



QUESTION TIME
OF THE
LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY
FOR THE
AUSTRALIAN CAPITAL TERRITORY

HANSARD

Edited proof transcript

Thursday, 10 May 2018

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Questions without notice

Cabinet meetings

MR COE: My question is to the Chief Minister. The Freedom of Information Act, in section 23, sets out that open access information for the Chief Minister includes information about each cabinet or cabinet committee decision. The latest available summary of cabinet decisions is dated 19 February. Chief Minister, why have there been no summaries of cabinet decisions published since that date?

MR BARR: I will inquire of the Head of Service in relation to that matter and advise the Assembly in due course.

MR COE: Chief Minister, do you approve what information is published on the cabinet decisions register, and will you publish all the summaries since 19 February?

MR BARR: Cabinet approves the summaries. That is part of the cabinet agenda. They are approved in accordance with the legislation and the *Cabinet Handbook*. I will check with the Head of Service as to why there are not summaries for the month of March available on the website.

MR WALL: Chief Minister, has cabinet approved any cabinet summaries since the February meeting of the 19th?

MR BARR: Yes, my understanding is that those summaries would have been approved. There has obviously been a delay for some reason in their being placed on the website.

Federal government—facial recognition scheme

MS LE COUTEUR: My question is to the Chief Minister and relates to the intergovernmental agreement on identity matching services and your agreement in COAG last year for the ACT to participate in the new federal government facial recognition scheme which, based on the bill tabled in February, will enable the Department of Home Affairs to disclose private information potentially to private corporations. Minister, can you assure the Assembly that any facial recognition scheme that the ACT signs up to is compatible with our Human Rights Act?

MR BARR: Yes, I can. That was one of the conditions of the ACT's agreement. Ms Le Couteur, in the 30-odd seconds of your question I could not quite get the communique of that COAG meeting open in front of me. I will endeavour to do so in the next minute or so. But I am aware that the schedule that is attached to that agreement has some arrangements required that are specific to the ACT and the conditions under which we are participating in that intergovernmental agreement.

MS LE COUTEUR: Chief Minister, Victoria has, in fact, threatened to pull out of the regime because the federal bill goes beyond the scope of what had been agreed by the states and territories. Will the ACT pull out of the scheme if the scheme cannot be made compatible with our Human Rights Act?

MR BARR: I make the observation that at the time of this COAG meeting I was the

only leader of any state or territory to point out those issues publicly and to seek a special arrangement for the ACT's participation. So it was with a degree of irony that we saw the Victorians change their position somewhat. Maybe the commonwealth have overreached in their legislation. The only grounds on which the ACT signed up to that intergovernmental agreement were on the basis that it would be compatible with our Human Rights Act.

Animals—dangerous dogs

MS LAWDER: My question is to the Minister for Transport and City Services. On 12 January 2018 an article appeared in the *Canberra Times* under the heading "Canberra's dog rangers open up on horror year". The article reports that domestic animal services rangers, or DAS, had been "many times before" to a house in Molesworth Street, Watson where a woman had been killed by a dog in October 2017. Minister, how many times in total had DAS rangers attended that Watson house prior to October 2017?

MS FITZHARRIS: I thank Ms Lawder for the question. I do not have the precise number. I will take that question on notice.

MS LAWDER: Minister, on how many occasions had a dog or dogs been seized from the house?

MS FITZHARRIS: I will take the question on notice.

MISS C BURCH: Minister, were all the dogs seized from the house subsequently returned?

MS FITZHARRIS: I will take the question on notice.

Sport—international fixtures

MR PETTERSSON: My question is to the Minister for Sport and Recreation. Minister, can you outline the significance of Canberra hosting its first international cricket test match next February?

MS BERRY: I thank Mr Pettersson for his question and his interest in cricket in the ACT. The historic nature of the test match will shine a spotlight on Manuka Oval and Canberra as a new venue for international test cricket. This event and, we hope, more tests in the future will build Canberra's growing reputation as a host city for significant national and international sporting events and add to Canberra's major events calendar.

For Canberra cricket fans this will allow the pinnacle of test cricket in Canberra for the first time. For aspiring young cricketers it will be a great opportunity to get close to the best in world cricket. This historic match will generate extensive national and international media coverage and remind everyone of Canberra's credentials as a leading city for sport, tourism and events.

Importantly, Canberra's successful involvement with elite cricket aligns neatly with

its passionate fan base. This was highlighted during the Women's Ashes T20 matches played at Manuka Oval in November 2017, which attracted the highest attendances for the series. A more recent demonstration was during January's Big Bash League, which saw a crowd of 11,319 on hand for Sydney Thunder versus the Melbourne Renegades.

