



QUESTION TIME
OF THE
LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY
FOR THE
AUSTRALIAN CAPITAL TERRITORY

HANSARD

Edited proof transcript

Tuesday, 5 June 2018

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Questions without notice

ACT Health—Proposed organisational changes

MR COE: I have a question for the Chief Minister. I refer to the government's decision on 15 March to restructure the Health Directorate by splitting it in two. This decision was based on a brief by the Head of Service which shows there was no internal or cross-directorate consultation. No documents have been provided under FOI requests to show that either the minister for health or the Minister for Mental Health were consulted before this decision was taken. Chief Minister, why didn't the proposal to drastically restructure the Health Directorate go to cabinet?

MR BARR: Of course, the administrative arrangements are a matter for the Chief Minister to determine, but to put this conspiracy theory to bed, let me be clear that the minister for health and the Minister for Mental Health discussed, over many, many months, this particular issue and consulted with me on numerous occasions. The Head of Service and those associated with the delivery of administrative changes were involved in a discussion over a period of time. But it of course remains the prerogative of the executive government to at any time announce changes to the administrative structure of government. I sign an instrument that outlines such changes on a regular basis. This particular decision involved, as I say, many months of discussion and consideration, and is being developed over a period of some months still to come.

MR COE: Chief Minister, are there any documents or anything that suggests any rigour was undertaken or was all of this simply done at water-cooler conversations?

MR BARR: The government has undertaken an extensive process of assessment in relation to these matters. We have considered and discussed these matters at some length and reached a decision, which we have taken and announced.

MRS DUNNE: Chief Minister, are there any documents to substantiate your claims that this was considered over a lengthy period of time, and that you consulted the Minister for Health and Wellbeing and the Minister for Mental Health?

MR BARR: There certainly are diary meetings and, indeed, the discussions that have been publicly aired by the Minister for Mental Health. The government, as I say, can make administrative changes at any point. I repeat: the government can make administrative changes at any point. I do so regularly, and I will do so in the future.

Planning—Territory Plan

MS LE COUTEUR: My question is to the Minister for Planning and Land Management. It relates to development proposals that threaten our important public spaces with overshadowing. Minister, we have had a rash of these proposals recently: Curtin, Woden town centre and Garema Place in the city. What are you doing to strengthen the Territory Plan so that these types of proposals are rejected?

MR GENTLEMAN: I thank Ms Le Couteur for her question and her interest in planning. There is the opportunity to provide the best urban open space as we move forward in renewing the city and ensuring that we have enough opportunity for people

to live in the city itself as well. We have, of course, strategic codes underneath the Territory Plan and its coding to ensure that we do not overshadow public areas.

As we move forward with any changes to planning in the future, we look at overshadowing, particularly with development applications that are of some height, to ensure that those urban open spaces are not overshadowed in the winter solstice.

MS LE COUTEUR: Minister, I think you are basically saying that the rules are currently strong enough.

MADAM SPEAKER: Ms Le Couteur, go straight to your question.

MS LE COUTEUR: If so, why did the multistorey car park on the western side of Woden town square get approved when it will significantly overshadow the Woden town square?

MR GENTLEMAN: I will have to take the details of that question on notice.

MR PARTON: Minister, are you considering any changes to the Territory Plan, or is the directorate considering changes to the Territory Plan, to protect what Ms Le Couteur is speaking of in terms of overshadowing? Is there anything that is being considered at the moment?

MR GENTLEMAN: As I said earlier, we are always looking at future changes to the Territory Plan. It is of interest, where the community perceives overshadowing, that in most of these development applications we provide detailed briefs to the community on development applications, and 3D modelling on overshadowing as well. I am confident that the codes in the Territory Plan at the moment stand up to the need for providing the best urban open space for Canberra as we renew the Canberra city central area and some of the other areas as well. But, of course, there is always opportunity to change the Territory Plan should the community want it.

Visitors

MADAM SPEAKER: Members, I bring to your attention that in the gallery we have members of the Canberra Quakers club. Welcome to your Assembly and question time.

Questions without notice Education—skills development

MR STEEL: My question is to the Minister for Education and Early Childhood Development. Minister, how is the government ensuring that ACT students are equipped with the skills they need for the future?

