services areas has mental health and

mental wellbeing issues for their staff and for their clients, their customers, that we need to deal with. I do not think this is just about the health agency. One of my key agendas is that mental health is about much more than just clinical services and that is what the office for mental health will be seeking to prosecute as part of its agenda.

Homelessness—government funding

MR PARTON: My question is to the Minister for Housing and Suburban Development. Minister, why has real spending on homelessness services dropped from \$25.3 million in 2012-13 to \$20.7 million in 2016-17?

MS BERRY: It was the commonwealth government that made those cuts, not the ACT government.

MR PARTON: Minister, why, after 17 years of Labor government in this territory, is it that one in three people seeking help are being turned away from housing assistance?

MS BERRY: I remind Mr Parton that we have, still, the lowest rate of rough sleepers in the country, the lowest rate of homelessness per person in the country, the most support for homelessness through our funding of homelessness support services in the country, and we are three-quarters of the way through of an 11 per cent public housing renewal program—\$600 million over four years—renewing 11 per cent of our public housing. That is a considerable amount of money spent on making sure that public housing best meets the needs of our tenants.

MS LAWDER: Minister, why do over 1,000 clients' accommodation needs remain unmet after 17 years of Labor government in this territory?

MS BERRY: I remind members that, with respect to the homelessness funding that goes to support services to support people who have contacted OneLink to get into accommodation or get support in some other different way, people are being supported by a number of different support organisations, including organisations like Havelock, Uniting Care at the early morning centre, St Vincent de Paul in the street to home program, Beryl, Doris and Toora. All of those services provide support to people who are experiencing homelessness and are seeking support from the government. Whilst it is easy to say that there are people languishing on a waiting list, those applications are being very carefully considered and they are being supported in the best possible way for what is often a very complex issue, with a lot of complicated matters going on in those individuals' lives.

Sport—Narrabundah ballpark

MR STEEL: My question is to the Minister for Sport and Recreation. Minister, can you update the Assembly on the status of the government's commitment to upgrade the Narrabundah ballpark?

MS BERRY: I am very happy to update the Assembly on the status of the government's commitment to the Narrabundah ballpark. In the 2016-17 budget, the ACT government committed \$4.5 million for the upgrade of Narrabundah ballpark in

partnership with Canberra Cavalry. The government worked very closely with Cavalry to develop a design solution that meets the needs of the baseball community. Those upgrade works will include construction of a new clubhouse, an announcers box, a scorers room and a broadcast area as part of an extension to the existing grandstand. On the ground floor, a new commercial kitchen, toilets and storage areas will be provided. The facility will also meet current accessibility standards.

The existing change rooms will be upgraded, and are sure to be more inclusive and female friendly, and batting cages currently located at the entrance to the park will be relocated to the rear of the existing pavilion. Fence realignment on the first and second baseline will create additional space within the ballpark which will improve the spectators' experience as well as provide more commercial opportunities for the Canberra Cavalry.

Some work has already occurred out at the ballpark, including some more parking upgrades on Kyeema Street, an additional upgrade to the PA system, and the provision of some shipping containers. These works were completed before the commencement of the 2017-18 season. A contractor has been engaged, and the additional works that will occur will be completed by November 2018, minimising the impact on the Canberra Cavalry.

MR STEEL: Minister, what will these improvements mean for players and supporters?

MS BERRY: I thank Mr Steel for the supplementary. Anyone who has had the chance to get out to a Cavalry game will know what a unique and personal experience it can be to be up close with the players and the supporters. The upgrade to the facility will improve on that and provide benefits to both players and supporters. It is Canberra's own little patch of American culture, and I encourage members of the Assembly to get out and enjoy a game when they can in the upcoming season. Particularly with the upgrades, it will be much more enjoyable and a much better spectator experience.

Players will benefit from an upgrade to the existing pavilion. The change rooms will be larger and more functional and will better meet the needs of the Canberra Cavalry and the baseball community more broadly. The new batting cages that will be constructed will provide upgraded practice and warm-up facilities in proximity to the change rooms. These currently do not exist, so that will be a fantastic improvement for the ballpark.

MS CODY: Minister, how will the upgraded facility elevate Canberra as an international baseball facility?

MS BERRY: I thank Ms Cody for the supplementary. Upon completion of the upgrades, the Narrabundah ballpark will be among the best in the country. I have already had feedback every time I get to talk with people who attend games out there—whether they are from the ACT or visiting—about what a great experience it is out there, what a great ballpark it is and what a great sports facility it is to play on.

The ACT government is currently discussing opportunities with Baseball Australia to bring elite-level event content to Canberra as a result of the facility upgrade. These

discussions are ongoing, with an announcement on additional event provision at the ballpark expected to be made in the coming months.

