



QUESTION TIME
OF THE
LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY
FOR THE
AUSTRALIAN CAPITAL TERRITORY

HANSARD

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Questions without notice
Budget—health funding

MR COE: I have a question for the Minister for Health and Wellbeing. Minister, the combined figures for the Health Directorate and the ACT Local Hospital Network in the appropriation bill for 2018-19 compared to the appropriation act for 2017-18 show that the recurrent expenditure appropriations decrease by \$4.8 million. Minister, how will a decreased appropriation fund the expense initiatives for 2018-19?

MS FITZHARRIS: Overall, the investment in ACT Health has gone up this year. I do not have the papers in front of me. I will take the specific question on notice.

MR COE: Minister, in light of this decreased appropriation, where will additional funding be coming from?

MS FITZHARRIS: The ACT budget.

MRS DUNNE: Minister, how will a decreased appropriation provide growing health services for our growing city?

MS FITZHARRIS: The ACT health budget is growing.

Greyhound racing—transition package

MS LE COUTEUR: My question is to the minister for gambling and racing and relates to the greyhound transition scheme. Minister, what is the eligibility for people to be retrained or otherwise assisted under the scheme? How many have been assisted and how much money has been spent on this?

MR RAMSAY: I thank Ms Le Couteur for the question. In relation to the second and third parts of the question, I will take those parts on notice. In terms of the eligibility for the scheme, certainly one of the key things is the ACT government has been very clear from day one that the rehoming of greyhounds is an absolute priority as part of the overall work that we have been doing in this area and, as part of the suite of services available to transition support, Woden Community Service has been providing that level of support.

It is important that the transition support is focused on people who have strong connections to the ACT. An ex-racing greyhound must have been owned by an ACT resident or must have been surrendered on or after 23 June. That was the date that the government confirmed its intention to end the industry.

The amount of support that is available for each ex-racing greyhound is assessed according to need but is capped at \$2,000 per hound unless there are exceptional circumstances. That ensures that the support that is funded by ACT taxpayers is focused here in the ACT.

We do note that there are some exceptional circumstances and we are encouraging people to continue to make contact with local community services who have the ability

to assist people in the application process. One example of the exceptional circumstances would be where there is evidence of a significant proportion—and that may be recent racing of around 60 per cent or more—of the activity carried out at the Canberra Greyhound Racing Club.

There is also the capacity to apply for financial assistance that goes beyond the \$2,000 cap, again if there are exceptional circumstances, and that may relate to behavioural issues, dental problems or other ones of the dog itself.

MS LE COUTEUR: Minister, how many dogs have been rehomed under the scheme and how much money has been spent? I am asking that on the assumption that you have given me the full list of exceptional circumstances. If there are any more you would like to elaborate on, I would love to hear them.

MR RAMSAY: In relation to the detail of those two questions, I will take those on notice and provide those.

MS CHEYNE: Minister, noting transition is available for greyhounds, what transitional support is available for people seeking to exit the greyhound industry?

MR RAMSAY: I thank Ms Cheyne for the supplementary question. Certainly, one of the things that we have done right from day one is encourage people who are affected by the end of the racing industry here in Canberra to make contact and to receive the transition support package that is available.

Again I encourage people to do that through Woden Community Service. It provides a range of support: training and reskilling opportunities, short-term financial support, business skills support, specialist advice, guiding and planning about future career options, financial counselling and planning services, no-interest loans to meet individual needs, and microcredit loans. There is also counselling to provide emotional support for anyone involved and exiting the industry.

Noting that today is the last sitting day before the end of the period available for the applications, I encourage people to disregard what has been said by the members opposite, who have been steering people away from the transition support in disregard of what it is they may have been going through in life. I encourage people to make contact with Woden Community Service and to access the support that the government is providing.

Budget—employment

MS ORR: My question is to the Chief Minister. Chief Minister, what does the 2018 budget show about performance and prospects for the ACT economy?