MS BERRY: I thank Mr Steel for his question. The ACT government is funding a skills academy, which has been announced as part of this budget. It is a resource for local public schools to deepen education in science, technology, engineering and maths disciplines. With a commitment of \$5.76 million, this initiative will complete and build on ACT Labor's election commitment to establish a coding and cyberskills academy.

Madam Speaker, I know this is something that is dear to your heart, having turned the sod at the start of the development of the centre for innovation and learning at Caroline Chisholm School, now a very busy centre working on increasing access by young people in the ACT to science, technology, engineering and maths. What has been great about it is making sure that we look at how we introduce STEM to young people in a way that makes it inclusive; in a way that will encourage young people to engage in those sorts of learning experiences, and not discourage them.

Particularly for young women, those kinds of skill areas are not always seen to be an exciting pathway. Through the future skills academy and the learning I have seen in Caroline Chisholm School, we will make sure that STEM is as inclusive as possible.

It has been great to have the Chief Scientist, Dr Finkel, encouraging and applauding us for the work we are doing in the ACT on these two academies: the future skills academy and the Caroline Chisholm School. I also give a shout-out to Paula and her pink lab coat at the Caroline Chisholm School for being such a great host and always looking for interesting and fun ways to introduce young people to STEM.

MR STEEL: Minister, how will the future skills academy support teachers across all schools?

MS BERRY: To make sure that the academy benefits as many people as possible, these hubs will be available for teachers to learn through as well. Teachers will be able to access professional learning and accredited training in STEM, which will strengthen the delivery of the Australian curriculum. The hubs will feature 3D printers, augmented reality equipment and robotics kits. It was a great pleasure to hear from a student who had developed a 3D artificial foot for his duck using one of the 3D printers. I hope that it was put to good use and that that duck now has two feet and not just one.

It is because of the hub's expert teachers and staff that they are able to support all of their colleagues across the ACT school system as well as facilitate strong industry, government and tertiary sector partnerships that individual schools would otherwise not be able to universally and equitably access.

Teachers will be able to take these skills to their classrooms, supported by the Chromebooks that all high school students were delivered by last year's budget and the excellent facilities that are provided in our public schools.

MS CODY: Minister, how will the future skills academy support local industry?

MS BERRY: I thank Ms Cody for the supplementary. The academy was developed in consultation with CSIRO, the ANU, the University of Canberra, the CBR Innovation Network and other industry representatives. It will connect schools with local industry for students to work on real-world scenarios.

The ACT economy is growing in sectors like defence, sports science, multimedia and digital arts, fashion and renewable energy—all fields that will increasingly require strong science, technology, engineering and maths skills. By providing real-world situations for students to work on, we can show them how valuable their education is, what they are capable of, and get them passionate about the classroom of their future.

The academy will also aim to increase the workforce representation of students from low SES backgrounds, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students, as well as students for whom English is an additional or second language.

Engineering Australia reports that fewer than six per cent of girls across Australia studied physics in year 12 and over five per cent more boys studied advanced math than girls. Connecting students with local industry and problem solving scenarios engages students to keep them keen to learn STEM and on track to continue this work in the local industry after they finish school.

ACT Health—governance

MRS DUNNE: My question is to the Minister for Health and Wellbeing. Minister, in your ministerial statement this morning about the accreditation process at the Canberra Hospital, you stated, “The directorate’s governance framework, clinical governance framework and corporate plan play an important role in guiding and demonstrating how the organisation goes about achieving its vision.” But you then went on to acknowledge that these documents were out of date at the time of the accreditation process. Minister, why were these important standards out of date at the time of the Canberra Hospital accreditation process?

MS FITZHARRIS: I thank Mrs Dunne for the question. They should not have been. They have since been reviewed, as I acknowledged in my statement this morning.

Mrs Dunne: Did you get an explanation?

Mr Wall: You are responsible.

MS FITZHARRIS: The directorate is responsible for the production and the update of business plans and corporate plans within the directorate. They were clearly not up to date and every effort is being made, as I outlined extensively this morning, to make sure that they are for re-accreditation of the hospital.

MRS DUNNE: Minister, did you seek an explanation as to why these documents were late, and what responsibility did you as the minister for health take for not updating these important documents?

MS FITZHARRIS: Again I refer to my statement this morning and also inform the Assembly that everything is being done for ACT Health to achieve re-accreditation next month. It is certainly the case that there has been significant work underway within ACT Health for what are very clearly directorate-level responsibilities to undertake clear corporate and clinical governance.