Bimberi Youth Justice Centre—staffing

MRS KIKKERT: My question is to the Minister for Disability, Children and Youth. Minister, when you were asked in March last year if the staffing levels at Bimberi were adequate, you replied:

In short, the answer is yes.

And when asked again in August, you stated:

I would like to assure the Assembly that Bimberi Youth Justice Centre is appropriately staffed.

We then learnt last sitting that, in the second half of 2017, kids in Bimberi were confined to their rooms 95 times, with insufficient staffing a cause. Minister, why did you tell this Assembly that Bimberi was appropriately staffed when in fact lack of workers was contributing to the occurrence of an operational lockdown every other day, on average?

MS STEPHEN-SMITH: I thank Mrs Kikkert for her question. She is of course referring to the Bimberi headline indicators report that I tabled in March, and that was a report that I commissioned as part of my commitment to an open and transparent youth justice centre and system. This commitment to establish the new report was made in a ministerial statement in this place on 1 August.

Subsequently, in response to a motion and some comments made in this place by Mr Coe and Mrs Kikkert, I wrote to them, among other things reiterating my commitment to this report and advising them that I would seek advice on the possibility of improving information on the frequency of lockdowns in the report, which I did, in line with my commitment to transparency.

Subsequent to that, in October last year, on 31 October, I tabled the Official Visitor (Children and Young People) report and at that time I made a tabling statement. The tabling statement said:

In their reports, the official visitors have consistently noted that they are received well by the staff and management at Bimberi and have expressed their satisfaction with the level of care provided to young people. The official visitors have recently raised a concern about operational lockdowns at Bimberi and the potential for this to disrupt young people's participation in education programs at the Murrumbidgee Education and Training Centre.

Bimberi management has responded to these concerns by ensuring that, where possible, management of an operational lockdown does not interfere with access to educational services and also by undertaking recruitment to ensure that staffing levels can respond to increases in the number of young people in Bimberi and the pressures of unplanned leave. A period of low numbers in Bimberi has resulted in the depletion of the casual staffing pool and consequently the capacity of Bimberi to respond to a temporary increase in numbers. I am

pleased to note that six new youth workers commenced in June and a further four are currently in their last week of training.

Any suggestion that I have not updated the Assembly on this matter since last August is completely false.

Mrs Dunne interjecting—

MADAM SPEAKER: Mrs Dunne, please; we do not need that.

MRS KIKKERT: Minister, are operational lockdowns as a result of insufficient staffing still occurring in 2018?

MS STEPHEN-SMITH: I do not have the tabling statement that I made or my ministerial statement when I tabled the headline indicators report. At the time I think I indicated a number of things. The decision to undertake an operational lockdown is not taken lightly. It can only be authorised by a member of the senior management team. Lockdowns are structured in a way that still enables the maximum period of time outside cabins for young detainees.

Opposition members interjecting—

MS STEPHEN-SMITH: For the information of the Assembly I still have a minute and a half to go. Lockdowns may be for a period of time of just two hours, to enable staff meal breaks, or in the event that they are for a longer period of time they are rolling, which means young people alternate between spending one hour in their cabins and then one hour out of their cabins. During the time they are in their cabins, young people have access to TV, reading materials and schoolwork whilst the lockdowns are occurring.

As I have said, the increase in young people in the centre during 2017, as well as staff leave and the loss of casual staff from the depleted pool, have increased the need for operational lockdowns. Ongoing and current recruitment is addressing these issues. Eleven new staff commenced induction training on 13 March 2018. A further recruitment round is currently underway, with induction training to commence on 7 May. I am assured that this will result in sufficient additional staff being appointed to minimise the need for future lockdowns.

MR MILLIGAN: Minister, will you correct the record to clarify that staffing levels at Bimberi in 2007 were, in fact, not adequate or appropriate?

MS STEPHEN-SMITH: I am pretty sure Mr Milligan means 2017, and I refer him to my response to the first question.

Alexander Maconochie Centre—accredited training

MS CODY: My question is to the Minister for Corrections. Minister, since the opening of the bakery at the AMC, how has the uptake of accredited training been going?

MR RATTENBURY: Overall, I can say that the actual bakery has been going extremely well. In terms of actual accreditation, one of the important parts is that people who participate in these industry programs come out of them with formal qualifications. This is about enhancing the rehabilitation process and making sure that the skills that are picked up inside the bakery can potentially be used outside, either directly in that industry or for the detainees to be able to demonstrate their ability to acquire skills and potentially apply that learning in another area.

In terms of the specifics, all of the women employed at the AMC bakery have completed, or are currently in the process of completing, training. Almost half of the women employed at the AMC bakery have successfully completed recognised units of competency, including work health and safety, using hygienic practices in food safety and numeracy foundation skills. The remaining women are in the process of completing these units.