MR PETTERSSON: What benefits will this event bring for the ACT?

MS BERRY: As I said this match will generate extensive national and international coverage, which can only serve to further enhance Canberra's reputation. It builds on the Chief Minister's success in attracting international flights and record tourism growth by adding to Canberra's major events calendar and the government's major events strategy.

From that perspective, the opportunity for Canberra to host its first-ever test match in February 2019 is a significant development that reinforces Canberra's standing as a world-class events host. Visitors from interstate and overseas will obviously spend on local hospitality, and we expect that they will leave with knowledge of what Canberra offers.

Staging national and international cricket in the ACT delivers economic benefits to the territory through direct employment as well as match-related activity, community development activities and tourism. It also capitalises on the ACT government's investment in Manuka Oval, including the installation of state-of-the-art light towers, additional grandstand seating, the re-laying of playing surfaces and the scheduled media centre upgrade.

MS CHEYNE: Minister, what steps has the ACT government taken to grow Canberra's place as a host of international sporting fixtures?

MS BERRY: I thank Ms Cheyne for the supplementary. International sporting events have proven to be an excellent vehicle for showcasing the best of Canberra. As a host city for both the ICC Cricket World Cup and the AFC Asian Cup football tournament in 2015, we demonstrated Canberra's outstanding credentials as a major events destination.

These successes have shaped the way international sporting bodies see us and paved the way for a host of other opportunities on the international sporting landscape. In 2017 Canberra played host to the Rugby League Anzac Test between Australia and New Zealand, test matches for both Rugby Union and netball, and three Rugby League World Cup matches. Earlier this year Canberra was announced as a host city, and Manuka Oval as a host venue, for the ICC Women's World Twenty20 to be played in Australia in February and March 2020.

The ACT government continues to invest in facilities and participation at all levels of sport, and it is this thriving sports community which underpins the success of elite events. I have no doubt that the February test match will further lock in Canberra's place on the world sporting stage.

Industrial relations—work safety

MR WALL: My question is to the Minister for Regulatory Services. Minister, I refer to your answer to my question yesterday about a meeting that you and Minister Stephen-Smith had with the then secretary of the CFMEU on 22 January this year. You stated in your answer that this was about “WorkSafe practices in the ACT”. Minister, what aspects of WorkSafe practices in the ACT were discussed in this meeting and what was the outcome of the meeting?

MR RAMSAY: I thank Mr Wall for the question. My recollection of the meeting is that it was a relatively broad conversation around improved safety and the ongoing commitment to safety, to better workplaces and better work practices across the ACT, knowing that the government has a very strong commitment to ensuring that everyone who goes to work can go home safely. The outcomes of that meeting were our ongoing dedication to ensuring WorkSafe practices are good for all workers in the ACT.

MR WALL: Minister, is there currently an inquiry, investigation or audit underway into the Work Safety Commissioner, WorkSafe ACT or its powers or functions?

MR RAMSAY: No.

MRS DUNNE: Minister, have you been asked by anyone in the construction industry or elsewhere in the union movement to conduct such an inquiry into the Work Safety Commissioner?

MR RAMSAY: I thank Mrs Dunne for the supplementary question. Yes, a number of conversations have taken place in relation to the nature of WorkSafe in the ACT. Yes, it has been suggested that it could take place.

National Multicultural Festival—service of alcohol

MRS KIKKERT: My question is to the Minister for Multicultural Affairs. Minister, in January you told the ABC that the ban on community organisations selling alcohol at this year’s Multicultural Festival was “in response to feedback from stakeholders, including Policing”. In reality, ACT Policing’s concern was about commercial vendors with no cultural significance selling cheap alcohol, and their specific recommendation for limiting alcohol on the festival’s footprint was to support “alcohol sales that fall within a multicultural context” instead. Minister, were you aware of ACT Policing officials’ advice on this issue when you told the ABC that the ban was in response to their feedback?

MS STEPHEN-SMITH: I was aware that ACT Policing had provided advice—and that has been confirmed through the FOI—that they were concerned about the amount of alcohol that was for sale on the footprint and the level of intoxication on the footprint. I was not aware that ACT Policing had provided specific advice by email in relation to what would be a better way to limit licences. I was, I have to say, extremely disappointed to learn that that specific advice had been provided.

