



**QUESTION TIME**  
OF THE  
LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY  
FOR THE  
AUSTRALIAN CAPITAL TERRITORY

**HANSARD**

Edited proof transcript

Wednesday, 6 June 2018

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**Wednesday, 6 June 2018**

Questions without notice:

|   |    |
|---|----|
| Land—Dickson land swap .....                    | 1  |
| Parks—southern memorial.....                    | 1  |
| Budget—childcare funding .....                  | 2  |
| Budget—government investment .....              | 3  |
| Courts—building works .....                     | 4  |
| ACT Health—proposed organisational changes..... | 5  |
| Budget—education .....                          | 5  |
| ACT Health—proposed organisational changes..... | 7  |
| Hospitals—waiting times .....                   | 8  |
| Domestic animal services—rangers.....           | 8  |
| Budget—light rail .....                         | 9  |
| Light rail—disability access .....              | 11 |
| Light rail—Mitchell .....                       | 12 |
| Budget—disability services .....                | 14 |
| Budget—Canberra Institute of Technology.....    | 16 |
| Justice—resourcing.....                         | 16 |

## Questions without notice

### Land—Dickson land swap

**MR COE:** My question is to the Chief Minister and Minister for Economic Development. I refer to media reports of 30 May on the Dickson land swap. The article claims:

A possible box of documents that may detail 40 meetings between senior ACT public servants and the Tradies Club over the Dickson land swap seems to have gone “missing” ...

Chief Minister, has an internal investigation been conducted into the missing documents? If so, what did it find?

**MR BARR:** I am not aware of an internal investigation on this matter. I will seek advice from the directorate. It is not my directorate, as the Leader of the Opposition would be aware.

*Mr Hanson interjecting—*

**MADAM SPEAKER:** Mr Hanson, not today.

**MR BARR:** I am not in a position to comment any further at this point.

**MR COE:** Chief Minister, when were you first made aware of the possible missing documents and why are there apparently so few details regarding these meetings?

**MR BARR:** I was not aware that there was a box of missing documents. I am still not aware that there is a box of missing documents. There is a claim to that effect but it is difficult to ascertain at this point. I have not been privy to a lot of the conversations and discussions because I do not have portfolio responsibility in this area.

**MR WALL:** Chief Minister, what steps are you taking to improve recordkeeping practices in your directorate and to ascertain the veracity of the claims of the box of missing documents?

**MR BARR:** I refer the member to my previous answers.

### Parks—southern memorial

**MS LE COUTEUR:** My question is to the Minister for Transport and City Services and relates to the apparent lack of funding for the southern memorial park in this year’s budget. What is now the timetable for construction of the southern memorial park?

**MS FITZHARRIS:** There is further work underway and that work will progress, particularly over the course of the next six months, as will the government’s getting underway the review of the relevant legislation whose specific title I cannot recall.

**MS LE COUTEUR:** Minister, can the government ensure there will always be burial facilities in south Canberra, or is a gap now locked in?

**MS FITZHARRIS:** As Ms Le Couteur is aware, there was a previous commitment by the government to expand the Woden Cemetery which at the time was supported by the Woden Community Council and had been somewhat progressed. In the intervening period a number of members of the community and members in this place have indicated to the government that they wish that previous decision to be reconsidered in light of the government's significant investments and commitments to the Woden town centre. The government agreed to do that and resolved earlier this year to not proceed with the expansion of Woden but to, instead, focus on further work on the southern memorial park. That work will continue. There is space already allocated at Woden where families, for example, have allotments available to them. They will continue to be available at Woden.

We are very conscious of minimising any gap that may occur in the provision of services on the south side and on the north side as well. Work is well underway, including by the authority, on this matter. I note it was previously supported by the community to expand Woden but then, for a number of reasons, that support was no long forthcoming. The government has responded to that community sentiment.

### **Budget—childcare funding**

**MR MILLIGAN:** My question is to the Minister for Community Services and Social Inclusion. Minister, Yurauna has previously received government support through the Community Services Directorate to provide Indigenous students studying at CIT with subsidised child care. Given this service is so crucial to supporting Indigenous students who are trying to further their education and circumstances, why has this relatively small sum of funding ceased?

**MADAM SPEAKER:** I call the Minister for Community Services and Social Inclusion.

**MS BERRY:** Madam Speaker, if it is with regard to the early childhood centre—

**MADAM SPEAKER:** You are taking the question?

**MS BERRY:** I will take the question in that respect. The Education Directorate has been working very closely with the early childhood centre, with Northside Community Service, to ensure that that provision remains possible for people who are studying at Yurauna. We will continue to work closely with them to make sure that they continue to be supported.

**MR MILLIGAN:** Minister, will there be alternative childcare support options provided to Indigenous students attending Yurauna?