MR BARR: I thank Ms Orr for the question. The budget this week shows that the ACT economy is amongst the strongest in the nation. We have seen growth of 13.6 per cent over the past three years as we see a continued diversification of the territory's economic base. Our strong economic growth has seen more than 10,000 jobs created in the territory economy, and I am pleased to advise the Assembly that there are over 2,000 more businesses operating in Canberra today than three years ago. Our companies are

doing more international business, with the ACT service exports rising by 22 per cent since 2015.

The 2018 budget forecasts continued strong growth in jobs and economic activity in the years ahead. It is really pleasing to see that our international education sector expanded by 24 per cent last year and that prospects for further growth are strong, with providers like UNSW Canberra exploring significant expansion.

As we see more international airlines flying to Canberra and our city being recognised internationally as one of *Lonely Planet's* top cities to visit, the outlook for our tourism sector is also very positive. We expect to see more jobs created in a range of knowledge-based industries. It is again very pleasing to see that the city's professional, scientific and technical services sector grew by almost 36 per cent last year, showing that Canberra's local innovation companies are also thriving.

The budget shows that our economy is growing, and the future for Canberra is very bright.

MS ORR: Chief Minister, how is the ACT government investing in stronger public sector agencies and job creation through the 2018-19 budget?

MR BARR: This year's budget does deliver a significant expansion of public services for Canberrans, particularly in our hospitals and schools, public services associated with local government responsibilities to improve the look and feel of our suburbs, investments in emergency services and, importantly also, our community services providers.

As a result, the ACT government's own workforce is expected to grow by over 300 full-time equivalent staff in 2018-19. This will include significant recruitment in health, in education and in the community services directorates, as well as within Chief Minister, Treasury and Economic Development. We are also providing more resources to help take pressure off staff working in high demand areas of service delivery, including through Access Canberra and the working with vulnerable people scheme.

On this side of the chamber we understand that having a professional, skilled and secure workforce is critical to delivering high quality services in our community, which is why we are growing our investment in staff across the ACT public service.

MS CODY: Chief Minister, how will the 2018 budget back local businesses and private sector job creation?

MR BARR: I thank Ms Cody for the supplementary. The 2018 budget invests very heavily in health, education, transport and housing infrastructure. This is infrastructure that a growing city will need in the years ahead. It means we are also continuing to support strong private sector job growth creation. The budget delivers more funding to progress the planning and approval of stage 2 of the light rail project, as well as the commencement of design on a series of enabling infrastructure works in and around the Woden town centre. We have also set aside almost \$600 million over the forward estimates—

Ms Orr: A point of order, Madam Speaker.

MADAM SPEAKER: Chief Minister, can you resume your seat. Ms Orr.

Ms Orr: Members opposite have been having discussions throughout the whole answer. While not very loud, it has made it very difficult to hear the Chief Minister.

MADAM SPEAKER: Thank you, Ms Orr. I remind members that I cannot stop you having private conversations, but can you keep it down so other people can hear.

MR BARR: As I was saying, we have set aside almost \$600 million over coming years to build new hospital infrastructure, including the SPIRE centre and an expanded Centenary Hospital for Women and Children. There is a brand-new primary school being built for Molonglo. There are additional places for students at four local schools in Gungahlin as well as the next phase of development of a new school to address Gungahlin's ongoing population growth.

The 2018 land release program sets out a plan to deliver 17,000 new dwelling sites across our city over the next four years, and this represents a clear pipeline of both infill and new suburban estate development. In combination, all of these initiatives generate further opportunities for local businesses and support the creation of more good, long-term, secure jobs as we continue to invest in Canberra's future.

Land—sales

MS LEE: My question is to the Minister for Planning and Land Management. Minister, CRS has applied to the ACT government to purchase block 11 section 8, a strip of land adjacent to the old Shell refinery site on block 9 and the freight rail line at Fyshwick. Minister, has this block been valued, offered for sale or sold and, if so, at what price?

MR GENTLEMAN: I understand the process is in train at the moment—pardon the pun. Those matters have not been concluded at this stage but I am happy to get more details and come back to the chamber on it.