I think it is fair to say that in responding to the Policing and other stakeholder views in relation to the amount of alcohol available on the footprint, that advice was conflated

with CSD's decision on how this would best be undertaken. I did say in January that this was a response to concerns from stakeholders, including ACT Policing, about the amount of alcohol available on the footprint and in relation to responsible service of alcohol. Those things are both confirmed through the FOI and the CPO's recent interview.

I did also say at the time that the approach that had been chosen and that was publicly known since August last year was perhaps not the best approach, and committed to revisiting that decision as part of the festival review. That is exactly what is happening now.

MRS KIKKERT: Minister, why did the ACT government introduce an alcohol policy at this year's festival that directly contradicted the clear recommendations from ACT Policing?

MS STEPHEN-SMITH: I do not know that that is an accurate representation. The Community Services Directorate and office of multicultural affairs introduced a policy to address what they considered to be the primary concern that had been expressed by ACT Policing and other stakeholders, which was the amount of alcohol available, the level of intoxication and the behaviour on the footprint. I would like to highlight that the email feedback from police as released under FOI starts with the sentence that they believe this is a terrific, progressive step for the festival in relation to the issue of restricting the amount of alcohol available on the footprint.

We know from the feedback from this year's festival that the festival's reputation as a family-friendly event increased compared to last year and that more people agreed or strongly agreed that they felt safe at this year's festival. As I said the specific way in which that policy is implemented will be part of the review.

MR PARTON: Minister, will you apologise to Canberra's multicultural community organisations for imposing on them a policy that, if not opposite to what ACT Policing clearly advised, was clearly in conflict with that advice?

MS STEPHEN-SMITH: I thank Mr Parton for his supplementary question. I will continue to engage with the multicultural community, as I do. I explicitly requested also that the Community Services Directorate continue to engage with the multicultural community about all aspects of the festival.

I did understand that what I believed was the steering group for the festival would have been involved in this decision. Again I was disappointed to discover that that was not the case and that the community was not as engaged in making this particular decision as I had believed they would have been. Another thing that we will be looking at in the review is exactly how we manage that consultation in the lead-up to each festival to ensure that we really are reflecting the views of the multicultural community.

I did also say, though, in October to the Community Services Directorate that if we had a lot of feedback on the changes to the participation policy at that time, when stallholder applications closed, it was very transparent—

Mr Parton: A point of order.

MADAM SPEAKER: Mr Parton.

Mr Parton: It is on relevance. The question was: will you apologise to Canberra's multicultural community? That was the question. Will you apologise?

MADAM SPEAKER: In the context of the policy of banning alcohol, I think the minister was going to the principles of the conversation she had. You have 30 seconds to continue.

MS STEPHEN-SMITH: Thank you very much, Madam Speaker. As I was saying, the stallholder application process closed in September and I was perfectly happy to respond to feedback that was received. There was a small amount of feedback received in relation to this policy and we engaged with stakeholders to ensure that they could deliver the best stall that they could in the context of this policy.

Canberra Hospital—adult mental health unit

MRS DUNNE: My question is to the Minister for Mental Health. I refer to the draft accreditation report into the Canberra Hospital, which found that mental health patients were placed at extreme risk due to the failure to carry out robust reviews following four suicides in the mental health ward and one in a general medical ward. It also found that there was no regular review of high risk areas within the Canberra Hospital. Minister, why has the Canberra Hospital placed patients at extreme risk by failing to conduct robust reviews into the suicide of patients at the hospital?

MR RATTENBURY: Yes, this is a very concerning element of the accreditation report, one I was disappointed to read but one that we are taking decisive action to address. Mrs Dunne is right to cite the issues she has cited. In particular, for ACT Health, one of the key concerns raised in the accreditation report is the failure to adequately address ligature points.

I am taking two approaches to that. One is to make sure the work gets done immediately. I think that is the most important thing. We need to make sure that we do that as quickly as possible. There is obviously a degree of physical infrastructure involved, so it will take a little bit of time, but work has already commenced. Significant progress is being made in removing those potential ligature points and putting new infrastructure in place.

The second part of it goes to some of Mrs Dunne's question. She is interested in the blaming part. Clearly, there needs to be some assessment of why this work was not done sooner. I will get to that in good time. But my primary focus at the moment is on addressing the work that needs to be done and ensuring that ACT Health and the ACT hospital gets its accreditation within the 90-day period ahead of the advanced accreditation study in July.

MRS DUNNE: Whilst passing over the snide comments in that, minister, why is there no regular review of high risk areas in the adult mental health unit? Why did it take the accreditation review to point out this failing?