**MS BERRY:** There are already options available at Yurauna.

**MRS KIKKERT:** Minister, did the Education Directorate consult with other agencies prior to seizing this funding, given the intersectional nature of the service with child

protection, corrections, health and higher education?

**MS BERRY:** I thank Mrs Kikkert for the supplementary. The funding to the Yurauna Centre is not from the Education Directorate but for the actual childcare facility. The Education Directorate is working closely with the facility to ensure that support continues to be available for people who are attending training courses at the Yurauna Centre.

### **Budget—government investment**

**MS CHEYNE:** My question is to the Chief Minister. Chief Minister, how is the ACT government growing services for our growing city through the 2018 budget?

**MR BARR:** I thank Ms Cheyne for the question. We are providing a significant boost to the services that Canberrans rely on through the 2018 budget, through more and better schools, new facilities in Molonglo and 500 more places for students at four local Gungahlin schools. We are very pleased that we can strengthen front-line care in our hospitals, with more resources for our emergency department, 4,000 more elective surgeries and the expansion of the hospital in the home program.

We are focused on making commuting quicker, with better transport infrastructure, including funding to progress the next stage of the light rail project, the duplication of William Slim Drive and a significant number of investments to improve walking and cycling connections in and around our town centres in Tuggeranong, in Woden and in Belconnen. We are boosting our investment in services for our city and suburbs. There will be more mowing, weeding and the upgrading of playgrounds. We will be planting more trees and there are more rangers funded for better animal management. We are keeping Canberrans safe by recruiting more first responders for our police and emergency services as well as backing up those emergency services workers with the purchase of a range of equipment improvements.

The city is growing and the budget is making significant investments now to ensure that the city gets even better as we grow.

**MS CHEYNE:** Chief Minister, how will the 2018 budget help more young Canberrans and families on low incomes to own their own homes?

**MR BARR:** We certainly understand that buying a home is a challenge. It is a massive challenge in cities like Sydney and Melbourne, but it is also a challenge for many Canberrans. That is why we have determined to accelerate our tax reform program by abolishing stamp duty altogether for eligible first homebuyers. First homebuyers with a household income below \$160,000 annually will pay no stamp duty at all, whether they are buying an established property or a newly built home.

At the moment some first homebuyers qualify for a stamp duty concession if they are purchasing a newly built property. But people buying established properties, which can sometimes be more affordable and located closer to jobs, did not receive support through that particular scheme. We are widening this to ensure that all eligible buyers get better help through the abolition of stamp duty for all property types and at any purchase price.

This builds on the tax reform program that we have been delivering progressively since 2012. I have indicated that we will continue to cut stamp duty on all properties across the forward estimates. This will assist all homebuyers, but we have particularly prioritised first homebuyers in this year's budget with the abolition of stamp duty. It is a significant achievement for the territory. We look forward to continuing to cut stamp duty year on year.

**MS ORR:** How is the ACT government working to ensure all Canberrans share in the gains of our economic growth through the 2018 budget?

**MR BARR:** This is a significant priority for everyone on this side of the chamber. We want to ensure the gains of our territory's nation-leading economic growth are shared across the community. That is why we are growing the range of services and supports available to Canberrans who need that help.

This year's budget delivers more mental health accommodation and services, more front-line support for women and their families escaping violence, more services to meet the needs of Canberrans with disabilities, and more accommodation for people at risk of experiencing homelessness.

We are also determined to keep pushing forward in making Canberra a more inclusive city. On top of this step-up in services, we are also growing annual grants funding for a range of community-led efforts to boost inclusion for people with disability, for older people, for veterans and for LGBTIQ Canberrans.

Our social and community services sector is a critical source of support for Canberrans when they need it most, as well as being a major local employer. We are backing our local community sector providers with more investment in this budget because as our city grows and as our economy grows, everyone should share in those gains.

### **Courts—building works**

**MR HANSON:** My question is to the Attorney-General and it relates to the new court buildings for the ACT. When announced, stage 1 was due in early 2017 and stage 2 was to be completed in late 2018. It is now apparent that the court building will be significantly delayed, with stage 1 not yet completed. Attorney-General, when will this building be completed?

**MR RAMSAY:** I thank the shadow attorney-general for his interest in the court building, which will be an excellent facility for the Supreme Court and for the Magistrates Court. We are certainly looking forward to the improvements that will come with that: the expanded number of courtrooms, the jury service rooms and the broader services that will be provided.

There was some delay that was the case primarily because of the wet winters that we had in previous years. The anticipation is that it will be completed in coming months. I look forward potentially to being able to—

**Mr Hanson:** What does “coming months” mean?

**MR RAMSAY:** In the coming months, and I look forward to being able to share in the opening of the building with the shadow attorney-general very soon.