MS LEE: Minister, was the block offered for sale publicly? If not, why not? If so, when and by what method?

MR GENTLEMAN: My understanding is that the block was not offered publicly for sale. In relation to the directorate's work on the sale of that block, again I will take the details on notice and come back to the chamber.

MR PARTON: Minister, at this stage how many valuations have been undertaken, and when the process is finalised, will you be able to table that information in this place?

MR GENTLEMAN: Yes. I will obtain as much information as I can from the directorate, and I am happy to table it in the chamber.

Women—government support

MS CODY: My question is to the Minister for Women. Minister, the ACT women's plan and its first action plan provide two years worth of actions to deliver real change in our community on gender equality. Can you update the Assembly on some of the first-year achievements and how these actions are contributing to better outcomes for women and girls in the ACT?

MS BERRY: I thank Ms Cody for the question. Soon the government will be releasing a detailed report to let the community know what we have achieved in the first year of the women's plan. As members will know, these actions, which sit under the ACT women's plan, are focused on getting better health and wellbeing outcomes for women and girls in the ACT community. Importantly, these actions are the responsibility of the whole ACT government. The office for women and the Ministerial Advisory Council on Women are working closely with directorates to ensure that they remain focused on delivering their actions.

I am glad to say that in the first year there has already been a great deal of action. We have held two great forums to engage with women, community organisations and business representatives. They provided an opportunity for leaders across government and the community to work together to identify the barriers and opportunities for future progress.

In sport, the government is actively promoting and encouraging more women to get involved through a range of actions. These include the HerCanberra active portal launched in October last year and the development of female-friendly infrastructure guidelines to support the development of new facilities, and the modification of existing facilities, to be more accessible for female participants.

The women sport and recreation participation and leadership program was introduced this year. It provides \$100,000 each year for four years to provide assistance to eligible parties to support greater participation opportunities for women and girls, and for women to take on leadership roles in the sector.

There is also new investment in this year's budget specifically focused on delivering key actions in the women's plan to see stronger promotion and realisation of gender equality. The additional investment provides \$696,000 and will support and bolster the work of the office for women and the delivery of the women's action plan right across the ACT government.

MS CODY: Minister, how will this additional funding assist with driving gender equality in the ACT?

MS BERRY: I thank Ms Cody for the supplementary. The additional funding will assist the ACT government to continue its strong focus on building an even more inclusive and equitable community that ensures all Canberrans have equal opportunities to participate actively in the things they want. We know our community wants desperately to see greater equality—in fact, more than any other jurisdiction in the country, when you consider the recent vote on marriage equality.

The additional funding will specifically assist with: support for the office for women to undertake more and better community engagement activities to promote gender

equality; improving the evidence base relating to gender equality, noting that we are doing a great deal of research, story and data gathering right now as we progress to the full suite of actions under the women's plan while not losing sight of this evidence and ensuring it is widely accessible into the future; training to reduce and eliminate unconscious bias across government; promoting diversity on boards through the diversity register which was launched just last week—and I encourage members in this place to share it with their networks to get more people registered; and delivering a board traineeship program for women.

Importantly, it ensures that the office for women is better resourced and given greater ability to work across government with each and every government directorate to drive and deliver the commitments we have made around this issue. This investment will also assist the broader community, including businesses and community not-for-profit organisations, by providing additional tools to better address gender inequality in our spheres of influence.

MS CHEYNE: Minister, what is the next step for the delivery of the remainder of the actions in the women's action plan?

MS BERRY: I thank Ms Cheyne for her question. As I said we will be releasing in coming weeks more details around our delivery of actions already. You will be able to see what we have underway and what actions are coming up. The additional investment made through the 2018-19 budget will allow the office to get stuck into this work and have an opportunity to drill down on delivering these actions more closely with all of the responsible directorates.