MR RATTENBURY: The accreditation report has recognised that and we are now putting mechanisms in place to ensure that that does not happen again. The government has accepted, and I have accepted, all of the recommendations in the accreditation report. As has been outlined by the minister for health, and in comments I have also made, we now have a clear timetable to deliver on all of those recommendations.

MR WALL: Minister, why is that issues within the adult mental health unit have to exceed crisis point, such as high occupancy rates and staff turnover, before action is actually taken to address them?

MR RATTENBURY: If I go to the premise of Mr Wall's question, it should not take that, and this work should have been done sooner. I am disappointed that it was not, and that is a matter we will reflect on very carefully. But, as I said, my primary focus is on making sure that we get this work done and that we rectify the concerns that have been identified.

What I can say—and I have said this publicly and I will say it again here—is that the adult mental health unit is still the safest place in Canberra for someone to be if they are having a serious mental health crisis. Whilst some physical concerns have been identified, the safety of people and the care of people are not solely determined by the physical environment. Obviously, we have staff there. A range of protocols are in place to ensure the safety of individuals. That goes to things such as regular staff rounds and the frequency of observations made of individuals. Those sorts of things change based on the understanding of risk of an individual.

It is still fair to say this is a very safe environment. But what the report has identified is that further improvements can be made to the physical infrastructure of the facility to improve safety for patients going forward.

Greyhound racing—government policy

MS CHEYNE: My question is to the Minister for Regulatory Services, who has responsibility for gaming and racing. Minister, can you update the Assembly on the status of the ban on greyhound racing?

MR RAMSAY: I thank Ms Cheyne for the question and for her interest in dog welfare. As of 30 April, it is now illegal to race or trial greyhounds in the ACT. The maximum penalty for undertaking these activities is \$15,000, one year of imprisonment, or both. We will be taking a zero tolerance approach to these activities. As we know, they come with a high risk of injury to the dogs involved.

We also know that those who come and race in the ACT do so from jurisdictions where there is a demonstrated record of animal welfare breaches, such as doping and live bating. We will not allow a sport to continue here which rewards such behaviours.

The changes also make it illegal to bet on a greyhound race held in the ACT, with those arranging or receiving proceeds from the gambling, and those owning the place

it is conducted, being subjected to maximum penalties of \$15,000 or a year in jail. The maximum penalty for participation in illegal gambling on greyhound racing is \$7½ thousand.

We have been clear about why the ban has been introduced. The New South Wales greyhound industry has demonstrated systemic failures in its animal welfare. The ACT cannot allow a sport to continue where people who repeatedly breach animal welfare laws are allowed to cross the border and race here in the ACT.

MS CHEYNE: Minister, how will the greyhound racing ban improve animal welfare in the ACT?

MR RAMSAY: I thank Ms Cheyne for the supplementary question. While we have banned the racing and the trialling of greyhounds in the ACT, it will still remain lawful to breed, train and own them in the territory. We have done this because, while we cannot control who comes here to race, we can regulate what happens to the dogs that are in Canberra.

More regular racing registration renewals, new licensing requirements on owners, trainers and breeders and a mandatory code of practice for people who have day-to-day control of greyhounds registered for racing are now in place to improve our oversight of the welfare of greyhounds here in the ACT.

The new legal framework for monitoring is designed to give us a better line of sight on the entire lifetime of greyhounds here in the ACT. The hardworking staff at Access Canberra and domestic animal services will be working closely together to monitor the ban and other associated changes to ensure that the welfare of animals is upheld here in the territory.

MR STEEL: Minister, can you please update the Assembly on where people affected by the greyhound racing ban can seek support?

MR RAMSAY: I thank Mr Steel for his question. The government has established the greyhound industry transition task force. The task force has engaged Woden Community Service, which has strong experience in providing support to a diverse variety of members of the public. The government strongly encourages anyone affected by the end of greyhound racing in the ACT to contact either the transition task force or Woden Community Service to access the support.

Free counselling is also available to anyone who is impacted by the end of greyhound racing in the ACT whether or not they are pursuing a transition support package. This can be accessed by contacting Woden Community Service, who have been engaged to provide dedicated support, case management, information and counselling services for those affected by greyhound industry transition and those wishing to consider support package options.

While some industry lobbyists have publicly stated that they do not intend to engage with the transition process, the government strongly encourages individual members of the industry to consider their own futures and engage with the task force while the opportunity is still available.