**MR HANSON:** I certainly look forward to that in the coming months. Attorney-General, what is the final projected total cost for this project?

**MR RAMSAY:** I will take the details of the question on notice but I do note again that because of the nature of the agreement—the public-private partnership—any of the delays that are happening have no negative budgetary impact on the ACT government at all.

**MS LEE:** Attorney-General, who is responsible for the extra costs of this delay, including costs of trials that should have been heard in the new building but that will now have to be heard in other venues such as Queanbeyan?

**MR RAMSAY:** I refer the member to my previous answer.

### **ACT Health—proposed organisational changes**

**MRS DUNNE:** My question is to the Minister for Health and Wellbeing. In an exchange of emails at the start of the decision to restructure ACT Health, the then director-general advised the Head of Service that you, minister, wanted the restructure because you claimed you received too many reports. You seem to have had trouble reading reports and briefs in the past, minister, including a brief in October on health data issues which you did not read at all and a January brief on the same topic which you took several weeks to read. Minister, other than claims that you received too many direct reports, why did you advocate the restructure of ACT Health?

**MS FITZHARRIS:** Mrs Dunne either misread the question or I misheard Mrs Dunne’s question. It was not a matter of me receiving too many reports. I recall that the email from the FOI says the director-general made that comment. I have outlined fairly extensively, including in a ministerial statement, the reasons I recommended that ACT Health be separated into two organisations, and there has also been media coverage. I refer Mrs Dunne to all of those extensive previous statements.

**MRS DUNNE:** Minister, why have you been so badly briefed in the past? How will this restructure of ACT Health improve the capacity to brief you well?

**MS FITZHARRIS:** I do not agree with the premise of the question. I refer Mrs Dunne to my previous answer today and to my extensive previous answers in this place that are also on the public record.

**MR PARTON:** Minister, what important briefs and reports will you now not read as a result of the restructure of ACT Health?

**MS FITZHARRIS:** That question does not make sense; so I will just leave it at that.

### **Budget—education**

**MS ORR:** My question is to the Minister for Education and Early Childhood Development. Minister, how will the 2018 budget make sure that all ACT families have access to a high quality local public school?

**MS BERRY:** I thank Ms Orr for her question. We announced last week that the ACT will invest \$47 million into building a new P-6 school in Molonglo. This will open in Denman Prospect in 2021. It will deliver on ACT Labor's election commitment to provide education for families that are moving into this growing part of the ACT. The school will cater for 600 students between kindergarten and year 6, with spaces for 44 full-time equivalent preschool students and space for future growth.

The government will also undertake early planning and feasibility work for a future years 7 to 10 campus on this site to accommodate continued growth in Molonglo. This is in addition to the new Gungahlin school in Taylor which is already under construction, funded in the last ACT government budget.

The budget will also provide \$9.2 million over four years to improve teaching in every classroom every day, as well as enabling continued development of long-term strategic reform. High quality school education relies on the teachers and the support staff in our schools. This government knows this and is dedicated to supporting quality teaching.

The government will invest in teacher capability in literacy and numeracy and will build strong relationships with the University of Canberra, which is where many of the ACT's teacher graduates come from. The university partnership will provide teachers with the chance for professional learning through research collaboration.

**MS ORR:** Where is the government investing to expand existing public schools?

**MS BERRY:** The ACT government is investing in areas of growth. Last year's census confirmed that Gungahlin is the second fastest growing region in Australia. The ACT government will expand schools in the area so that all Canberra students can access quality education close to home. Another 500 students will be welcomed across Amaroo, Neville Bonner school and the Gold Creek junior campus, with the Franklin Early Childhood School receiving transportable buildings to immediately expand the school to accommodate current year 2 students in a new 2019 year 3 class and beyond. The government will also fund planning and consultation on a permanent expansion to a full preschool to year 6 school.

Parents have been very happy to learn that their children will be able to continue learning in the school environment that best suits them and the community that supports their needs.

The ACT government is committing \$31.1 million for teachers and support staff who will continue to deliver education to more than 1,300 additional students as Canberra grows. The government will continue to deliver excellent teaching and support staff, with an additional 66 in local public schools, and will lock in support for students with a disability, boosting the delivery of quality education for Canberra's children and young people.

**MS CODY:** Minister, where is the government investing to upgrade existing public schools?

**MS BERRY:** I thank Ms Cody for the supplementary question. The 2018 budget will deliver \$18.8 million to replace buildings at Campbell Primary School with new modern learning facilities and upgrade ageing infrastructure. The new buildings have been designed for contemporary learning and teaching, disability access and environmental sustainability.

The ACT government will also provide funding to scope and plan for the modernisation of Narrabundah College. Calwell High School and Telopea Park School will benefit from roof replacements under this budget, along with several of Canberra's other older schools.