Mrs Dunne: And you take no responsibility? You were responsible.

MS FITZHARRIS: Madam Speaker, I am taking responsibility for making sure that ACT Health does everything it can to achieve re-accreditation next month.

MR WALL: Minister, how will two agencies keep key documents up to date with

regular reviews when you have failed to manage one directorate properly? Do you ultimately take supreme responsibility for those shortcomings?

MS FITZHARRIS: I am sorry; I did not get the back end of that question.

MR WALL: How will two agencies keep key documents up to date with regular reviews when you have failed to manage one directorate properly? And: do you ultimately take responsibility for the shortcomings of the current directorate?

MS FITZHARRIS: In terms of the two organisations, absolutely. The leaders of those two organisations will ensure that governance is properly and effectively managed within the organisation. That is very clearly the responsibility of officials within directorates. Certainly, I am taking very clear responsibility for making sure that ACT Health achieves re-accreditation, and for making significant governance and structural changes within ACT Health to remedy the situation.

Hospitals—emergency departments

MS CODY: My question is to the Minister for Health and Wellbeing. Minister, can you please outline how the government's significant emergency department investment at both Calvary and Canberra Hospital will support the wellbeing of Canberrans when they access emergency care?

MS FITZHARRIS: I thank Ms Cody very much for her question and note her ongoing interest in health care in the ACT.

Of course, the health and wellbeing of our community is the government's clear priority. That is why we are investing even more in our emergency departments and emergency surgery to help people when they need it most. Recently the demand for emergency procedures has grown at six per cent each year, and presentations to Canberra Hospital's ED are increasing.

Through this budget, the ACT government is making a sustainable investment in core public hospital services, such as emergency services, by expanding the capacity of our emergency departments to respond to this growth on an ongoing basis. We will invest \$47.2 million in acute care to support the emergency department, intensive care and additional inpatient beds. This will mean more acute care beds for admission and will help bring down emergency department wait times. We are also investing \$10.9 million in Calvary Public Hospital to undertake significant upgrades in their emergency department on Canberra's growing north side.

By taking a territory-wide approach to health services, we are making sure our community have better access to emergency care when they need it. By expanding health care right across the territory, ensuring a sustainable funding base for essential hospital services and building new facilities, we are making sure that Canberra's public hospitals can continue to deliver high quality services to Canberrans, reduce wait times and keep our growing community healthy.

MS CODY: Minister, what will the emergency department expansion and upgrades consist of?

MS FITZHARRIS: The government will be working closely with Calvary Public Hospital in Bruce to deliver this funding for Calvary, to deliver a vital upgrade and expansion of its emergency department and also to purchase the necessary clinical and diagnostic equipment.

With Calvary being an important hospital for Canberra's fast-growing north side, this upgrade will deliver additional treatment spaces, improved access and triage arrangements, enhanced waiting areas and an expanded short-stay unit, importantly including paediatric short-stay beds within the emergency department.

In particular, the upgrade will deliver eight short-stay unit beds, bringing the total number of these beds at Calvary Public Hospital to 19. The ED upgrades will benefit patients, visitors and staff by making people more comfortable before and during their presentation and treatment.

A reconfigured setting will also facilitate the introduction of new models of care for emergency department presentations. This investment in Calvary will also support upgrades and replacement of essential equipment, including clinical and diagnostic equipment such as patient monitoring equipment and a new CT scanner. People living in Canberra's north especially will see real benefit as a result of these works at Calvary Public Hospital, which will get underway next month.

MR PETTERSSON: Minister, how will this investment improve emergency waiting times and the delivery of emergency health services for Canberrans?

MS FITZHARRIS: Indeed, with a growing population, the Canberra Hospital emergency department anticipates close to 90,000 presentations this year, with further growth expected next year. Presentations at Calvary emergency department will reach almost 60,000 this year.

The expansion of Calvary Hospital's emergency department will provide for the improved flow of patients through the ED, which will have a positive effect on emergency department wait times. Importantly, it will build on our investment in other areas of Calvary, including the maternity unit and recently completed upgrade to operating theatres to modernise the hospital and make the patient experience much more comfortable and provide a more modern and contemporary healthcare setting for Calvary staff.