Planning—land use

MR PARTON: My question is to the Minister for Housing and Suburban Development. Minister, what is your policy in regard to selling land parcels that are currently zoned urban open space under the PRZ1 code?

MS BERRY: If Mr Parton is referring to a particular parcel of land that he has a concern about, perhaps he could let me know and I can get some advice for him on that. With regard to whether the government has a policy around purchase of land that he has referred to, I will take the question on notice and provide some more detail for the Assembly.

MR PARTON: Minister, what urban open spaces generally are you planning, intending or considering for sale or for rezoning?

MR GENTLEMAN: Madam Speaker, it is probably appropriate that I respond to that question. I can say that there are indications for land sales on our four-year indicative land release program but not in the urban open spaces, that I am aware of.

MR COE: My supplementary question is to either minister. Will you guarantee there will be no decrease in urban open space in Canberra, as has been Labor Party policy in the past, in keeping with the character of Canberra? In particular, does the government have any plans in Belconnen to develop on PRZ1 or PRZ2 land?

MR GENTLEMAN: I thank Mr Coe for the supplementary question. We do have a policy of ensuring that we have as much urban open space for recreation and amenity as we possibly can. Particularly in discussions with the minister's statement of planning intent workshops a couple of years ago, whilst the Canberra community said to us that they would like to see denser living, and less spread of the city's borders, they do want urban open space alongside those revitalised areas in the city, to ensure they have amenity and places to recreate. We have taken that on board, and that is part of our policy.

Education—gifted and talented students

MISS C BURCH: My question is to the Minister for Education and Early Childhood Development. Minister, in answer to question on notice 1273 on the number of ACT government schools offering gifted and talented classes and the number of students in those classes, you replied that the ACT Education Directorate does not collect such information. You were also not able to advise how many students are enrolled in those classes or whether the numbers had changed over the past four years. Minister, why do you and your directorate not know this information?

MS BERRY: Because we trust that schools, school principals and schoolteachers will be able to provide appropriate programs for all students, including students that are gifted.

MISS C BURCH: Minister, if basic information on gifted and talented classes is not available, how do you and your directorate provide or plan for appropriate resources

to meet the needs of schools in delivering these classes?

MS BERRY: Because the ACT government has respect for and values the work of school principals and schoolteachers within our school communities. They will make arrangements for education programs that suit the needs of every child, no matter what their background, how they learn or the circumstances in which they come to our schools.

MS LAWDER: Minister, do you support ACT government schools offering gifted and talented classes?

MS BERRY: ACT government schools meet the needs of all children, including students that are gifted or talented.

Waste—strategy

MR STEEL: My question is to the Minister for Transport and City Services. Can the minister update the Assembly on the ACT government's waste feasibility study?

MS FITZHARRIS: I thank Mr Steel very much for this question. I was very pleased yesterday to release the findings of the *Waste feasibility study—a roadmap to improved resource recovery* for consultation with the community and stakeholders. The study was established to identify pathways to achieve the territory's waste management goals, which are outlined in the ACT waste management strategy 2011-25.

This includes a target of 90 per cent of waste being diverted from landfill by 2025, when the resource recovery rate has plateaued at around 70 per cent for the last decade. The government recognised the need for a “step change” to achieve this target and committed \$2.8 million over two years in the 2015-16 budget.

With the study now complete, the government has received its final recommendations at a time when public interest in waste management has never been higher, with television programs like the ABC's *War on Waste* prompting a necessary and very interesting debate on waste management issues.

The recent changes to conditions surrounding the importation of recyclable products to China have also highlighted the need to encourage more local value adding of waste. The waste feasibility study has given the ACT government a better understanding of local and national waste management systems, their sensitivities and areas for improvement and opportunity. The study's road map and recommendations are designed to provide a framework to drive change in the ACT community, businesses and the waste industry over the next five years.

MR STEEL: Minister, what did the waste feasibility study deliver, and what are its key recommendations?

MS FITZHARRIS: I thank Mr Steel for the supplementary. The study's road map and recommendations are designed to provide a comprehensive framework to drive change in the ACT community, businesses and waste industry over the next five years.

The road map follows a materials recovery pathway and is consistent with the waste hierarchy principles of reduce, reuse and recycle before energy generation or landfilling.

Many of the recommended steps have already commenced. The Waste Management and Resource Recovery Act 2016 is now being implemented by Transport Canberra and City Services, and the green bins scheme is up and running and is hugely popular. A new recommendation for a food organics and garden organic service, called FOGO, is a key focus of the study and would be a large undertaking, with the experiences of other jurisdictions indicating that a lead time of around five years is required to identify and set up an appropriate processing location. Another recommendation and initiative, one sadly opposed by those opposite, is a container deposit scheme, which will reduce litter and increase recycling. It is set to start in the ACT on 30 June.