Included in the plan going forward are a range of actions around procurement, gender perceptions in schools, and how we can make transport and planning decisions more inclusive of women's views, to name just a few. Investigation of contemporary procurement practices is underway, as we look at how we can promote gender equity through procurement. Preliminary analysis has already begun about possible reform and the two-year action plan will see how we can progress this work.

Action is underway to look at gender perceptions in schools and how this may impact on the wellbeing of female students. This work is also underway with the establishment of the gender equity and education advisory committee as well as some preliminary research. This early work will be used to develop new, or adapt existing, policies, practices, training and resources to promote gender equity in schools.

Action to look at how we can improve processes for women's perspectives to be better incorporated into master plans, territory plan reviews and urban design processes is also underway. I look forward to hearing more about this. There are too many actions to list here today. But, as I mentioned, over coming weeks I will be releasing a more concise report outlining what is next for gender equality in the ACT.

ACT Health—workplace culture

MRS DUNNE: My question is to the Minister for Health and Wellbeing. I refer to notes from a staff meeting at the Canberra Hospital that was called to explain the staff restructure in the week following the announcement of the restructure. These notes state

that staff raised questions about “significant dysfunction and poor culture” in the Health Directorate and asked whether a restructure would change things for the better. Minister, why is there significant dysfunction and a poor culture in the Health Directorate?

MS FITZHARRIS: I am not familiar with that particular note, but if that is something that has been expressed by a member of staff, I would refer all members to my previous statements around the significant decisions I have recommended and taken regarding the future of ACT Health and my significant and extensive statements talking about ongoing consultation, particularly with staff of ACT Health, as we look towards the separation of ACT Health into two new organisations, in both of which it is one of my key priorities, as it is of the leadership team at ACT Health, to make sure that there is a positive and healthy culture in ACT Health.

MRS DUNNE: Minister, how will a restructure address the reported significant dysfunction and poor culture in the Health Directorate?

MS FITZHARRIS: I again refer Mrs Dunne to my extensive previous statements that there are clearly governance challenges in ACT Health and I am taking very significant actions to improve those. I refer you to my previous answers.

MR WALL: Minister, what responsibility do you take, as the minister responsible for the Health Directorate, for the significant dysfunction and the poor culture that is present?

MS FITZHARRIS: I refer members to my previous statements extensively made about the responsibility I am taking to make sure that ACT Health has a sustainable and successful future and consults and engages with its staff in particular over the coming months, looking forward to two new organisations later this year.

MADAM SPEAKER: A question without notice, Ms Cheyne.

MS CHEYNE: Thank you, Madam Speaker.

Ms Lawder: On a point of order, Madam Speaker.

MADAM SPEAKER: Sorry, Ms Lawder; I thought you were standing to ask a question.

Ms Lawder: I was but I would like to point out that the standing orders allow for people who have difficulty standing. I must say I am quite slow standing at the moment, with my foot in a moon boot. I think it was a little unfair to be penalised for that.

MADAM SPEAKER: I am not penalising you, Ms Lawder. Ms Cheyne has the call. We have limited time and I am trying to be fair, going across the chamber. Mrs Dunne had the last call. I am giving the call to this side.

Ms Lawder: I am not sure that this is fair when we have more people to ask questions.

MADAM SPEAKER: Ms Cheyne, you have the call.

Budget—infrastructure

MS CHEYNE: My question is to the Minister for Transport and City Services. How will the 2018-19 budget deliver more essential city services and local community infrastructure for our growing city?

MS FITZHARRIS: I thank Ms Cheyne very much for the question. Through this year's ACT budget we are delivering even more high quality city services and amenities in our established suburbs and in new or expanded neighbourhoods, including those with recent greenfield and brownfield residential development. For example, the annual mowing program will have increased capacity to manage accelerated grass growth, particularly following wet periods across our city. There will be more weed control, including hand weeding of suburban shrub beds, and chemical control of weeds in kerbs, gutters and around roadway barriers. This will improve the look of our city and will particularly focus on major entry roads to the ACT, including around Canberra airport. This work will also assist in preventing unnecessary damage to existing infrastructure.