The government's significant commitment of additional funding for emergency services at Canberra Hospital will provide certainty, enabling the hospital to plan for and sustainably respond to demands more efficiently, effectively and in accord with our community's growing needs. It will help improve hospital performance by investing in more acute beds for admission while enabling patients who do not require admission to be treated in a timely manner and, as a result, bring down emergency department wait times.

It is a whole-of-hospital investment. This is all part of the government's commitment to invest more in core health services so that we can provide better and faster access to health care for the Canberra community.

ACT Health—proposed organisational changes

MS LAWDER: My question is to the Minister for Mental Health. Minister, the Chief Minister decided to restructure the Health Directorate on 15 March, the same day on which the Head of Service made a formal recommendation to him to do so. The background supporting that recommendation noted that there was no consultation internally or across directorates. The schedule of documents released under FOI in relation to this matter lists no records of meetings between you, the minister for health or the Chief Minister to discuss a restructure of ACT Health. Yet you claimed in the media on 4 June that you and Ms Fitzharris had been in regular contact for as long as 12 months before this decision was taken. Minister, why are there no records in the schedule of documents of meetings between yourself, Ms Fitzharris and Mr Barr to discuss this restructure?

MR RATTENBURY: As I have been perfectly clear about in my public comments, Minister Fitzharris and I meet quite regularly. There is obviously a significant degree of crossover of the areas that we work on. Whilst we each have our particular areas of responsibility when it comes to the Health Directorate, there are obviously areas that cross over, and, as I said in my public comments, we have over a period of time discussed the best way and the best model for ACT Health to operate under. That is the basis on which I made those public comments.

The framing by the Liberal Party is an interesting one. They are seeking to generate a conspiracy theory where clearly the Chief Minister acted—and has been in discussions with me and Minister Fitzharris—in response to advice that had been provided to him by the ministers who have direct responsibility for this.

I was sitting here reflecting on the line of questioning, and I can imagine a parallel universe where—

Ms Lawder: A point of order, Madam Speaker.

MADAM SPEAKER: Yes, Ms Lawder.

Ms Lawder: The question asked: why are there no records? It is quite a simple question. Why are there no records?

MADAM SPEAKER: Thank you, Ms Lawder.

Opposition members interjecting—

MADAM SPEAKER: Ms Lawder, can you resume your seat. Mr Wall!

MR RATTENBURY: I have nothing further to add, Madam Speaker.

MADAM SPEAKER: You have nothing further to add.

MS LAWDER: Thank you, Madam Speaker. Minister—

Opposition members interjecting—

MADAM SPEAKER: Mr Wall! Mr Hanson can be quiet. Indeed the benches on my left can be quiet. Ms Lawder, you have the floor.

MS LAWDER: Minister, will you table any documents relating to the meetings between Ms Fitzharris and yourself to discuss the restructure by the close of this sitting period?

MR RATTENBURY: The Liberal Party have conducted a freedom of information application under our new and improved freedom of information laws. They have received all the documents that are available to them.

MRS DUNNE: Minister, why is it that no staff in mental health were consulted before the decision to restructure the directorate was made?

MR RATTENBURY: This is exactly the point I was about to go to when Ms Lawder came in. There are two possible ways to go about this. The minister and I discussed this and we have taken—

Opposition members interjecting—

MADAM SPEAKER: You asked a question of the minister. He is providing an answer. Have regard and respect, and just listen.

Mrs Dunne: I'm waiting to see whether it's relevant yet.

MADAM SPEAKER: Mrs Dunne!

MR RATTENBURY: The approach that has been taken here is that the broad decision has been taken, and now there is a significant period of time for discussion to go on with staff to plan the specific details relevant to ACT Health. The minister and I, with the Chief Minister's endorsement, have taken a decision to make this the future direction for the structure of ACT Health, and now the staff will be involved in extensive discussions.

We could have taken another approach where we did all of this work in the background, and the Liberal Party would have been in here outraged, confecting their outrage, about the fact that we have not made a public announcement about it. They would have said, 'You're doing this in secret. You're not telling anybody. What are you actually doing here?'

We have been very up-front from the get-go about the direction we are going in, and there is now an extensive process, working with staff, to ensure that the details are sorted through.

Emergency services—government support

MR PETTERSSON: My question is to the Minister for Police and Emergency Services. Minister, how is the ACT government helping to keep our growing

community safe by supporting our police and emergency services personnel?