The road map also includes recommendations on waste to energy, which is low down the waste hierarchy. I acknowledge that incineration of waste is a contentious issue in the community, and any utilisation of processed engineered fuel, or PEF, would be as a last step on the road map for residual waste. The study has recommended the ACT develop a clear policy on waste to energy that seeks to address community concerns, provides certainty to industry, and establishes a framework for assessing any future proposals. The government looks forward to consulting further on this issue.

MS CODY: Minister, how will community and industry stakeholders be able to have their say on the road map and its recommendations?

MS FITZHARRIS: I thank Ms Cody for the supplementary question. The recommendations in the road map to improved resource recovery require community support and participation to succeed. I encourage the community to visit the your say website to review the road map, make a submission or attend an information session to ask questions. The discussion paper will be on the your say website for a six-week period and ACT NOWaste will host information sessions for community and industry groups.

It is important to note that the study itself was significantly informed by two consultative groups, a community consultative group and an industry consultative group, over the last two years. The opportunity for the community more broadly to contribute will take place over the coming six weeks. A community information session will be held on Wednesday, 30 May at 5.30, and the industry information session will be held on Thursday, 31 May at 8 am. Both will be held at the Griffin Centre in Genge Street, Civic.

This is a very exciting time for our waste industry here in the ACT. It is clear we are leading the way when it comes to addressing the challenges facing the waste sector. We are also very blessed to have a very active recycling community here in Canberra who are keen to do what they can and are very aware of the need to reduce, reuse and recycle to limit our impact on the environment. I am sure Canberrans will have ideas about how we can best implement the recommendations from the waste feasibility study.

I invite the community and industry to explore the report recommendations and have

their say on how we can better use resources and be less reliant on landfill.

Aboriginals and Torres Strait Islanders—health services

MR MILLIGAN: My question is to the Minister for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Affairs. Minister, the Winnunga Nimmityjah Aboriginal Health Service was promised \$12 million for a new health and community services facility in 2016. Now, almost two years on from that announcement, what is the status of this project?

MS FITZHARRIS: Madam Speaker, I will take that question. I note that Minister Stephen-Smith and I have been working at length with Winnunga Nimmityjah over the past year, since the funding of this important initiative in last year's budget. I am pleased to say that we are very close to making a further announcement with Winnunga Nimmityjah on the exciting progress of the government's \$12 million investment in Aboriginal health services in the ACT.

MR MILLIGAN: Minister, can you clarify for the Indigenous community who will own and operate the facility after the building has been completed?

MS FITZHARRIS: As I indicated to Mr Milligan, that is an announcement that the government is set to make very shortly.

MR COE: Minister, how much of the \$1 million in capital allocated in the 2017-18 budget has been expended, and on what?

MS FITZHARRIS: At this point I do not have that precise figure, but I look forward very much to making further announcements about this very important and exciting project very shortly.

Rural fire services—Molonglo

MR HANSON: My question is to the Minister for Police and Emergency Services. Minister, on 1 August 2017, ACT fire brigade staff were advised that renovations of the Molonglo brigade's RFS shed would commence on 10 August and conclude on 1 October 2017. Staff were told that during this three-week period RFS tankers would need to be housed at the west Belconnen fire station. Minister, is it the case that seven months later these RFS tankers are still being housed at the west Belconnen fire station? If so, why?

MR GENTLEMAN: I welcome Mr Hanson back to the police and emergency services portfolio from his respite in the health area. Unfortunately, I do not have any update for Mr Hanson on those matters at the moment. I am happy to take the question on notice and come back to him.

MR HANSON: Nothing has changed. Minister, do the renovations to the Molonglo brigade's RFS station comply with the fire safety requirements of the Building Code of Australia, and if not, why not?

MR GENTLEMAN: All construction in the ACT should comply with the fire regulations of Australia. I will ensure that that occurs.

MR COE: Minister, how much money has the government spent on renovations of the Molonglo RFS station?

MR GENTLEMAN: Quite a lot but I do not have the detail in front of me. I will come back to the chamber with the actual record.

Work safety—young workers

MADAM SPEAKER: Ms Cody, a question without notice.

Opposition members interjecting—

MADAM SPEAKER: Members! Ms Cody has the call for a question without notice.

Mr Wall interjecting—

MADAM SPEAKER: Mr Wall!