On top of the \$85 million commitment in the last budget, the ACT government is continuing the work of the public school infrastructure upgrade program, which last year included upgrades like a natural play area at Macgregor Primary School, an appropriate cultural space at Narrabundah Early Childhood School, increased access for students with disability at Alfred Deakin High School, as well as tree planting programs and flagpoles for schools all across the ACT.

### **ACT Health—proposed organisational changes**

**MRS KIKKERT:** My question is to the Minister for Health and Wellbeing. Minister, on 11 April 2018, in answer to a question about the restructure of ACT Health, you said the restructure involved your office but not just your office. Documents obtained under FOI indicate that the Chief Minister made the decision with no evidence of significant involvement by you or Mr Rattenbury in the decision-making process. Your office was involved in developing the communications strategy after the decision had been taken. Minister, why is there no record of you, your office or your directorate playing a significant role in the decision taken by the Chief Minister to restructure ACT Health?

**MS FITZHARRIS:** I refer to answers in this place yesterday, and to previous statements by me, by Minister Rattenbury and by the Chief Minister. I also can confirm, once again—as three ministers did yesterday to rebut any conspiracy theory that the opposition may have—that I had considerable input into this decision. I also had a number of meetings, including with the Head of Service, with Minister Rattenbury and with the Chief Minister, on this matter. I am very much looking forward to continuing the work to make sure that the separation of ACT Health occurs later this year and involves extensive consultation with the community, stakeholders and particularly with ACT Health staff.

**MRS KIKKERT:** Minister, will you table by tomorrow all documents in your possession about the decision to restructure ACT Health?

**MS FITZHARRIS:** The opposition has done an FOI, and I refer the opposition also to my previous extensive statements in this place about that decision and the process from here until 1 October. I also note that I attended a number of ACT Health staff

forums where I discussed this matter with staff.

**MRS DUNNE:** Minister, why is there no record of the Chief Minister consulting with you or your directorate before he took the decision to restructure ACT Health on 15 March?

**MS FITZHARRIS:** I think the record is one of extensive comment in this place and on the public record.

### **Hospitals—waiting times**

**MR PARTON:** My question is to the Minister for Health and Wellbeing. On 22 February this year you advised the Assembly that:

On the issue of waiting times in both elective surgery and emergency departments, it is clear that we are making improvements ...

You advised the Assembly on at least nine occasions between August last year and February this year that waiting times for elective surgery were coming down. The ACT budget papers show that the target for emergency department presentations seen on time in 2017-18 was 70 per cent; FOI documents show that in February 2018 only 44 per cent had been seen on time; and the budget reports an expected outcome for the year of only 50 per cent. Did you mislead the Assembly in your statements of 22 February 2018 and on previous occasions about improved performance on waiting times for elective surgery?

**MS FITZHARRIS:** No. Mr Parton has talked about elective surgery and emergency department waiting times. Particularly with emergency department and elective surgery wait times, there are a number of different measures, and I believe he has confused them in his question.

**MR PARTON:** Minister, when did you first become aware that our hospitals were unlikely to meet the target of 70 per cent of emergency department presentations seen on time?

**MS FITZHARRIS:** I will have to take that question on notice.

**MRS DUNNE:** Minister, what action have you taken or will you take to ensure that you do not mislead the community about the performance of the hospital in emergency department waiting times in the future?

**MS FITZHARRIS:** I have not, and I have also said in this place that it is clear that there is significant progress that we need to make. Yesterday's budget, of course, invested considerably in core public hospital services. One of its key aims is to bring down waiting times, but it is important to note that it is a whole-of-hospital investment in beds, in the emergency department, in emergency surgery, in the intensive care unit and in elective surgery right across the territory.

### **Domestic animal services—rangers**

**MS LAWDER:** My question is to the Minister for Transport and City Services. On 1 November 2017, only days after the tragic death of a woman in Watson following a dog attack, you released a statement which read in part, “The ACT government has already announced several measures to protect the community including doubling the number of animal rangers.” In an article in the *Canberra Times* on 12 January 2018, the operations manager of domestic animal services said that he now oversees eight rangers and that “eight new staff are coming on next month”. In the budget announced this week, there is funding for two new ranger positions to manage domestic dogs. Minister, has the number of animal rangers doubled since 1 November 2017?

**MS FITZHARRIS:** Yes, it has.

**MS LAWDER:** Minister, has the total number of DAS staff increased since 1 November 2017 and, if so, by how many?

**MS FITZHARRIS:** Yes, it has. As of last year, in October, there were 15 staff, eight of whom were dedicated rangers. There are currently 20 staff. Sixteen are now dedicated rangers.