MR GENTLEMAN: I thank Mr Pettersson for his interest in community safety. Last week I was pleased to announce that the 2018-19 budget will be investing in various measures aimed at ensuring that our police and emergency services personnel receive the support they require. This will ensure that Canberrans can continue to enjoy a safe community.

In order to do this, ACT Policing will be recruiting for six more specialist positions, and Fire & Rescue will recruit 18 new firefighters to keep our growing city safe. The recruitment of these 18 new firefighters delivers on the government's commitment to ACT Fire & Rescue to replace retiring firefighters.

Canberra's firefighters do not just help out in putting out fires. They also respond to a range of other emergencies, from car accidents to power outages. This is in addition to the police officers previously funded in the 2016-17 ACT budget and the December 2017 announcement to deliver 23 more paramedics to the ACT Ambulance Service.

Another way that we will be supporting our police and emergency services is by providing equipment and technology that helps these personnel to better serve their community in new and innovative ways. I congratulate the work that our emergency services front-line personnel do in the ACT.

MR PETTERSSON: Minister, how is the ACT government supporting emergency services personnel to do their job safely and effectively?

MR GENTLEMAN: As mentioned earlier, through the 2018-19 budget the ACT government will be investing further in our police by providing six new specialist positions to provide support and to effectively prevent and fight crime. Four of these new specialist positions will be dedicated to expanding ACT Policing's strategic analysis capability and to helping to identify and target crime hot spots and emerging risks.

Another two specialist officers will be recruited to combat organised crime, strip criminal wealth and deliver an improved surveillance capability to monitor the activities of criminal gangs. The 2018-19 ACT budget will also aim to use our resources effectively and invest in new smartphone equipment for all officers to improve operations.

This will allow police officers to do more of their work while mobile and spend more time in the community. Having a greater police presence within our community allows officers to better keep Canberra safe. We are delighted that we are able to use technology to achieve this. These strategic investments in upgraded technology and intelligence-led policing will help ensure that even as our city grows it will remain the safest city in Australia.

MS ORR: How is the ACT government supporting our police to prevent and fight crime?

MR GENTLEMAN: There are many ways that the government will be supporting

emergency services personnel effectively. I have talked about the work that we are investing in in ACT Policing that goes also to our work that we funded last year in looking at the police futures model. This will mean that we will be able to look at the work that is needed for ACT Policing across the territory in both a resource sense and an infrastructure sense. The CPO will be finalising that model in the not-too-distant future and will report back to me on the future needs for ACT Policing in the territory.

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

Appropriation Bill 2018-2019

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

Budget papers in accordance with section 10 of the Financial Management Act 1996

Statements of intent for territory authorities, pursuant to 62(1).

Title read by Clerk.

MR BARR (Kurrajong—Chief Minister, Treasurer, Minister for Economic Development and Minister for Tourism and Major Events) (3:00): I move:

That this bill be agreed to in principle.

Growing services for our growing city

The 2018-19 Territory Budget invests in the core public services Canberrans need.

At the same time as we deliver on our commitment to return the budget to balance, we are growing services and infrastructure to make sure this city keeps getting better for everyone who lives here.

We are delivering new local schools and more places for kids at our existing ones. We are strengthening front-line care in our hospitals and making commuting quicker with better transport infrastructure. We are boosting our investment in services for our city and suburbs, and keeping Canberrans safe by recruiting more first responders for our police and emergency services.

Madam Speaker, Canberra is growing.

People from across Australia and around the world are moving to Canberra because we are a city of brilliant possibilities. A place full of good jobs that make a difference. A hub for world leading study and research institutes. A community that embraces creativity and champions new businesses.

Our city's growth is an opportunity. Canberra is more diverse and dynamic today because more people from many different places call it home. But we understand that it also brings some challenges. Services and infrastructure have to step up alongside our community to make sure Canberra keeps getting better as we grow.

No other government in Australia delivers as many services as we do. We take seriously our task to keep Canberra livable with great schools and health care, efficient public transport and local government services, more housing options, a clean environment and exciting events for people to enjoy.

That's why the ACT Government is growing services for our growing city through the 2018-19 Budget.

Strong and sustained growth, delivering a balanced budget

Four years ago our Government made an important decision.

We chose to prioritise protecting local jobs and services by using the ACT's budget to keep our economy growing and ensure the Commonwealth's cuts and the Mr Fluffy crisis did not mean cuts to the local services Canberra families rely on.