In the last 15 years there has been a significant increase in the number of suburban lakes and ponds across Canberra. The budget allows for an increase in lake and pond cleaning to improve the health and amenity of our waterways and encourage more recreation around our lakes and ponds.

The budget also delivers on our election commitment to plant additional trees over the next four years in the urban environment and deliver an adopt-a-park program. The 1,330 additional tree plantings will improve Canberra's overall unique green canopy cover and help to cool our suburbs. The adopt-a-park program will provide small grants for local volunteer groups to achieve cleaner, greener local parks and open spaces.

A comprehensive program will also improve the cleanliness of bus shelters, continue the graffiti management program which assists in reducing illegal graffiti across Canberra and increase responsiveness to tree-related public inquiries.

MS CHEYNE: Minister, how will Canberrans have a say on how and where this local community infrastructure is allocated?

MS FITZHARRIS: We had a discussion yesterday, and I am pleased to also note that the better suburbs program will set the vision and priorities for improved city services over the next four years and beyond in the form of a community-authored better suburbs statement.

The first stage of consultation last year highlighted services and features most important to our community. The next stage of consultations is through "kitchen table conversations", which will be encouraged amongst families, friends, communities and neighbourhood stakeholder groups to gain a deeper understanding of community need. Hosting kits will be available to download or pick up in hard copy later on this month.

A representative citizens forum panel consisting of 40 community members and 25 senior representatives of community stakeholder groups, government and industry will

identify and plan for the right mix of city services. Four thousand Canberrans have already received invitations to participate in the panel, and we look forward to those discussions getting underway later this year.

The feedback from both consultation activities, the initial survey last year and the kitchen table discussions, will be shared with the panel members at upcoming citizens forums in late July and August of this year.

I will also be asking the better suburbs citizens forum to directly allocate \$1.9 million set aside in this year's budget for playgrounds and local community improvement projects. This will be the first trial of real-life participatory budgeting. Work will start on those projects after the better suburbs statement is released in September of this year, with further improvements to be based on the community-identified vision and priorities for the next four years and beyond.

MS LAWDER: Minister, what percentage of the total number of street trees would an additional 1,330 trees be?

MS FITZHARRIS: I will take that question on notice.

ACT Health—proposed organisational changes

MS LAWDER: My question is to the Minister for Health. Had ACT Health already made a budget cabinet submission as part of the 2018-19 budget process when the Chief Minister decided to restructure ACT Health?

MS FITZHARRIS: The budget process starts, as members know, early in the year, including the Treasurer calling for submissions from community organisations. Yes, a number of submissions had been made by ACT Health into that process from late last year.

MS LAWDER: Minister, why didn't you wait for the 2019-20 budget to restructure ACT Health?

MS FITZHARRIS: Because I announced the decision in March.

MRS DUNNE: Minister, did any of the budget submissions from ACT Health include suggestions for new agencies within Health or splitting the agencies?

MS FITZHARRIS: Not to my direct knowledge. But a number of submissions did note—and in a number of my discussions, particularly with community stakeholder groups, and health representative organisations spoke to me at length—the overall stewardship of the ACT health system in addition to performance issues, particularly at the hospital. It was very clear to me that there were calls for improved stewardship of the ACT health system. That is exactly what the restructure of ACT Health will deliver.

Hospitals—bullying

MR HANSON: My question is to the Minister for Health and Wellbeing. On 15 April this year the media reported on bullying at Calvary Public Hospital. They cited cases

of bullying in the emergency department, in the wards, security, administration and human resources. On 16 April the AMA called for an investigation into bullying. Minister, for how long have you known about bullying in the ACT public health sector and what have you done about it?

MS FITZHARRIS: Mr Hanson is running the line that I know he ran for many years regarding the ACT health workforce, whether that is in ACT Health or within Calvary. Certainly, with regard to the reporting in the *Canberra Times* and the AMA's calls for Calvary to investigate that issue, I also wrote to the CEO of the Little Company of Mary following that—

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