**MS CHEYNE:** Minister, can you expand on what this investment in extra rangers will bring?

**MS FITZHARRIS:** I thank Ms Cheyne for the supplementary question. Certainly, there has been significant work underway in domestic animal services over a number of years in response to community feedback and also increased levels of activity in the community. With additional rangers and with rangers whose roles have been upgraded as a result of investments in yesterday’s budget, they are now much better placed to deal with administrative, investigative and animal behavioural issues. As well as providing victim support and public education functions, an extensive education and awareness-raising campaign has been undertaken by domestic animal services.

Madam Speaker, as you are well aware, extensive work was done last year, particularly on legislative amendments and improvements which were supported right across the chamber at the end of last year.

### **Budget—light rail**

**MS CODY:** My question is to the Minister for Transport and City Services. Can the minister please update the Assembly on how the 2018-19 ACT budget supports the development of Canberra’s light rail network?

**MS FITZHARRIS:** I thank Ms Cody very much for her question and her interest in light rail, particularly stage 2 of light rail from the city to Woden. Yesterday’s budget supports the development of Canberra’s city-wide light rail network by continuing the development of the extension of light rail from the city to Woden through an additional investment of \$10 million for further technical and design work on the second stage of this network.

The budget will also invest a further \$2½ million in works to support light rail to

Woden. This funding will support the development of business cases for the redesign and build of a new Transport Canberra bus interchange in the Woden town centre. The purpose is to ensure that future bus and light rail interchange plans are well integrated. It will include an upgrade of Parkes Way to improve traffic flow around light rail. This will examine the impact of population growth and development on the existing road network and recommend proposed improvements to Parkes Way. It will also include an investigation of network-wide park-and-ride provisions and opportunities right across the city and the redevelopment of the Yarra Glen intersection with Melrose and Yamba drives to accommodate light rail.

I am pleased to say that the funding will also support a stop to be built on Sandford Street in Mitchell in the following financial year, adding to the stage 1 light rail route.

There is also continued collaboration with the National Capital Authority, and further consultation with the community and stakeholders will continue to be a priority. I note that the government is preparing a submission to the current commonwealth parliamentary inquiry into stage 2 of light rail.

**MS CODY:** Minister, can you also provide an update on the progress of light rail construction for stage 1 of light rail from the city to Gungahlin?

**MS FITZHARRIS:** Thank you; I would be delighted to. Certainly, Canberra Metro's current program for light rail stage 1 is reaching construction completion in December 2018. It is anticipated that in the second half of this year we will see further construction activities completed in various sections of the alignment and at the depot, allowing for testing and commissioning activities to proceed.

Canberra Metro has made significant progress in construction, with 19½ thousand metres of track slab being laid to date. This is 77 per cent of the total track slab length. It is important to note that the forecast date for construction completion in December of this year remains contingent on a range of activities and, as always, weather. Assuming all sections successfully complete initial testing, full system testing will progress over October to December 2018.

As with any construction project, the construction completion date remains subject to a range of general and project-specific risks, including bad weather, system and operational testing and commissioning, and timely receipt of accreditation from regulators, specifically including the office of the national safety regulator.

Canberra Metro, supported by Transport Canberra, have commenced an important public education campaign for light rail. The first campaign messages build community awareness of testing activities starting, such as energising overhead wires and light rail vehicles moving onto the alignment and is further supported by an investment in yesterday's budget. Later stages of this campaign will advise the community about how to use the system as we move ever closer to the exciting prospect of light rail services commencing in our city.

**MR PETTERSSON:** Minister, what is the ACT government doing to prepare for the commencement of light rail operations?

**MS FITZHARRIS:** I thank Mr Pettersson for the follow-up question. It is certainly exciting to be preparing for the commencement of light rail operations in the ACT. Transport Canberra light rail has a dedicated operations team which is managing a wide range of operational readiness activities towards the planned beginning of services.

Key activities that the team is managing or providing substantial assistance on include legislation. Two bills have now been passed by the Assembly, presented by Minister Rattenbury, to enable the operation of light rail as a form of transport and in regard to normal passenger operations. There has been significant cross-government coordination, including a detailed works program which has been developed that identifies all activities across TCCS as well as more broadly across government, that will facilitate the introduction of light rail—for example, sharing of light rail CCTV with the AFP and management of traffic signals and street lighting, and implementation of these measures is closely monitored.

Interface agreements include assistance in the development of formal interface agreements between light rail and the territory—for example, a statutory requirement to have a road-rail interface agreement—and customer services, ensuring appropriate processes are in place for all customer elements like managing public inquiries and complaints, journey planning and website information.

Other activities include a fully integrated ticketing system, developing an integrated light rail and bus network and a comprehensive safety campaign; and, of course, lots of thinking about the actual first service. We are looking forward to discussing more broadly with the community how community members right across the territory can be involved in the incredibly exciting first light rail journey. We very much look forward to the commencement of light rail services in the ACT.