That decision came with a plan to return the budget to balance over time. Today, we have achieved that goal.

The 2018-19 Budget confirms a balanced fiscal position in the current fiscal year and in every year across the forward estimates. This means we are fully covering the cost of delivering services for Canberrans while building in a responsible buffer against future risks or shocks.

Madam Speaker, our work to support the Territory economy through tough times has paid off. Canberra has now seen a sustained period of very strong economic growth over the past few years.

This Budget estimates this year's growth for our economy will be 4½ per cent—the fastest in Australia. This will bring our total economic growth since 2014-15 to a very strong 13.6 per cent.

This rapid economic growth drove the creation of almost 10,000 new jobs in 2017, the great majority of them full-time, secure jobs. There are 2,000 more businesses operating in Canberra today than there were three years ago. And our companies are doing more international business than ever before, with the ACT's services exports rising by 22 per cent since 2015.

Canberra is seeing the benefits of economic growth where it really matters: in the creation of more good jobs and better opportunities for local businesses.

Our tax reform plan is also working to cut costs for homebuyers while providing a fairer and more stable revenue base from which to fund essential services for Canberrans.

We have cut residential duty rates in every budget since 2012, and we will continue to do so every year across the forward estimates. By 2021-22, someone buying a \$500,000 home in Canberra will be paying half the amount of stamp duty they would have been up for when we started this reform—that is a saving of \$10½ thousand.

We are also continuing to reform commercial conveyance duty. I am pleased to advise that from 1 July this year commercial property transactions worth \$1.5 million or less will be abolished. This will mean about 70 per cent of commercial property purchases will no longer involve duty, a significant boost for small businesses and investment.

But we know there is still more we can do.

That is why we are abolishing stamp duty for eligible first homebuyers through this year's Budget.

We understand that buying a home is a challenge for many, particularly young people and those on low incomes. Stamp duty can put another hurdle in front of these Canberrans by adding tens of thousands of dollars to the price of a home.

From 1 July 2019, first homebuyers with a household income below \$160,000 will pay no stamp duty, whether they are buying an established property or a newly built home.

At the same time, we will abolish the payment of First Home Owner Grants. A range of experts and long-run analysis has found the grants have not been effective in helping first homebuyers enter the housing market.

In fact, they can actually make housing less affordable by inflating people's borrowing power and channelling too much demand into one small segment of the market.

Together, these changes will help more Canberrans buy their first home, sooner.

More places at our local schools and faster front-line health care

We know that great local schools and easy to access, high quality health care are two of the things that matter most to Canberrans.

The ACT Government already invests an average of \$10,000 for every Canberra household on delivering health care through our hospitals and local health services. We provide \$7,600 per household to deliver quality local public schools attended by over 46½ thousand students and that employ 3,800 teachers.

This Budget will grow our investment with more places for kids at new and expanded schools and a major new investment in front-line hospital services, nurses and doctors.

We are delivering on our commitment to build a new primary school in Molonglo, which will provide places for 600 students from Kindergarten to Year 6 as well as a preschool and early learning centre. The school will be ready to take students from the start of the 2021 school year, while the funding delivered through this Budget will also support the preparation of services for a future Year 7 to 10 campus on the same site.

As the next big frontier of our city's growth, the Government is committed to making sure services are ready and available in Molonglo as more people move into that region.

We are also expanding capacity at four schools in Gungahlin so that kids can continue to find a place at a great local school, close to home. We will deliver capacity for an

additional 500 students across Amaroo School, Gold Creek and Neville Bonner Primary, as well as expanding the Franklin Early Childhood School so that current students can continue on past Year 2. We will also continue the planning work that is underway for another new school to cater for Gungahlin's ongoing growth.

At the same time as delivering new and better school facilities, we are also investing in more teachers and support staff.

We will hire the equivalent of 66 more teachers and support staff to meet growing school enrolments, and we will recruit a further 15 school psychologists—fully delivering on our election commitment to make mental health services more accessible for kids through their schools.

We are also investing in more support for students with disability and those who have complex health needs to ensure local schools can offer them the same learning opportunities as other Canberra kids.

Like our schools, Canberra's hospital and health services need to keep growing to make sure all Canberrans can access quality care when they need it.

The number of people presenting to local emergency departments has grown by about 40 people a day since 2015, while at the moment elective surgery waiting lists are growing faster than our hospitals can reduce them.