As you can see by the very names of these units, they are the sorts of things that are applicable well beyond the specifics of baking. They could be applied in quite a few areas of the hospitality sector in particular.

MS CODY: Has feedback from those undertaking the bakery apprenticeships been provided? If so, what has the feedback been?

MR RATTENBURY: I have been in the fortunate position to have direct feedback from those working in the bakery during an onsite visit at the AMC. I have to say that it has overwhelmingly been very positive. The women have said to me that they really enjoy working in the bakery. It helps pass the time, which is an important consideration. It also gives them a real sense of purpose and pride in what they are doing.

I was particularly pleased to be at the AMC just before Easter, where the ladies were baking hot cross buns for the first time. They were providing them not only to everybody in the AMC over the Easter period but also providing some to Beryl Women's Refuge as a way of supporting the community. The pride the ladies took in being able to contribute to the community in that way was very welcome.

MS ORR: Minister, is any other accredited training being offered? If so, what units are they?

MR RATTENBURY: One of my agendas as the minister is to ensure that we have a range of industries provided at the AMC, and corrective services are currently working on what other potential industries we can offer and, therefore, what other accreditation and trade training opportunities might be applied. Expanding employment industries is obviously very important for the rehabilitation program and having a broader range of skills available and different trades qualifications only enhances the opportunity for people to reintegrate into the community more effectively when they finish their period of incarceration.

Bimberi Youth Justice Centre—staffing

MS LEE: My question is to the Minister for Disability, Children and Youth. Minister,

when you were asked last year if children had ever been kept in their rooms because of insufficient staffing at Bimberi, you replied, “On occasion young people are required to remain in their rooms for short periods for an operational lockdown to cover staff meetings, training and lunch breaks.” Minister, why did you not confirm then, as we know now, that children were indeed being kept in their rooms because of a lack of staff?

MS STEPHEN-SMITH: I refer Ms Lee to my answers to the previous questions that Mrs Kikkert asked, which I think were quite comprehensive. The summary of what she just said is exactly right. That is generally why young people are kept in their units for operational lockdowns: to cover those exact things that Ms Lee referred to.

MS LEE: Minister, how many times this year have operational lockdowns occurred at Bimberi because of insufficient staffing?

MS STEPHEN-SMITH: I will take the question on notice as to how many lockdowns have occurred this year. I would say in relation to the term “insufficient staffing” that there is a range of operational requirements within Bimberi. Like all workplaces, there are days when staff take unplanned leave, and Bimberi’s operations need to work around that; there are also days when there are a larger number of young people than usual in Bimberi; and there are operational requirements around things like taking young people to court and taking them to other appointments outside of Bimberi. There are times when the behaviour of some young people requires a response that may require other young people to be locked in their units for a period of time. I will take on notice how many lockdowns there have been, but I will not take the premise of the question about insufficient staffing.

MRS KIKKERT: Minister, will you correct the record to clarify that insufficient staffing did in fact result in Bimberi detainees being confined to their rooms in 2017?

MS STEPHEN-SMITH: I refer Mrs Kikkert again to the statement that I made in this place, a tabling statement on 31 October, that did acknowledge that the depletion of the casual pool, as a result of low numbers—it did not go into this level of detail, but—

Mrs Dunne: Just say yes.

MS STEPHEN-SMITH: I have already clarified in this place, on 31 October, that the low numbers of young people, the very low numbers of young people, in Bimberi in 2016—a fantastic reflection of the success of the blueprint on youth justice—have resulted in a depletion of the casual pool of staff at Bimberi. There was then an increase in the number of young people. One of the reasons that I commissioned the new task force to look into the next five years for the blueprint on youth justice was that increase in the number of young people in Bimberi.

Opposition members interjecting—

Mr Gentleman: A point of order, Madam Speaker.

MADAM SPEAKER: Thank you. Resume your seat.

Mr Gentleman: I am having difficulty hearing the minister, as those opposite keep interjecting loudly.

MADAM SPEAKER: Thank you, Mr Gentleman. I will bring them to order. Mr Wall, Mr Hanson, please let the minister finish.

MS STEPHEN-SMITH: As I was saying, the increase in the number of young people in Bimberi was recognised in my statements in the Assembly a number of times last year. It was one of the things that prompted me to establish the task force looking into the second five years of the blueprint on youth justice, to provide recommendations around that. As I said in statements I made in this place, including on 31 October last year, I acknowledge this issue, and I also acknowledge the work that the Community Services Directorate is doing to undertake rolling recruitment. It is very important that we have the right staff at Bimberi with the right temperament and the right training. We cannot rush getting those staff. We must have the right staff. But we are on track to fully staffing Bimberi to ensure that we minimise lockdowns in the future.