### **Light rail—disability access**

**MS LEE:** My question is to the Minister for Transport and City Services. Minister, were disability and other mobility advocacy groups involved in the design of the light rail carriages and platforms?

**MS FITZHARRIS:** Yes, I believe they were. It is my understanding that there was significant community engagement, including through community forums and a community reference group that, from recollection, included particularly ACTCOSS and other representative groups, including representative disability groups. If there is anything further to add, I will provide that information to the Assembly.

**MS LEE:** Minister, what provisions have been made to ensure that the gaps between the tram and the platform are small enough to allow those with wheelchairs or walking frames with small wheels to safely board the tram?

**MS FITZHARRIS:** I thank Ms Lee for the supplementary question. There are, of course, standards about disability access, and Canberra Metro and TCCS have been aware of that right through the planning, design, procurement and construction phases of the project. It is indeed a notable feature of light rail that it is universally accessible and it is a much easier and more comfortable mode of transport; for many people with

a disability, it is much easier to access. Through the development of and the discussion about light rail there was considerable community conversation about the accessibility of light rail, particularly for people with a disability.

**MISS C BURCH:** Minister, will light rail carriages be able to accommodate larger mobility scooters?

**MS FITZHARRIS:** Yes, it is my understanding that they will.

### **Light rail—Mitchell**

**MISS C BURCH:** My question is to the Minister for Transport and City Services. Minister, early plans for light rail included stops in Mitchell. Why will it now cost \$150,000 more to design a single light rail stop at Mitchell?

**MS FITZHARRIS:** Miss Burch is incorrect; there were not plans for additional stops in Mitchell. That is not correct. There was significant community consultation which proposed a number of stops along the route—around 24, from memory, possible stops along the route. As with anything, a range of options go out for community, stakeholder and industry consultation.

The stage 1 light rail route could not accommodate, and was never going to accommodate, 26 stops along the route. There was considerable discussion and debate at the time, and the combination of patronage, travel time, distance between stops, and where current and future development was to take place were all considered. There were a number of stops—

**Mr Coe:** A point of order.

**MADAM SPEAKER:** Minister, resume you seat.

**Mr Coe:** It is on relevance. The question was: why will it now cost \$150,000 to design a single light rail stop at Mitchell? She has yet to address that.

**MADAM SPEAKER:** I think she is talking about the planning process for light rail. I do not believe there is a point of order, but you have 40 seconds left, minister.

**MS FITZHARRIS:** The simple answer is that that is what it will cost.

**MISS C BURCH:** Minister, given that light rail construction is being done in the area now, why are you delaying construction of a stop at Mitchell for more than a further 12 months?

**MS FITZHARRIS:** The irony, the unbelievable irony, of the opposition, who blanketed this city with anti-light rail propaganda for years—for years. It is laughable. It is laughable for the opposition to think that anyone had for a moment contemplated that it wanted to support—

*Opposition members interjecting—*

**MADAM SPEAKER:** Members!

**Mr Hanson:** Madam Speaker, a point of order.

**MADAM SPEAKER:** Stop the clock, please.

**Mr Hanson:** There is a great deal of interjection. I cannot hear the answer.

**MADAM SPEAKER:** I will call the minister. You have a minute-plus left. Please continue.

**MS FITZHARRIS:** Despite their relentless negativity and questioning of this project, they fail to appreciate what has been extensively discussed in this place in public and through committee inquiry about the nature of the contract. They fail to understand that. They also fail to understand that constructing an additional stop at Mitchell is about a number of factors.

One of them is about the construction of the stop. The other is about the operational impact of adding another stop, the timing of the route and the resequencing of traffic lights, for example, along the full route. The government will build a stop in Mitchell. It is, as I have said previously, the only stop along the route that has future-proofed utilities underground. The government has funded it.

The government will look forward to doing that work over the next 12 months. The government will look forward to further engagement with the Mitchell Traders Association. Most of all, the government will look forward to light rail operating in the ACT because no-one is under any illusion that the opposition opposed that. (*Time expired.*)

**MR MILLIGAN:** Minister, what would it cost now to contract this stop in this stage, the first stage of light rail?

**Mr Steel:** Madam Speaker, a point of order. That is just a hypothetical and it should be ruled out. Under standing order 117, hypotheticals cannot be asked about. It is as simple as that.

**MADAM SPEAKER:** Can you repeat your question, Mr Milligan?

**MR MILLIGAN:** Minister, what would it cost to construct the stop for Mitchell under the current contract?

**MADAM SPEAKER:** I believe it is in order, Mr Steel.

**MS FITZHARRIS:** As I have indicated, the government has not considered opening up the contract at this point because the construction of that stop would involve significant negotiation not only about the construction of the stop itself but also about the complete operations of the entire route. The government has funded the provision of a stop in Mitchell. It was pleased to do so in yesterday's budget and looks forward to progressing that work over the next 12 months.