Canberra's doctors, nurses, midwives and allied health staff are working incredibly hard to keep up with this growth. This Budget will back them up with a significant new investment in front-line staff and services.

We are funding 4,000 more elective surgeries over the next four years, raising ACT Health's annual target to around 14,000 surgeries a year.

We are growing funding for emergency surgery and the Emergency Department at The Canberra Hospital, to cut wait times and ensure more patients get the care they need sooner.

We are delivering on our election commitment to upgrade critical parts of our public hospitals, including an expansion of the Calvary Public Hospital Emergency Department.

And we are funding more hospital beds across the Territory including more maternity places and more beds to cope with the annual winter surge that hits The Canberra Hospital during flu season.

We are making these investments in hospital beds and staff now while we continue to invest in new health infrastructure for the future. This includes progressing the development of SPIRE and developing new Northside hospital options.

Importantly, we are also investing in other front-line health services to help take the pressure off our hospitals. This Budget delivers a significant expansion of the *Hospital in the Home* program—with 30 nurses and six doctors added to the service so that an

additional 3,000 patients a year can receive the care they need in their own homes and community health centres.

With the Government's investment in the new University of Canberra Hospital also coming online this year to provide rehabilitation and sub-acute health care, we are ensuring more tertiary hospital beds are available for those who need the most intensive and specialised care.

We understand that mental health services and supports are also a critical part of front-line health care. That is why the Budget delivers new supported accommodation options for people with complex mental health needs, and a boost to the targeted services that support teenagers, older people and those transitioning out of the justice system.

We will establish three community-based mental health accommodation facilities to provide long-term care for people who need 24-hour support. We will also establish a Step-Up-Step-Down facility on the south side of Canberra to provide short-term residential and clinical treatment for people discharged from hospital, and refurbish the 10-bed Extended Care Unit at the Brian Hennessey Rehabilitation Centre, to help provide a secure facility for people to transition back into the community.

Our support for Canberra's healthcare services and schools already accounts for over half the ACT Budget each year. But from this year we are stepping up our investments on the front line—on top of the major expansion in hospital and school infrastructure already underway that will come online in the next few years.

Keeping Canberra moving and delivering more services across our city and suburbs

Madam Speaker, we are overhauling Canberra's public transport system. We are designing a system that can move large numbers of people around quickly, efficiently and with the lowest possible impact on our environment; one that is simple to use and provides a genuine alternative to the car.

Light rail is at the heart of our plan for a city-wide integrated public transport network. That is why this year's Budget delivers more funding to progress the planning and approval of Stage 2 from the City to Woden, as well as to start the design work on the enabling infrastructure.

We will continue working through the design and approvals process with the National Capital Authority and the Federal Parliament to progress Stage 2 of Light Rail because this is the next step in delivering the essential public transport spine we need to connect Canberra's north and south.

Keeping Canberra moving also requires more investment in road and active travel connections—not just from our suburbs to the city, but between our town centres too.

That is why this Budget funds design and planning work on duplicating William Slim Drive from Ginninderra Drive to the Barton Highway, to help reduce congestion between Gungahlin and Belconnen.

Along with Commonwealth funding, our investment in upgrading the Monaro Highway will deliver shorter travel times and improve road safety. We will also start planning and design on the extension of John Gorton Drive and a bridge across the Molonglo River. This will provide a major new transport link for Molonglo as the region's community grows.

At the same time as we are building new roads, we are actively working to cut the ACT's emissions from local cars. Once Canberra reaches our target of being powered by 100 per cent renewable electricity in two years time, tackling emissions from our transport fleet will be the next big task on our path to zero net emissions by 2045.

That is why this Budget will invest in 50 electric vehicle charging stations at ACT Government sites across Canberra. This builds on our recently-released Transition to Zero Emissions Vehicles Action Plan, and will see us pursue Australia's most ambitious emissions reductions effort across the transport fleet.

We are also helping to cut this city's emissions by getting more people out of their cars for the daily commute.

Canberra is already Australia's most active community, with many of us walking or cycling to work and school. We gave a commitment to deliver an additional \$30 million in active travel infrastructure over the life of this Parliamentary term, and I am very happy to say that the 2018-19 Budget fully achieves that.

We are delivering an integrated bike network for Belconnen which links suburbs like Macquarie and Florey with the Belconnen Town Centre, the Lake Ginninderra foreshore, and major sporting and study institutions in Bruce.