MS CODY: It is difficult; I could not hear myself think, let alone ask my question.

Opposition members interjecting—

MADAM SPEAKER: Members! On the next outburst that person will be warned.

MS CODY: My question is to the Minister for Workplace Safety and Industrial Relations. Minister, what is the ACT government currently doing to improve safety for young workers in the ACT?

MS STEPHEN-SMITH: I thank Ms Cody for her question and for her deep and abiding interest in workers' safety. The safety of our young and most inexperienced workers is, of course, a high priority for the ACT government, as it should be for all employers also. We know young workers are at risk for a range of reasons: they may not fully understand their health and safety rights and responsibilities or where to go if they have questions or concerns; they may be worried they will look silly if they ask questions or question why something is done in a particular way if they believe it is not safe; or they may simply believe they are invincible, as young people tend to do, highlighting the need for proper supervision of young workers.

Young workers were the focus of this year's World Day for Safety and Health at Work, which was themed "Generation Safe and Healthy". I was honoured to represent the government at a moving ceremony held at the National Workers Memorial in Commonwealth Park on Saturday, 28 April, which is both World Day for Safety and Health at Work and also International Workers Memorial Day. The event was not only an opportunity to honour those who have died or been seriously injured at work and to pay respect to them, their families and friends and co-workers, but also to focus on workplace health and safety for young workers and future generations.

This focus of ensuring the health and safety of young workers is, as I have said, shared by the ACT government. WorkSafe ACT is currently undertaking a proactive

audit across a range of high risk industries for apprentices, looking at issues such as supervision and safety to improve safety outcomes and understanding. I understand that approximately 40 workplaces have been visited so far, with the audit to continue well into this year. In addition WorkSafe is also working closely with SafeWork NSW to improve compliance and strengthen the safety culture throughout the construction industry in Canberra.

MADAM SPEAKER: Before I call the supplementary, members on my left, it is permissible to have quiet conversations, but you may need to be aware of what is going on around you. As you were chatting and laughing, the question asked was about workplace deaths. I do not think it is appropriate for some conversations to occur given the content of some of the answers. A supplementary, Ms Cody.

MS CODY: Minister, what work is being undertaken to inform the next steps in relation to improving the safety of young workers and ensuring their workplace rights are upheld?

MS STEPHEN-SMITH: Thank you, Madam Speaker; and thank you also for your comments. I thank Ms Cody for her supplementary question. In August 2017, following a number of concerning workplace incidents involving young workers, I requested that the Work Safety Council establish an apprentice and young workers safety advisory committee to consider the next steps to ensure that apprentices and young people are working in safe environments and are aware of their workplace safety rights and obligations.

Since its establishment the committee, which is a tripartite body, has extensively engaged with stakeholders from employer and employee groups, training organisations, the community sector and government. Meetings have been dedicated to issues impacting young workers in hospitality, construction and plumbing, business services, community services, electrical and retail industries. I am expecting the committee's report early in the second half of the year. I look forward to it providing me with recommendations for action to improve young worker health and safety.

While government can set the frameworks to support safety in workplaces and on worksites, we need industry, regulators, industry groups, employers, unions and workers to work together to lift safety across all industries and ensure worker safety is a primary consideration for employers and employees alike.

No young person should feel that their job is a place where their safety, their health or indeed their mental health is at risk. No parent should worry that they might one day receive a call that their child has been seriously injured at work. It is imperative that we keep strengthening our safety practices, especially as the next generation of Canberrans gets their start in the workforce.

MS ORR: Minister, what else is impacting on the workplace rights and safety of young workers in the ACT?

MS STEPHEN-SMITH: I thank Ms Orr for her supplementary question. Safety and security issues concerning the wider workforce are magnified for many young workers who are starting their careers and trying to get ahead. The rise of insecure

work, including the casualisation of the workforce and the emergence of the gig economy, are particularly pertinent issues for young workers.

The ACT government is committed to doing what it can to ensure that young workers are safe in their place of employment and are treated fairly, paid well and have their rights at work upheld.

The government's secure local jobs package will deliver better, more secure jobs for Canberrans by establishing clear principles to ensure worker safety, fair pay and conditions on public projects and contracts.

Fundamental to this commitment is a recognition that the ACT government can play an important role in delivering better outcomes for young workers, as for all workers, by using its purchasing power to set high standards for workplace safety and workers' rights alongside the delivery of quality goods and services to the people of the ACT.