## **Budget—disability services**

**MR PETTERSSON:** My question is to the Minister for Disability, Children and Youth. Minister, what is the ACT government doing to support Canberrans with high and complex support needs which are not being met by the NDIS?

**MS STEPHEN-SMITH:** I thank Mr Pettersson for his question. The ACT is, of course, proud to be the first jurisdiction to roll out the national disability insurance scheme to all eligible participants. It is delivering choice and control for thousands of Canberrans living with a disability. In 2018-19 the ACT government will contribute \$137 million towards the scheme.

I would like to acknowledge the activism and advocacy of NDIS participants, carers, families, service providers and representative organisations in raising significant issues and concerns with both the ACT government and through the Standing Committee on Health, Ageing and Community Services inquiry into the implementation, performance and governance of the NDIS in the ACT.

While the Office for Disability within the Community Services Directorate continues to work closely with the National Disability Insurance Agency when issues arise, the government knows more needs to be done. This transition to an entirely new service model is complex. We are committed to ensuring that no-one seeking support gets left behind. That is why we will deliver \$1.8 million for an integrated service response in this budget as we continue to support the transition to the NDIS. This includes \$1.1 million in 2018-19 to purchase necessary supports for people with disability who have high and complex support needs that are not being fully met by the NDIS.

The measure will also fund coordination staff within the Office for Disability to work with the NDIA and the mainstream services to ensure that people with complex support needs receive a coordinated service response. The integrated service response program will monitor service gaps and issues arising from the implementation of the NDIS, and will work with the NDIA and across the ACT government to address these issues.

**MR PETTERSSON:** Minister, what else is the government doing to support people experiencing difficulty in navigating the NDIS and engaging with the NDIA?

**MS STEPHEN-SMITH:** I thank Mr Pettersson for his supplementary. It is certainly the case that the ACT government works closely with the NDIA on the implementation of the scheme in the ACT. We also collaborate with the commonwealth, other states and the Northern Territory on ensuring the successful national rollout through the Disability Reform Council and its officials groups.

We know there have been many challenges experienced by participants and we continue to advocate and raise these issues with the NDIA and directly with the commonwealth ministers. The NDIA has responded to the challenges participants have faced in planning and engaging with the NDIS with the development of a new participant pathway which is currently being piloted in Victoria. This pilot is testing administrative improvements to streamline processes and enable a more collaborative planning experience.

It is fair to say, however, as I indicated in my evidence to the Assembly committee inquiry into the implementation, performance and governance of the NDIS in the ACT, that all jurisdictions have expressed a strong desire to see these changes happen—and sooner rather than later.

The NDIA has also recognised that some participant groups require a more tailored pathway to take into account their particular contexts. The ACT government has expressed a strong interest in being involved in the development and delivery of the tailored pathway for psychosocial disability in the ACT. As a jurisdiction we are already leading the work in developing a better understanding of the interface between the mental health system and the NDIS.

In recognising the challenges experienced by some NDIS participants, the ACT government's budget has also committed \$400,000 over two years as part of the budget for independent individual advocacy for people who require assistance to navigate the NDIS. Ensuring that NDIS participants can get appropriate support in engaging with NDIS decisions, including their rights to review of decisions and, if needed, utilising appeal processes, is absolutely crucial to ensuring that the NDIS enables participants to have real choice and control.

**MR STEEL:** Minister, what other budget measures will support the inclusion of people with a disability in our community?

**MS STEPHEN-SMITH:** I thank Mr Steel for the supplementary. The ACT government supports the inclusion and participation of all people with a disability in the Canberra community in a number of ways. The government recognises that many people with disability will not be NDIS participants, and we need to work as a community to ensure their needs are met and that the community as a whole is inclusive of people with disability in all areas, including employment, community engagement and social activities, as well as access to other government services.

The budget includes a doubling of funding for the disability inclusion grants, with the total grant pool increasing from \$50,000 to \$100,000 per year. This grant program provides opportunity for community groups, small businesses and not-for-profit organisations to apply for funds to become more inclusive and welcoming of people with disability.

These grants provide a real opportunity for people with disability to engage with their local community, let the community know how it could be more accessible, and encourage their local businesses and community organisations to apply for funds to remove hurdles to inclusion. This could include physical infrastructure such as hearing loops, adjustable equipment, training for staff and volunteers on disability awareness, the development of a disability action and inclusion plan, or translating information into easy English.

Last year the first round of grants saw an overwhelming response from the community. In the 2017 grant round 44 disability inclusion grant applications were received seeking a total of more than \$550,000 in funding. Eight applications were successful for the \$50,000 grant round. The 2018 disability inclusion grant round opened on 30

April, and we will be keeping the grants open until the end of July to ensure as many organisations and parts of the community as possible can apply for this new larger round. I encourage all members to make this information available to their constituents.