We are improving cycling and footpath connections in the Woden and Tuggeranong town centres, constructing an off road "rapid" bikeway network and completing the Lyons to Weston Creek (Heysen Street) cycle path link.

These investments will make it easier than ever for Canberrans to get active when they are moving around our city.

On top of these improvements to our town centres, this Budget steps up services for our suburbs.

We are delivering more funding every year for mowing, weeding, cleaning up graffiti, maintaining local waterways and tree trimming. We are investing in playgrounds through a community-led process that will give Canberrans a say in where funds should be targeted to provide the most community benefit.

We are also significantly expanding the funding provided to City Services, because we recognise that a growing city means more demand for municipal services. The number of homes receiving rubbish collection has risen by about 6,000 in the past five years, while we have added four new ovals, 24 new suburban playgrounds and 10 playground upgrades in that same time.

More investment in core municipal services will mean tidier suburbs across Canberra,

along with parks, playgrounds and public spaces we can continue to be proud of.

This builds on last year's Budget funding for the rollout of green bins to every Canberra suburb by 2019—a key election commitment and a time and cost-saving benefit for households.

More support for Canberra families and inclusion

By all measures, Canberra is the wealthiest, best educated and longest-living community in Australia. That brings huge advantages for many of us, but it also comes with responsibilities: to support those who are not doing as well, to take good care of those who need our protection, and to work to close the gaps that some members of our community might otherwise fall through.

The ACT Government currently delivers half a billion dollars each year for community services and public housing. But we know there is more to do.

With this Budget, we are delivering 36 more places for women seeking safe and secure accommodation through services like the Beryl and Doris women's refuges, as well as for asylum seekers and migrants with uncertain immigration status. We are also funding three more counsellors for the Canberra Rape Crisis Centre and Domestic Violence Crisis Service, to ensure women in crisis can get the help they need as quickly as possible.

Building on the investments made in keeping Canberra's children safe through recent budgets, we are investing in a dedicated team within the Community Services Directorate to improve the adoption process for kids in out of home care and help more young people find a permanent home, sooner.

We are also providing new resources to deliver family group conferencing for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander families who are at risk of ongoing involvement with the child protection system.

Secure, suitable and affordable housing is one of the basics that people build a good life from, and we understand that finding the right place to live is a growing challenge for Canberrans on low incomes and those who have complex needs.

Our ongoing Public Housing Renewal program is currently delivering the largest overhaul of the Territory's housing stock since self-government, with 810 new properties already delivered and a further 478 to go by mid-2019.

The Deputy Chief Minister has been leading a detailed conversation with the Canberra community about what comes next after this program and how we can work to ensure our affordable housing supply keeps up with our city's growth. That will come together in the new housing strategy that will be released later this year, laying out the next phase of our investment in public, community and affordable housing.

But there are some priority investments we are getting on with now through this Budget, including delivering on our commitment to build a second culturally-appropriate housing complex for older Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Canberrans.

This Budget also kick-starts the development of a second Common Ground complex at Dickson with funding for design and approvals. We know that it will take a significant further investment to ensure vulnerable Canberrans can access safe, suitable and affordable housing, and we are taking the time to get this right in partnership with service providers, clients and the sector.

The ACT Government is doing what we can to support vulnerable Canberrans and families who are finding it hard. But our programs and services are only one part of the equation.

Today, I add the ACT Government's backing to calls being voiced around Australia for a rise in the level of income support available through Newstart. At just \$273 a week—some \$400 less than the national minimum wage—the current rate of Newstart is too low to help people get back on their feet when they end up out of work. Instead, it simply traps them in disadvantage.

Progress towards lifting Newstart was a glaring omission in last month's Commonwealth Budget, and we urge all sides of the Federal Parliament to do the just thing by providing better support for Canberrans, and all Australians, who rely on it.

A better Canberra, as we grow

Canberra's growth is both a challenge and an opportunity.

As a Government, it challenges us to think harder about how this city works, where we need to invest more and what we can do smarter, better or differently.

As Canberrans, it challenges us all to consider what we value about this unique place we call home; what we can protect and preserve, and what will change.

For this city, and our community, the opportunities are limited only by our collective imagination and goodwill.

We believe Canberra can take hold of the opportunities in front of us. By growing services for our growing city through the 2018-19 Budget, we are backing our community to do it.

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