Aboriginals and Torres Strait Islanders—Reconciliation Day preparations

MS ORR: My question is to the Minister for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Affairs. What is the government doing to support plans for Reconciliation Day celebrations across the ACT?

MS STEPHEN-SMITH: I thank Ms Orr for her question. First, I begin by acknowledging the significance of the upcoming Reconciliation Day on 28 May. The ACT is the first Australian jurisdiction to gazette a Reconciliation Day public holiday. The ACT government is putting in place arrangements to promote and celebrate Reconciliation Day with funding of \$150,000 for the event and \$50,000 for the 2018 Reconciliation Day grants program.

These one-off grants will assist eligible organisations or individuals to conduct, coordinate and/or participate in reconciliation events in the lead up to and/or during the Reconciliation Day public holiday weekend. A total of 34 applications for funding were received from schools, community groups and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander-controlled organisations.

The 2018 Reconciliation Day grants program closed on 16 March. I will be announcing the successful recipient shortly. The newly appointed Reconciliation Day Council has adopted Reconciliation Australia's theme for the 2018 Reconciliation Week—"Don't keep history a mystery"—as the theme for our own Reconciliation Day.

Events ACT, in consultation with the Reconciliation Day Council, the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Elected Body, and the Office for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Affairs is managing planning for the Reconciliation Day event with the main celebrations to be held in Glebe Park. An inter-directorate working group has also been established to progress initiatives across government and is compiling a calendar of events in support of Reconciliation Day.

The ACT government is also working closely with the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Elected Body to ensure that community engagement is far reaching and planned activities are culturally safe. Most importantly, Reconciliation Day will keep reconciliation in the public conversation and celebrate the ongoing contribution of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander culture, history and connection to country.

MS ORR: Can the minister update the Assembly about the role and membership of the Reconciliation Day Council in the lead-up to Australia's first Reconciliation Day celebrations next month?

MS STEPHEN-SMITH: I thank Ms Orr for her supplementary question. I announced the membership of the ACT Reconciliation Day Council on 18 March 2018. This volunteer council will oversee preparations for Reconciliation Day, act as community ambassadors and lead community conversations about the importance of reconciliation. This includes supporting the ACT government to develop a program of activities taking place in the lead-up to and on Reconciliation Day; providing high-level strategic direction to the event coordinator; promoting the events; and providing leadership in the community about reconciliation.

The establishment of the council reflects the outcomes of community consultation undertaken in 2016 that highlighted the need for, and I quote, "a council and budget to ensure that the public holiday was not simply a day off but an inclusive celebration and showcase of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander culture".

I am very pleased that the ACT Reconciliation Day Council is co-chaired by Dr Chris Bourke and Ms Genevieve Jacobs. Dr Bourke was, of course, instrumental in pushing for the creation of Reconciliation Day. The council comprises prominent Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Canberrans and non-Indigenous Canberrans, including Mr Alan Tongue, Professor Tom Calma AO, Ms Selena Walker, Ms Katrina Fanning, Mr Matt Davies, Ms Samantha Faulkner, Ms Diane Kargas-Bray and Mr Alex White.

These individuals were selected as representative of the broader Canberra community and, due to their prominence in the community, they are also able to act as ambassadors for Reconciliation Day. To date, the council has met twice and will regularly meet in the lead-up to Reconciliation Day. Further, the council will be actively involved in the evaluation of events and activities following Reconciliation Day.

MR PETTERSSON: Could the minister explain the role of ambassadors in promoting Reconciliation Day?

MS STEPHEN-SMITH: It is always good to have the last question, and I thank Mr Pettersson for the last supplementary. The ACT Reconciliation Day public holiday will advance the aims of reconciliation by providing opportunities for the whole ACT community to: acknowledge the history of settlement of Australia and its ongoing impact on Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people and the community; celebrate Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people, culture and heritage and the contribution first nations people continue to make to the nation; and allow the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities in the ACT an opportunity to collectively celebrate the survival of their cultures.

The role of Reconciliation Day ambassadors is to further this important messaging. That might mean speaking at schools, attending community events or engaging with the media and wider community to promote reconciliation and the opportunities for Canberrans to participate in the ongoing journey of reconciliation in our city and nation. Members of the Reconciliation Day council will take on the role as ambassadors in addition to others who may be approached as part of the community engagement strategy.

The ACT government acknowledges and respects the continuing culture and contribution that Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people make to the life of our region. ACT Reconciliation Day provides the opportunity for all Canberrans to learn more about and celebrate this Ngunnawal country that we live and work on, recognise the connections to country and broaden their knowledge and understanding of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultures.

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