### **Budget—Canberra Institute of Technology**

**MR WALL:** My question is to the Minister for Higher Education, Training and Research. Minister, this year's budget has indicated that there will be a cut to staffing numbers at CIT next year. How many staff will be cut in total, and have these staff yet been identified?

**MS FITZHARRIS:** It is not quite as Mr Wall presents. I understand that this is the normal movement of staff in CIT in response to training needs. It happens in each year in terms of the training needs of the ACT because they bring on temporary staff to undertake particular training activities in each year.

**MR WALL:** Minister, which CIT campuses will be impacted by the reduction in staffing numbers?

**MS FITZHARRIS:** I will take that question on notice.

**MS LEE:** Minister, which courses will be impacted by these staff cuts?

**MS FITZHARRIS:** As I mentioned, they are not cuts; they are changes in staffing levels at CIT to respond to particular training needs which occur, which are temporary, with staff that are brought on to respond to training needs in every year. I would encourage the opposition to have a look at this over the course of previous years. I will take the specifics of the question on notice.

**Ms Lee:** Point of order, Madam Speaker.

**MADAM SPEAKER:** Point of order.

**Ms Lee:** I did wait until I thought the minister was finishing her answer. The question was actually: which courses will be impacted?

**MS FITZHARRIS:** I said I would take it on notice.

**MADAM SPEAKER:** There is no point of order. I think she was explaining the state of the staff and the temporary nature. You have more than a minute to continue to explain to the opposition, minister.

**MS FITZHARRIS:** I will take it on notice.

### **Justice—resourcing**

**MR STEEL:** Can the Attorney-General update the Assembly on the government's work to improve access to justice in the ACT?

**MR RAMSAY:** I thank Mr Steel for the question and his ongoing interest in our justice system. The government recognises that access to justice requires a holistic approach. Legislation, legal services, the courts and community services all play a key role in ensuring that people are able to seek and obtain justice. Our work in each area and new policies, new legislation and funding have focused on ensuring the people who are most vulnerable in our community get the support they need.

In my first ministerial statement of priorities I emphasised that justice is only true justice when it is timely, accessible and transparent. To achieve a justice system that meets that standard requires understanding of how all our decisions as a government in one area affect different parts of the justice system. That understanding has led us to expand the justice system by adding an eighth magistrate; provide Legal Aid, the Director of Public Prosecutions and our community legal centres with additional funding to support their vital roles in the legal system; and introduce a series of bills to improve the way the courts work and to respond to emerging issues.

These measures are making a real difference for vulnerable people in our community. They support our justice system to protect the rights of people who come before the courts.

**MR STEEL:** Minister, can you give some more detail about how work to change legislation is supporting vulnerable women, families and others?

**MR RAMSAY:** I thank Mr Steel for the supplementary question. Over the past year our focus on delivering new legislation has been to take action in response to national work on reforming our laws in relation to vulnerable people. This term we have already introduced significant reforms to our criminal laws in response to the Royal Commission into Institutional Responses to Child Sexual Abuse.

A new offence for repeated abuse over time, and a reformed offence for grooming, are now in place to ensure that our laws can be effectively used to hold offenders accountable. We also introduced new legislation on family and personal violence orders. That legislation focused on the experience of people who are seeking protection from the courts. It was designed to ensure that the trauma that can arise from being involved in the court process is minimised and to ensure that vulnerable people are effectively able to seek protection in the courts.

This is an important body of law reform that has followed the ongoing policy work of the Minister for the Prevention of Domestic and Family Violence and it is an example of the changes to legislation that support direct services to people in the community.

**MS CHEYNE:** Minister, can you illustrate how this government's investment in resources for the courts, for new legislation and for legal services delivers concrete benefits for people in Canberra?

**MR RAMSAY:** I thank Ms Cheyne for the supplementary question. This government is delivering significant resources to ensure that people who seek access to the justice system are empowered to do so and are supported.

We are providing \$5.3 million for a new magistrate, more Legal Aid staff and more

DPP staff. The Magistrates Court provides important justice services to the community, including the granting of domestic and family violence protection orders. Expanding its capabilities will make the courts more accessible to people who are seeking protection.

We are providing almost \$7 million in baseline funding to the Director of Public Prosecutions. This increase comes as the DPP is prosecuting more, and more complicated, cases, including historical sexual assault matters.

Our \$14 million commitment to fund the ACT's participation in the national redress scheme is a central part of providing access to justice. The redress scheme will offer psychological counselling, accountability from institutions for abuse through a direct personal response, and financial payments to help survivors of child sexual abuse rebuild their lives.

This government is committed to ensuring that its policies, its legislation and its resources all support access to justice for the whole community.

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