It is unfortunate that our efforts to protect young workers in the ACT are often undermined by the increasing insecurity of work. While we endeavour to protect the rights of young workers in the ACT, I cannot account for those rights being rewritten by a federal government determined to sell our young workers out. When we have a federal government that is intent on cutting penalty rates, intent on driving the casualisation of the industries that young people work in and intent on cutting the supports for those young people who find themselves out of work, some young workers in the ACT will continue to struggle and to suffer unnecessarily. The ACT government will do what it can to support the safety and health of those young workers.

Energy—policy

MS ORR: My question is to the Minister for Climate Change and Sustainability. Minister, can you update the Assembly on how the national energy guarantee is developing following the COAG Energy Council meeting on Friday, 20 April?

MR RATTENBURY: I thank Ms Orr for the question. The national energy guarantee is progressing. The ministers agreed at that meeting on 20 April for work to continue ahead of the next COAG Energy Council, which will be held in Sydney in August. It would be fair to say that there are some quite mixed views on the progress of this work. We are seeing two very distinct streams of work developing here.

There is the piece led by the Energy Security Board, which is very focused on the technical details of reforming the national energy market. I think that is progressing reasonably well. On the other side we have now seen a commonwealth paper, which is the policy work that goes alongside that. What we are seeing is significant and ongoing intransigence on the part of the commonwealth and a lack of clarity of what their position is. Certainly, from the federal minister, Josh Frydenberg, there is a clear reluctance or lack of willingness to engage in any kind of detailed discussions about what the commonwealth position will be. I think this is problematic. This means there is not a lot of latitude as we go forward.

Certainly, the commonwealth position continues to be highly problematic in terms of

the approach they have taken on things like the greenhouse gas reduction targets built into this system, the approach to offsets, and the very significant concerns from the renewable energy industry that the national energy guarantee, as it is currently formed, will stymie the growth of the renewable energy sector over the next decade.

MS ORR: Minister, can you detail why the ACT took the position it did on the national energy guarantee at the COAG Energy Council meeting?

MR RATTENBURY: Certainly, the ACT went to the meeting committed to being at the table because we know that we need to make progress on the national energy system. We need a system that is reliable, provides affordable energy and meets future needs of the grid in Australia whilst reducing our greenhouse gas emissions.

It would be fair to say that we do remain deeply concerned, as I touched on in my earlier answer.

Opposition members interjecting—

MADAM SPEAKER: Some silence for Mr Rattenbury to answer the question, thank you.

Mr Coe interjecting—

MADAM SPEAKER: Mr Coe, I did say that you were going to be warned.

Mr Hanson interjecting—

MADAM SPEAKER: Both Mr Hanson and Mr Coe are warned.

MR RATTENBURY: One of the biggest concerns we have is the impact the national energy guarantee will have on the future of the renewable energy industry in Australia. What we have seen already is a freeze on investment in Australia. I have been meeting recently with key players in the renewable energy sector who have outlined to me the fact that there are already signs of an investment freeze.

We have just seen, courtesy of the analysis by Mark Butler, the federal shadow minister for climate change and energy, out of this week's budget, the fact that the federal government is already investing less money in the renewable energy sector through the Clean Energy Finance Corporation, as he has identified. After drawing nearly \$2 billion of investment in 2017-18, they will only be drawing \$530 million in 2018-19.

We are already seeing the impact, the chilling effect, that the national energy guarantee is having on the future of the renewables industry here in Australia coming from both the federal budget and from experts in the industry telling us this.

MR PETTERSSON: Minister, can you provide details on how the ACT is moving ahead with its renewable electricity targets in light of how the national energy guarantee is progressing?

MR RATTENBURY: I am certainly happy to answer that for Mr Pettersson. The ACT is proceeding with our 100 per cent renewable energy target. We are well on track. We recently saw the wind farm in the northern tablelands, Sapphire Wind Farm, come on stream and start providing energy equivalent to around 35,000 to 40,000 households for the ACT. This is a very significant step forward in our renewable energy purchases. A number of other wind farms will come on stream over the next 18 months that will push the ACT to that 100 per cent target.

We are also happy, through the national energy guarantee negotiations, to make sure that the rules do not inadvertently counteract the work that the ACT has already done, so that ACT consumers are not punished as a result of the work and the investment that the ACT has already made. I have had undertakings from both the federal minister and from the head of the Energy Security Board that they believe those matters can be addressed. I am grateful to them for those undertakings and confident that, through the negotiations over the coming months, we can ensure that the ACT's 100 per cent renewable energy target is protected in the final model, if one can be agreed.

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